

**AN INVESTIGATION OF THE KEY MECHANISMS  
THAT PROMOTE WHOLE SCHOOL DEVELOPMENT  
IN A SECONDARY SCHOOL PILOT PROJECT  
CONTEXT**

**VOLUME ONE**

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## ABSTRACT

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### **An investigation of the key mechanisms that promote whole school development in a secondary school pilot project context**

Providing relevant and quality schooling for all South African learners is the paramount goal of the South African National Department of Education. South Africa's historical and current socio-economic contexts provide many challenges for both the Department of Education and schools in this endeavour to provide quality teaching and learning. These challenges impact directly and indirectly on what happens in the classroom. Since 1994 a plethora of education and training policy has been introduced in South Africa to redress historical imbalances; to introduce a new education and training framework and approach; and to provide guidelines, principles and procedures for addressing some of the challenges that impact on schools. The National Whole School Evaluation Policy provides the legislative framework for the establishment of a quality assurance process in South African schools based on accountability and support. The subsequent Integrated Quality Management System attempts to provide a framework for integrating school evaluation and performance measurement. Policy frameworks are in place to guide quality assurance and school improvement, however, the reality of implementing this at a grass roots level is particularly challenging.

The General Motors (GM) South Africa Foundation, a non-governmental development organisation, established by General Motors (GM) South Africa, commenced with the piloting the *Learning Schools Initiative* to investigate some of the challenges of whole school development and evaluation. This research documents the *Learning Schools Initiative's* intervention with the initial two pilot secondary schools situated in Port Elizabeth (Nelson Mandela Bay) over a four-year period. It reviews the relevant school reform and school development literature and adopts a critical realist evaluative research approach to

investigate the key mechanisms that promote whole school development and change in this context. In keeping with this approach, the results of the research are analysed and discussed within a context-mechanism-outcome configuration that involves the identification of the key mechanisms that bring about desired outcome/s in a specific context. Seven key generative mechanisms are identified as critical at a school and classroom level (i) school culture, (ii) school structures, (iii) effective leadership and management, (iv) personal growth and meaning, (v) restoration of relationships, (vi) professional development of educators, and development of capacity to work together, and (vii) support and accountability. The need to structure school development interventions around the triggering of identified key mechanisms is also identified as an important overarching mechanism. Suggestions are made for further research required to facilitate a deeper understanding of how to bring about meaningful change that results in quality teaching and learning in South African schools.

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

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<b>VOLUME ONE: AN INVESTIGATION OF THE KEY MECHANISMS THAT PROMOTE WHOLE SCHOOL DEVELOPMENT IN A SECONDARY SCHOOL PILOT PROJECT CONTEXT</b>	
<b>ABSTRACT</b>	ii
<b>TABLE OF CONTENTS</b>	iv
<b>LIST OF FIGURES</b>	xii
<b>LIST OF APPENDICES</b>	xiii
<b>LIST OF ACRONYMS</b>	xiv
<b>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</b>	xvi
<b>CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION</b>	1
1.1 The research context	1
1.2 Approaches to improving the quality of education in schools	2
1.3 The GM South Africa Foundation Learning Schools Initiative	5
1.4 Research goals and objectives	7
1.5 Overview of the thesis	7
1.6 Concluding summary	10
<b>CHAPTER TWO: THE SOUTH AFRICAN EDUCATION CONTEXT</b>	11
2.1 Introduction	11
2.2 The historical context of apartheid education and training in South Africa pre 1994	12
2.2.1 A segregated education and training system	12
2.2.2 The people's education movement	13
2.2.3 The period of systemic discourse	14
2.3 Education and training post 1994	15
2.3.1 The introduction of a new education and training system	15

2.3.2	The introduction of new education and training policy	16
2.3.3	The implementation of policy at a school level	19
2.3.4	The move towards a decentralised education system	21
2.4	Factors that impact on the quality of South African schooling	22
2.4.1	The long term impact of political instability	22
2.4.2	Socio-economic challenges	23
2.4.3	Educator challenges	25
2.4.4	Learners infected and affected by HIV/AIDS	26
2.4.5	Parental support for education	26
2.4.6	Learner employability and repetition	27
2.5	The Eastern Cape education context	27
2.5.1	The state of education in the Eastern Cape	27
2.5.2	Infrastructure and material resource challenges	28
2.5.3	Human resource and school support challenges	29
2.6	A whole school evaluation and development approach	30
2.7	Concluding summary	31
<b>CHAPTER THREE: DEVELOPMENT APPROACHES AND INTERVENTIONS</b>		<b>32</b>
3.1	Introduction	32
3.2	The concept of development	33
3.3	Terminology related to development role players	34
3.4	Macro development theories and approaches	34
3.5	Alternative influences on and approaches to development	35
3.6	Sustainable development	37
3.7	International development assistance and education	39
3.7.1	New approaches and focuses on international development	39
3.7.2	International aid and education development	41

3.8	Corporate social investment and development	43
3.9	Education development agencies in South Africa	45
3.10	The GM South Africa Foundation as development agency	47
	3.10.1 The background to the GM South Africa Foundation	47
	3.10.2 The GM South Africa Foundation's development approach	48
	3.10.3 The structure and capacity of the GM South Africa Foundation	51
	3.10.4 The GM South Africa Foundation and partnerships	51
	3.10.5 The concepts of "replicability" and "model"	52
	3.10.6 The GM South Africa Foundation Initiatives	54
3.11	Concluding summary	56
<b>CHAPTER FOUR: SCHOOL REFORM INITIATIVES AND FINDINGS</b>		<b>57</b>
4.1	Introduction	57
4.2	The impetus for and nature of school reform	58
4.3	Terminology in the field of school reform	62
4.4	The school effectiveness and school improvement approaches	62
	4.4.1 School effectiveness	63
	4.4.2 School improvement	70
4.5	Towards a merging of school effectiveness and school improvement	76
4.6	The influence of organisational development	78
4.7	School development	80
4.8	School reform and development in South Africa post 1994	84
	4.8.1 Initial educational transformation and school reform	84
	4.8.2 School development research in South Africa	85
	4.8.3 Key factors of "resilient" South African schools	92
	4.8.4 Balancing accountability and support	93
4.9	The key characteristics associated with effective schools and school improvement	95
	4.9.1 Leadership and management	95

4.9.2	Organisational culture	99
4.9.3	Relationships	101
4.9.4	Individual development and commitment	104
4.9.5	Primary focus on teaching and learning	107
4.10	The role of external agency	109
4.11	Levers for improving schools	111
4.12	Managing and sustaining change	111
4.13	Concluding summary	116
<b>CHAPTER FIVE: RESEARCH DESIGN DECISIONS</b>		<b>118</b>
5.1	Introduction	118
5.2	My interest and role in the research	119
5.3	The research question and focus	120
5.3.1	Determining the research focus	120
5.3.2	Determining the scope of the research	122
5.4	The theoretical framework informing the research	122
5.4.1	Determining a theoretical framework	122
5.4.2	Locating this research within a critical realist framework	124
5.4.3	The ontological dimension of critical realism	125
5.4.4	The epistemological dimension of critical realism	127
5.4.5	"Time and space" and critical realism	128
5.4.6	Generative mechanisms, powers and structures	128
5.4.7	Structure and agency and critical realism	131
5.4.8	Critical realism and research methods	136
5.4.9	The limitations of critical realism	137
5.5	Evaluative research within a critical realist paradigm	139
5.6	Research design framework	141
5.6.1	Data collection methods and processes	143

5.6.2	Individual and group interviews	145
5.6.3	Observation	148
5.6.4	Whole school feedback sessions	149
5.6.5	Document analysis	149
5.6.6	Reflexivity within the research process	150
5.7	Analysis of data	152
5.7.1	Analysis of theory and existing project data	152
5.7.2	Data analysis as process	153
5.7.3	The identification of generative mechanisms and causal powers	153
5.7.4	Conclusion drawing	155
5.8	Ethical issues in the research process	156
5.8.1	Access and informed consent	157
5.8.2	Confidentiality	157
5.9	Concluding summary	158
<b>CHAPTER SIX: THE LEARNING SCHOOLS INITIATIVE</b>		159
6.1	Introduction	159
6.2	Historical origins of the <i>Learning Schools Initiative</i>	160
6.3	<i>Learning Schools Initiative's</i> initial objectives (2002)	161
6.4	Initial principles underpinning the <i>Learning Schools Initiative</i>	162
6.5	Developing a preliminary intervention framework and approach	164
6.5.1	Initial conceptualisation: a situational analysis approach to whole school evaluation and whole school development	164
6.5.2	Aligning the initiative to national policy initiatives	165
6.5.2.1	The South African Schools Act	166
6.5.2.2	The Implementation Plan for Tirisano	167
6.5.2.3	The Manifesto on Values, Education and Democracy	167
6.5.2.4	The National Whole School Evaluation Policy	168
6.5.2.5	The Integrated Quality Management System	170
6.5.2.6	Working with national policy in the Learning Schools Initiative	172

6.5.3.1	Integrating vision crafting	173
6.5.3.2	Focussing on learner achievement	174
6.6	Partnerships	176
6.7	Piloting a tentative model for whole school evaluation and development	176
6.7.1	Phase one: selection of initial pilot schools	176
6.7.2	Phase two: vision crafting, whole school evaluation baseline analysis and planning	180
6.7.2.1	Creating a vision and mission	180
6.7.2.2	Preparing for whole school evaluation and development	180
6.7.2.3	The whole school evaluation co-ordinators	181
6.7.2.4	Initial self-evaluation and planning process	182
6.7.3	Phase three: refining the whole school evaluation instruments and planning process	183
6.7.3.1	The development of a whole school evaluation instrument	183
6.7.3.2	The development of a whole school planning process and templates	184
6.7.3.3	Working with conflicting terminology	185
6.7.4	Phase four: meeting the pilot schools' needs	186
6.7.4.1	Working with needs and interventions	186
6.7.4.2	Identifying the schools' needs	188
6.7.4.3	Funding and partnerships	189
6.7.4.4	Interventions to address shared needs	191
6.7.4.4.1	Language, numeracy & basic mathematics and lifeskills assessments and interventions	192
6.7.4.4.2	Educator motivation sessions	196
6.7.4.4.3	Umlambo team building and planning camps	197
6.7.4.4.4	Social welfare interventions	198
6.7.4.4.5	Fundraising capacity building	199
6.7.4.4.6	IQMS workshop and support	200
6.7.4.4.7	Peace education programme	201
6.7.4.4.8	Restorative practice workshop and process	202
6.7.4.4.9	Leadership development	204
6.7.4.5	Internal school development projects and processes	205
6.7.5	Phase five: refining the <i>Learning Schools initiative</i>	207
6.8	Concluding summary	211

<b>CHAPTER SEVEN: THE KEY MECHANISMS INFLUENCING WHOLE SCHOOL DEVELOPMENT IN TWO SECONDARY SCHOOLS</b>	<b>212</b>
7.1 Introduction	212
7.2 The process of identification and positioning of the generative mechanisms that facilitate school development and change in two pilot schools	214
7.3 Key development and change mechanisms in the Learning Schools Initiative initial pilot schools	220
7.3.1 Supportive organisational culture and structures	220
7.3.1.1 Introduction	220
7.3.1.2 School context and the identification of mechanisms	222
7.3.1.2.1 School culture	222
7.3.1.2.2 School structures	226
7.3.1.3 Discussion	229
7.3.2 Effective leadership and management	230
7.3.2.1 Introduction	230
7.3.2.2 School context and the identification of mechanisms	230
7.3.2.3 Discussion	240
7.3.3 Personal growth and meaning	243
7.3.3.1 Introduction	243
7.3.3.2 School context and the identification of mechanisms	244
7.3.3.2.1 Contextual challenges	245
7.3.3.2.2 Personal challenges	249
7.3.3.3 Discussion	253
7.3.4 Restoration of relationships and development of capacity to work together	255
7.3.4.1 Introduction	255
7.3.4.2 School context and the identification of mechanisms	256
7.3.4.3 Discussion	260
7.3.5 Professional development of educators	262
7.3.5.1 Introduction	262
7.3.5.2 School context and the identification of mechanisms	262
7.3.5.3 Discussion	267
7.3.6 Support and accountability	269
7.3.6.1 Introduction	269
7.3.6.2 School context and the identification of mechanisms	269
7.3.6.3 Discussion	272
7.4 Whole school development programmes as overarching mechanisms: structure and processes	274

7.5	Summary and concluding remarks	278
<b>CHAPTER EIGHT: CONCLUDING RECOMMENDATIONS, DISCUSSIONS AND REVIEW OF RESEARCH PROCESS</b>		283
8.1	Introduction	283
8.2	Recommendations for whole school development initiatives	284
8.2.1	Structure of the intervention	284
8.2.2	Key focus on leadership and management development	287
8.2.3	Personal empowerment and relationships	289
8.2.4	Work with mechanisms to improve teaching and learning	292
8.2.5	The need for accountability and support mechanism and structures	294
8.2.6	The need for resources	296
8.3	Review of the research process	297
8.4	Suggestions for further research	299
8.5	Concluding remarks	301
<b>REFERENCE LIST</b>		304

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## LIST OF FIGURES

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<b>Figure 4.1</b>	Means-end relationship between effectiveness criteria (Scheerens, 1992:10)	63
<b>Figure 4.2</b>	A framework for school improvement (Hopkins, 1996:42)	71
<b>Figure 5.1</b>	The realistic evaluation cycle (Pawson & Tilley, 1997:85)	140
<b>Figure 5.2</b>	The framework for the second phase of data collection and analysis	154
<b>Figure 6.1</b>	The GMSAF depiction of the nine focus areas of whole school evaluation	170
<b>Figure 6.2</b>	The GMSAF <i>Learning Schools Initiative's</i> model framework in 2005	190
<b>Figure 6.3</b>	The GMSAF <i>Learning School Initiative's</i> model framework March 2006	209
<b>Figure 6.4</b>	The GMSAF <i>Learning School Initiative's</i> model framework October 2006	210
<b>Figure 7.1</b>	Overarching CMO configuration	216
<b>Figure 7.2</b>	<i>Learning Schools Initiative</i> mechanisms	219
<b>Figure 7.3</b>	CMO configuration of mechanism with description of the micro context	219

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## LIST OF APPENDICES

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### VOLUME TWO: AN INVESTIGATION OF THE KEY MECHANISMS THAT PROMOTE WHOLE SCHOOL DEVELOPMENT IN A SECONDARY SCHOOL PILOT PROJECT CONTEXT: APPENDICES

<b>Appendix 1</b>	Example of focus area completed “wow-now-how-pow” table	1
<b>Appendix 2</b>	Example of revised focus area uncompleted “wow-now-how-pow” table	2
<b>Appendix 3</b>	GMSAF whole school evaluation instrument (July 2006)	7
<b>Appendix 4</b>	Key issue summary statement table	53
<b>Appendix 5</b>	Priority problem identification sheet template	62
<b>Appendix 6</b>	Priority problem analysis example: infrastructure	67
<b>Appendix 7</b>	Project planning example: infrastructure	68
<b>Appendix 8</b>	Summative evaluation (July 2006)	69
<b>Appendix 9</b>	Needs analysis of initial two pilot secondary schools	72
<b>Appendix 10</b>	Bonthoogte’s evaluation and planning document (2004-2006)	75
<b>Appendix 11</b>	Masihambe’s achievements and plans example	78
<b>Appendix 12</b>	GMSAF summative evaluation and analysis of schools’ 2006 plans and priorities	82
<b>Appendix 13</b>	Lifeskills, language , numeracy and basic mathematical skills assessments	87
<b>Appendix 14</b>	Masihambe educator attendance survey 2003	105
<b>Appendix 15</b>	Masihambe learner attendance survey 2003	112

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## LIST OF ACRONYMS

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ACE	Advanced Certificate in Education
ACSI	Association of Christian Schools International
AIDS	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
ANC	African National Congress
APAP	Academic Placement and Admissions Programme
DBST	District Based Support Team
CASS	Continuous Assessment
CIE	Catholic Institute of Education
CMO	Context-Mechanism-Outcome
COSATU	Congress of South African Trade Unions
CSA	Corporate Social Action
CSDI	Cadbury Schools Development Initiative
CSI	Corporate Social Investment
CSR	Corporate Social Responsibility
DAC	Development Assistance Committee
DANIDA	Danish International Development Assistance
DAS	Developmental Appraisal System
DDSP	District Development and Support Project
DDSP	District Development Support Programme
DFID	Department for International Development
DIP	District Improvement Programme
DoE	Department of Education
DSG	Developmental Support Group
EAZ	Education Action Zone
EC	Eastern Cape
EDO	Education Development Officer
ELRC	Education Labour Relations Council
EQIP	Education Quality Improvement Project
ESSD	Environmentally and Socially Sustainable Development Network
FET	Further Education and Training
GDE	Gauteng Department of Education
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GET	General Education and Training
GM	General Motors
GMSAF	GM South African Foundation
GNP	Gross National Product
GTZ	German Organization for Technical Co-operation
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
HMIE	Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Education
HOD	Head of Department
HRC	Human Rights Commission
ILST	Institutional Based Learner Support Team
IMF	International Monetary Fund
INSET	In Service Education and Training
IQEA	Improving Quality Education for All
IQMS	Integrated Quality Management System

ISASA	Independent Schools Association of South Africa
ISIP	International School Improvement Project
IUCN	International Union for the Conservation of Nature
JET	Joint Education Trust
JMT	Joint Management Team
LAC	Language Across the Curriculum
LEA	Local Education Authority
LEDA	Language in Education Development Association
LSEN	Learners with Special Education Needs
LSI	Learning Schools Initiative
MDG	Millennium Development Goals
MIP	Matric Intervention Programme
NBI	National Business Initiative
NCS	National Curriculum Statement
NECC	National Education Co-ordinating Committee
NECC	National Education Co-ordinating Committee
NEIO	New International Economic Order
NEPI	National Education Policy Investigation
NGO	Non Governmental Organisations
NMMU	Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University
NPO	Non Profit Organisations
NTSI	National Training Strategy Initiative
NUMSA	National Union of Metal workers of South Africa
OBE	Outcomes Based Education
ODA	Official Development Assistance
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OFSTED	Office for Standards in Education
PGP	Personal Growth Plan
PM	Performance Measurement
PRISEC	Private Sector Education Council
QLP	Quality Learning Project
RCL	Representative Council of Learners
RSA	Republic of South Africa
RUMEP	Rhodes University Maths Education Programme
SDC	School Development Committee
SDP	School Development Plan
SDT	School Development (Dream) Team
SEED	Systemic Enhancement for Education Development
SFCC	Schools Facing Challenging Circumstances
SGB	School Governing Body
SIDA	Swedish International Development Co-operation Agency
SIP	School (or Staff) Improvement Plan
SMT	School Management Team
SQIP	School Quality Improvement Project
SRN	Schools Register of Needs
SSDP	School Development Planning Project
SWOT	Strengths, Weakness, Opportunities and Threats
UNCN	Union for the Conservation of Nature
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WCED	World Commission on Environment and Development
WDI	World Development Indicators
WSD	Whole School Development
WSE	Whole School Evaluation

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# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 The research context

The recent *Report of the Public Hearing on the Right to Basic Education* (Human Rights Commission (HRC), 2006) stresses that the majority of South African schools are failing to offer quality education for their learners. The provision of quality schooling is an international concern that has resulted in numerous initiatives aimed at organisational quality assurance and performance measurement. In schooling quality assurance primarily focuses on benchmarking and assessing learner performance in key areas (i.e. literacy and numeracy) at identified levels and also at an exit level. In addition to setting standards for learner performance, some countries have also set standards by which to assess the overall functionality and holistic performance of schools. South Africa has adopted the approach of assessing learner performance in the form of systemic evaluation (in addition to the National Senior Certificate) and whole school performance through a process of whole school evaluation.

The National Policy on Whole School Evaluation (South Africa, Department of Education (DoE), 2001e) provides the framework for assessing the performance of South African schools according to nine identified focus areas. This policy aims at “improving the overall quality of education in South African schools” (*ibid.*:7) within a supportive and developmental ethos. It is not seen as an end in itself but rather the initial step in school improvement and quality enhancement (*ibid.*). In 2003 a broader framework that integrates performance measurement, performance management and whole school evaluation was produced in the form of the Integrated Quality Management System (IQMS) (Education Labour Relations Council (ELRC), 2003). While the National Policy of Whole School Evaluation and related guidelines can provide a framework and direction for change it is acknowledged that policy itself cannot “mandate what matters” (McLaughlin, 1990:12). There are complex dynamics such as those highlighted in the *Report of the Public Hearing on the Right to Basic Education* (HRC, 2006) that need to be engaged at a variety of levels within the education system to create an environment that supports and enhances the delivery of quality education.

The process of whole school evaluation outlined in the National Whole School Evaluation Policy (South Africa. DoE, 2001e) is situated within a cycle of school development where annually schools identify their priority developmental needs and proposed interventions and express these in the form of a School Improvement Plan. This seemingly simple process is fraught with challenges primarily related to South Africa's history and high level of poverty (HRC, 2006). These challenges include the inferior quality of education and training experienced by the majority of South Africa's educators prior to 1994, a lack of resources in many schools, the poor quality infrastructure of many schools and a related compromising of security for staff and learners, high levels of violence in and around schools, a breakdown of discipline in schools, lack of parental involvement and support, etc. In addition, increasingly reported factors such as abuse, illness and malnourishment of learners further impact on their receptivity to learning (HRC, 2006).

If school improvement is to bring about meaningful change, mechanisms need to be investigated and developed to deal with these challenges. Few schools in South Africa have the luxury of adopting a school improvement approach that focuses primarily on improving teaching and learning. Many South African schools have to address issues related to basic functionality prior to, or in addition to, a teaching and learning improvement focus. Related to this is the question of whether schools can undertake the process of school improvement by themselves, or whether this needs to be driven by an external agency with authority, i.e. the Department of Education. Recent research (Taylor, 2007 (forthcoming)) suggests that the Department of Education needs to intervene in an authoritative manner in the majority of South African schools to facilitate a process by which they become more self-sufficient and effective. External support is also highlighted in the National Whole School Evaluation Policy (South Africa. DoE, 2001e) which states that, in addition to eliciting accountability from schools, the Department of Education needs to play a supportive role in assisting schools to carry out their school improvement plans. Understanding the dynamics of school effectiveness and school improvement and how this plays out within South African contexts is pivotal to determining the role of accountability and support in bringing about meaningful change in South African schools.

## **1.2 Approaches to improving the quality of education in schools**

Key research in the 1960's and 1970's (Coleman et al., 1966; Jencks et al., 1972) raised challenging questions regarding the extent to which schooling can compensate for socio economic background and make a significant contribution to developing childrens'

potential. This resulted in a backlash of research that concentrated on proving that schooling does indeed matter (Brookover, Beady, Flood, Schweitzer, & Wisenbaker, 1979; Mortimore, Sammons, Stoll, Lewis, & Ecob, 1988). A pivotal point of the latter research, which was later reinforced by Coleman (1981), is that it is the quality of schooling that determines whether or not schooling makes a difference. Two primary approaches to researching and addressing the quality of schooling emerged from this process – school effectiveness and school improvement. School effectiveness research focuses on determining the extent to which a school achieves high performance standards and the factors that contribute towards this (Scheerens, 1992). This approach provides useful information regarding learner performance across schools, identification of factors that contribute to learner performance and levers that contribute towards improving schools (*ibid.*). Criticisms of school effectiveness research include: it only provides a snapshot of a school at a specific point in time (Teddlie & Reynolds, 2000, as cited in Harris, 2001:12); it focuses on a limited range of outcomes (Fidler, 2001; Reynolds, 2001); it does not always take the socio-economic impact of schooling sufficiently into account (Jesson & Gray, 1991; Reynolds, 2001); and it fails to produce theory related to what is required for school improvement (Harris, 2001). Recently effectiveness research, in response to the proposition that it cannot simply be assumed that "ineffective" schools simply lack the qualities of effective schools, has also begun to focus on the dynamics of dysfunctional schools (MacBeath & Mortimore, 2001).

School improvement research focuses on identifying what it takes to improve schools from within. Initially school improvement research was criticised for its lack of focus on learner outcomes. Interaction with school effectiveness approaches resulted in school improvement research and interventions adopting a multi-layered approach to improvement. There are different models of school improvement which tend to focus on different levels of and levers for school improvement. However, most of these approaches rest on the assumptions that (i) schools have the capacity to improve themselves, and (ii) school improvement involves interacting with the culture of the school which is best improved through working within a school. In addition school improvement focuses in different ways on the dimensions that impact on change and development such as for example the "givens", the "strategic dimension" and the "capacity-building dimension" (Hopkins, 1996:41). Recently there has been a tendency for school reform researchers and implementers to draw on the strengths of both the school effectiveness and school improvement approaches (Gray, Reynolds, Fitz-Gibbon & Jesson, 1996; Harris & Bennett, 2001). This is considered beneficial in that school effectiveness research identifies the features that make a school effective and school improvement

identifies a process of how to achieve this (Fidler, 2001:47). There is still, however, concern regarding lack of theory in both approaches (Harris, 2001) especially as regards “empirical testing and refinement of existing models” (Sammons, 1999, as quoted in Harris, 2001:18). This study focuses on a whole school development intervention in the form of the *Learning Schools Initiative* (see 1.3) that draws on both school effectiveness and school improvement theory and research. In this context whole school development refers to a process whereby the priority needs of a school are identified (i.e. specifically the areas identified in the whole school evaluation policy) and a structured school development planning process, aimed at improving a school towards its vision, is implemented. In a broader sense it aims to involve the whole school community in school planning and development.

Whole school development interventions introduced in South Africa during the mid 1990's were criticised for adopting an approach that leaned too far toward traditional school improvement in that they focused on organisational development issues and not on the core output of schooling – the improvement of learner performance (Muller & Roberts, 2000). There has recently been a move in school development interventions to measure output in addition to addressing broader organisational issues (Taylor, 2007 (forthcoming)). However, as highlighted by Hopkins (1996, 2001a), schools at different levels of development require different improvement strategies and while improving teaching and learning must always be a priority, other sometimes drastic interventions may be required to create an environment that supports and sustains initiatives to improve teaching and learning.

The statement in the *Report of the Public Hearing on the Right to Basic Education* (HRC, 2006:36) that “we, as a nation are failing our children in providing with them with a quality education” is particularly concerning; as is the finding that lived reality of many of the children in rural and township schools is not consistent with the legislation and policies of the Department of Education. The multitude of issues and complexities related to this are highlighted in this report – a primary issue being the poverty and related societal dysfunctionality which impacts greatly on the right to basic education (*ibid.*:38). Any initiative aimed at improving the quality of schooling needs to take these complexities and challenges into account and to find ways of addressing these in partnership with a school, the broader community and relevant government sectors. History and poverty weigh heavily in South African educational transformation and mechanisms that impact on successful school development need to be investigated and discussed within this complex context.

In addition, the extent to which, given the numerous and complex challenges faced by many South African schools, the concept of a “self renewing” (Hopkins, 1996) and self sufficient school can presently be actualised in South Africa is questionable, especially without external intervention specifically the provision of resources from government (Taylor, 2007 (forthcoming)). A key concern raised in the *Report of the Public Hearing on the Right to Basic Education* (HRC, 2006:3) is that while much has been done to improve the right to basic education “not all of these interventions have resulted in the outputs that were intended”. This highlights that the nature and structure of interventions need to be investigated to ensure maximum and appropriate utilisation of resources. In addition, relevant key mechanisms that leverage meaningful change need to be activated to bring about improved quality of education for all learners in all South African schools.

### **1.3 The GM South Africa Foundation Learning Schools Initiative**

General Motors South Africa (previously Delta Motor Corporation) established the GM South Africa Foundation (GMSAF) (previously the Delta Foundation) with the aim of increasing the company’s impact on development through experimenting with a corporate social action based approach. This hands-on project management approach commences with identifying logjams in housing and education and developing tentative models to address these. These models are piloted and continuously refined through a process of action learning (Revens, 1982). The GMSAF acknowledges the limitation of the concept of a “model”, and while this term is used to designate a specific approach, it often refers more to the documentation of a process than a product.

A key focus of the GMSAF is replication. The GMSAF housing and education models are developed and piloted in Port Elizabeth (Nelson Mandela Bay) in the Eastern Cape. Once a model is gauged to be successful it is documented and shared with interested agencies nationally. It is acknowledged that the models need to be adapted to suit the specific contexts in which they are implemented and where relevant the GMSAF assists with this process. Government features as the key target agency for replication; however, smaller sustainable agencies and organisations with enthusiasm and funding are also identified as potential implementers. All of the GMSAF initiatives are centred on or linked to national policy. The reason for this is two-fold: (i) to create a basis for the replication of the GMSAF initiatives by government, and (ii) in the case of education, to build on what is already expected of educators and schools, as opposed to creating additional work. The GMSAF

commenced with the *Learning Schools Initiative* in 2002 in an attempt to integrate the various GMSAF projects into a whole school development intervention. It was soon realised that a separate and unique approach was required to bring about change and transformation in schools, as while the existing GMSAF education initiatives addressed some aspects of school development, they did not target key development areas. The initial intervention framework for the *Learning Schools Initiative* was based on a whole school development approach and was linked to the National Whole School Evaluation Policy (South Africa. DoE, 2001e). It was later extended to include IQMS and other relevant policy. The initial pilot process involved vision crafting, needs analysis, planning and review. The staff in each school worked in focus area teams to carry out projects linked to priority problem areas in their schools. Each team had an elected co-ordinator and secretary, and a whole-school development co-ordinator was elected to coordinate and manage the whole school development process in each school. It was anticipated that the focus area teams would meet regularly to plan and work on their projects and that the whole school development co-ordinator would work closely with school management and the GMSAF team to co-ordinate the school development process.

As the initiative progressed the GMSAF team became increasingly aware of the need to focus on (i) change issues related to empowering and motivating human agency, (ii) the classroom level, (iii) improving staff relationships, and (iv) identifying and networking with support services and the broader school community. The *Learning Schools Initiative* model was refined and adapted accordingly as the piloting process progressed.

The GMSAF initially piloted this whole school evaluation and development approach with two identified secondary schools. In 2005 four primary schools were selected and included in the *Learning Schools Initiative's* pilot project. This research only focuses on the two secondary schools but makes reference to the primary schools where appropriate. My role as project co-ordinator of the *Learning Schools Initiative* requires that, in addition to managing the overall project implementation process, I also work with the GMSAF team and schools to conceptualise, design, pilot and refine a whole school evaluation and development model that will meet the schools needs and act as a framework in which to initiate and sustain school improvement.

This research provided the opportunity for me to engage with this process in a disciplined, focused and reflective way and to probe, within a critical realist paradigm, what mechanisms and causal powers were interacting at a deeper level to support or hinder development and change in the identified schools. This was of benefit to the *Learning*

*Schools Initiative* and allowed for a more in-depth investigation and analysis as well as a more rigorous documentation of the initial pilot phase. The roles of project co-ordinator and research are not at odds with each other but instead complement the GMSAF action learning approach. A challenge was being able to maintain a certain level of objectivity in documenting and reporting on the initiative, however, the GMSAF ethos of learning from mistakes supports this process.

This research is time and space bound. The *Learning Schools Initiative* continues beyond the boundaries of this study. The model applied will therefore continue to be adapted based on the continuous learning experiences of the GMSAF team and applied in different contexts.

#### **1.4 Research goals and objectives**

The aim of this study is to contribute towards an understanding of school development, as implemented by an external agency, within a South African secondary school context through investigating the key mechanisms that support and sustain this process. The research is located within a critical realist paradigm that provides for the exploration of strata of reality and issues related to structure and agency that impact on the success of a whole school evaluation and development intervention as piloted in two schools. The following goals guided this research:

- To provide an overview of the GMSAF *Learning Schools Initiative* as a whole school evaluation and development intervention with particular focus on the development, piloting and refinement process.
- To explore the extent to which school communities (particularly educators) engaged with and participated in the whole school evaluation and development process.
- To identify, explore and discuss the key mechanisms and related causal powers that contribute to whole school evaluation and development within a specific context.

In addition the findings of this research will be used to refine and mould the GMSAF *Learning Schools Initiative* model. It is also hoped that they will provide additional insight into the constraining and contributing mechanisms, associated not only with school evaluation and development, but also with the delivery of quality education and that this will be of use to other education and development agencies who aim to improve the quality of education in South African schools.

## 1.5 Overview of the thesis

Chapter two introduces the context in which this study is conducted. This chapter provides a brief historical overview of education and training in South Africa pre- and post-1994. It highlights some of the challenges involved in the transition from a segregated education system governed by the principles of apartheid to an integrated system within a new democracy that aspires towards equality of education for all learners. This includes a discussion of two primary challenges encountered, these being the move towards a decentralised education system and the development and implementation of a plethora of policies to address past education inequalities and to legislate a new outcomes-based curriculum. The chapter explores the vast amount of change that South African schools have had to adjust to and accommodate over the past decade and the impact that this change has had on schools and educators. It also considers the socio-economic context of South African schooling and the influence that factors such as unemployment, HIV/AIDS, lack of parental support, an increase in school-related violence and a breakdown in discipline have on educators and ultimately on the quality of education.

Chapter three positions the GMSAF within the broader international and national development and the South African Corporate Social Investment context. It discusses primary theories and influences of development tracking the move from a dominant economic growth perspective to a perspective that incorporates environmental and people-centred development. It also explores issues related to international aid and education development and discusses the concept of sustainable development with a particular focus on how this relates to educational development initiatives. The chapter also provides a brief overview of educational development agencies in South Africa and ends with a more in depth description of the GMSAF with a particular focus on its modus operandi and the *Learning Schools Initiative*.

Chapter four provides a synopsis of contemporary theory and research in the field of school reform. The chapter commences with a historical overview of school reform and introduces the different approaches that emerged in response to this. The chapter provides a clarification of key terminology within the field of school reform and provides an overview of the two dominant approaches within this field i.e. school effectiveness and school improvement as well as the move towards a merger of these two approaches. The roles of organisational development and change management theory are also discussed within the context of school reform. International and national literature on whole school development is discussed with a particular emphasis on school development in

developing countries. The chapter traces the history of school reform and development in South African post-1994 and highlights the findings of key school development projects in South Africa. The concept of accountability and support is discussed with reference to the National Whole School Evaluation Policy (South Africa. DoE, 2001e) and IQMS (ELRC, 2003). It is acknowledged early in this chapter that it is impossible to provide an in-depth description and discussion of the theory and research related to the key characteristics associated with effective schools and school improvement within the scope of this study. A brief synopsis of each of these characteristics is provided in which key research findings and relevant theory are highlighted and discussed.

Chapter five describes and justifies the research design decisions taken to address the primary aim and goals of this research. The chapter commences with an explanation of the process I followed to position this research within a particular ontological and epistemological framework and to select a suitable methodological approach. It provides an overview and discussion of critical realism as a theoretical framework. Central to critical realism are the concepts of generative mechanisms and causal powers and how these interact to influence different strata of reality. This chapter discusses these concepts with particular reference to the context in which they are experienced and how they are interpreted within an evaluative research approach. The difference between evaluative research within a critical realist framework and other approaches to evaluation are discussed together with the benefits of this approach. The chapter outlines the process by which the data for this study was collected, collated, analysed and interpreted as well as issues related to validity, reliability and ethics.

Chapter six provides a detailed description of the GMSAF *Learning Schools Initiative* from the time of its conceptualisation (2002) to the point of closure of this study (2006). The chapter extends the explanation of the GMSAF approach to development introduced in Chapter three and outlines the rationale for initiating a whole school development initiative. While I could perhaps have placed this chapter before Chapter four as part of the context of the study it seemed to be more appropriately placed here, as it contains some of the data of the study which is further engaged in Chapter seven. Chapter six documents the *Learning Schools Initiative* as implemented in the two pilot secondary schools. It outlines the development, piloting and refinement process followed during this period and describes the response of the two schools to various interventions as well as the rationale behind adjusting the model as the initiative progressed. The chapter provides valuable data that is incorporated in the discussion and analysis of the school development process and associated mechanisms in Chapter seven.

Chapter seven incorporates an analysis, interpretation and discussion of the data gathered throughout this research process. In keeping with a critical realist framework this analysis involves the identification of key mechanisms and related causal powers that contributed to or hindered the success of the *Learning Schools Initiative* in the two secondary schools. The relevant data is discussed within the context of each identified component and conclusions are drawn through a process of referring to all available data and reviewing supporting research and literature. I have attempted to do justice to each component within the confines of this research and to highlight where applicable the complexities of school development and change within a South African secondary school context. The interrelatedness of the various components is also highlighted and discussed with reference to the dependability of some components on others.

Chapter eight provides a brief summary of this study. Recommendations are made with specific reference to enhancing the performance of the *Learning Schools Initiative*. The implications of these recommendations and insights for other initiatives and for improving the quality of South African education generally are highlighted and discussed. A review of the research process is also undertaken in this chapter and the limitations of the study are discussed. The chapter concludes with recommendations for future research in the field of school development and transformation.

### **Concluding summary**

South Africa's unique education and training history, together with the current socio-economic context presents numerous complex challenges for any initiative aimed at improving the quality of schooling. In an attempt to develop a model that will initiate and sustain meaningful change the *Learning Schools Initiative*, and specifically the GMSAF team, has engaged with some of these challenges on an intensive level. I have been in the fortunate position as researcher to be part of a team that grapples with, reflects on and questions the reasons why things succeed or fail in an attempt to add value to the field of education development. This research provides a structured means of documenting this experience in the *Learning Schools Initiative*. The next chapter sketches the context in which this research was undertaken and highlights some of the challenges that currently influence the quality of South African schooling.

## CHAPTER TWO

### THE SOUTH AFRICAN EDUCATION CONTEXT

#### 2.1 Introduction

The legacy of the apartheid education and training system as well as the broader socio-economic conditions perpetuated by apartheid as a system of subjugation continue to impact on the quality of education and training in South Africa. The first decade of democracy in South Africa has witnessed the introduction of a vast amount of policy aimed at transforming education and training into a unified system that offers high quality relevant outcomes-based education. Schools in particular have had to engage with and implement a vast amount of policy. This policy has ranged from that of curriculum change and school governance to non-education based policy such as the Labour Relations Act (South Africa. Government, 1995a) and the Basic Conditions of Employment Act (South Africa. Government, 1997). The lack of permanency of some policy such as Curriculum 2005 (South Africa. DoE, 1997) and the continuous refinement of related policy instruments and implementation has added to many schools' inability to competently implement policy. The implementation of national policy across vastly unequal school environments has also resulted in numerous challenges for schools. It is hoped that a decentralised education system with district offices that serve communities of schools will ultimately provide the type of specific support required by schools. However, this process itself currently poses further challenges for the quality of education offered in the majority of provinces.

In addition to challenges posed by the implementation of new policy and related changes, schools are directly affected by the socio-economic contexts in which they are placed. Factors such as poverty, HIV/AIDS, violence, discipline and safety impact directly on teaching and learning. Infrastructure and resource issues, specifically the availability of classrooms, textbooks and educators, also pose problems for many South African schools.

The Eastern Cape Province, one of the poorest provinces in South Africa with the greatest number of schools, forms the backdrop for this study. This province has numerous historical and socio-economic challenges that impact directly on the quality of teaching and learning. A large amount of vacancies together with constant reshuffling of posts contributes towards the continued instability of education and training in this province.

Recent measures have been introduced to try and address some of these issues but the current environment is still under resourced.

The National Department of Education has introduced a number of policies directly related to improving schools, the professional development of educators and learner achievement. These policies are briefly introduced in this chapter as part of the national move towards a system of national and provincial accountability and quality control.

## **2.2 The historical context of apartheid education and training in South Africa pre 1994**

### **2.2.1 A segregated education and training system**

The past inequalities in South African society, especially those related to race, were particularly well depicted in the pre-1994 education and training system (King, 1998). Commencing with the Eiselen Commission (1949) and the Bantu Education Act (1953) the inequalities of apartheid society were embodied in a tightly controlled education system where different race groups received education that varied dramatically in quality (Christie, 1996). This segregation was depicted in a fragmented ministry of education with nineteen different departments responsible for different groups of racially and ethnically classified schools, as well as primarily separate paths of teacher training and development linked to financial advantage.

This racially segregated education and training system created a legacy of educational inequality for the majority of South Africans. While the compulsory registration of "African" schools resulted in an increase in the number of learners attending school there was a high drop out rate and the majority of learners in these schools did not continue beyond primary school (*ibid.*). The effects of this are seen not only in the post-apartheid unemployment rates, but also in many parents' inhibition to interact with secondary schools, participate in School Governing Bodies and to support their children's secondary school learning experiences (Grant Lewis & Motala, 2004; Fiske & Ladd, 2005; Rault-Smith, 2004).

Resistance to segregation and inequality in South African society was mirrored in the unrest and disruption in South African schools. Organised resistance to apartheid education was initiated in response to the Bantu Education Act. This resistance reached a

peak during the 1970s with events such as the May Revolt of 1972, the June 1976 Soweto Uprisings and continued through the early 1980's when nation wide school boycotts and alternative education programmes were organised. Christie (1996:259) states "one result of the continuing political protests was that there was a breakdown of learning, especially in urban and secondary schools". Schools were no longer places of teaching and learning.

### **2.2.2 The people's education movement**

The People's Education Movement (Christie, 1996; Kraak, 1999) arose in the mid-1980's in response to the inequalities and chaos of the apartheid education system. This movement, that initially originated in the form of the National Education Crisis Committee (NECC), encouraged learners to return to school and focussed on setting up structures and processes in communities so that students, teachers and parents could promote people's education. It promoted a fledgling radical pedagogy that was learner-centred student-paced and supported continuous assessment (Kraak, 1999). Eric Molobi, first General Secretary of the National Education Crisis Committee (as quoted in Levin, 1991:3), summarises the following as some of the main propositions of the people's movement:

- the democratisation of education through the participation of a cross section of the community in decision-making on the content, quality and governance of education;
- the negation of apartheid in education by making education relevant to the democratic struggles of the people;
- the achievement of a high level of education for everyone;
- the development of a critical consciousness;
- the bridging of the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical life; and
- the closing of the chasm between natural science and the humanities, and between mental and manual labour, with emphasis on worker education.

The People's Education Movement initiated the complex process of restoring the status of education and schooling in South Africa in previously disadvantaged communities. However, decades of apartheid education have impacted deeply both on society and schooling and the effects of this are still manifest in the majority of South African schools. These effects are particularly evident at a secondary school level (Christie, 1998; Schollar

& Associates, 1998) and pose additional challenges for both governmental and non-governmental school improvement initiatives.

### 2.2.3 The period of systemic discourse

As South Africa progressed towards a democratic society the People's Education was substituted by a less revolutionary more structured movement towards a new education and training system in the form of systemic discourse. This discourse evolved from a number of separate initiatives.

Two major initiatives were constituted in South Africa in the 1990's both of which impacted significantly on resulting education and training policy. These were the NECC (National Education Co-ordinating Committee), a nominal alliance of progressive education and labour stakeholders, and the NTSI (National Training Strategy Initiative), the first multipartite initiative consisting of representatives from the ANC (African National Congress), COSATU (Congress of South African Trade Unions) and the previous government regime. The NECC (National Education Co-ordinating Committee) oversaw the development of a broad values framework for the conceptualisation of democratic education policy (National Education Policy Investigation (NEPI), 1992) which emphasised "non-racism, non-sexism, democracy, equality and redress as the platform for post-apartheid education policy" (Jansen, 1999a). The NTSI (National Training Strategy Initiative) argued for an integrated framework to link vocational training and formal education. This concept was promoted in the resulting *National Training Strategy Initiative* (April 1994). The private sector in the form of the Private Sector Education Council (PRISEC) supported this perspective through a series of proposals that called for a greater emphasis on vocational and entrepreneurial training rather than formal academic education.

The unbanning of the ANC and other liberation movements in 1990 allowed these organisations to openly engage in the systemic discourse and to lay the foundation for future South African education and training policy. The ANC and COSATU supported initiatives such as the "Vocational Training Project" of NUMSA (National Union of Metal workers of South Africa) and proposed an integrated education and training system that would counter the social and economic divisions of apartheid education and training. This system was documented in the discussion document *A Framework for Lifelong Learning* (Bird & Elliot, 1993) that proposed a National Qualifications Framework that embodied principles such as integration, relevance, articulation, access, portability, and recognition

of prior learning (South Africa. Government, 1995b). This initiative was to a large degree undermined by the establishment of two separate departmental bureaucracies in the form of the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Labour following the first democratic elections in 1994.

## **2.3 Education and Training post 1994**

### **2.3.1 The introduction of a new education and training system**

The primary focus of the period immediately following the 1994 elections was that of unification and laying the legislative foundation for redress. The various departments of education were unified under one single National Department of Education. Each of the nine provinces has its own Department of Education accountable to the National Department of Education. Funding and policies promote equal education resources, opportunities and quality across the nine provinces (Fiske & Ladd, 2005). The Constitution of South Africa (South Africa. Government, 1996b) came into operation in February 1997 and provides the backdrop and touchstone for all South African policy (Oosthuizen, 2003). The political culture of stakeholder representation and participation in the development of new policy was a key government priority (Kraak & Young, 2001). The movement to integrate and reform the inequalities of the past education and training system resulted in a plethora of policies such as the *White Paper on Education and Training of 1995* (South Africa. DoE, 1995), the *National Education Policy Act* (South Africa. Government, 1996a), the *South African Schools Act* (South Africa. Government, 1996c), and *Curriculum 2005* (South Africa. DoE, 1997). In addition to education parliamentary legislation aimed specifically at education and training, schools also had to operate within the boundaries of general parliamentary legislation (Oosthuizen, *ibid.*).

The South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) Act of 1995 introduced a new role player in the education and training environment in the form of the South African Qualifications Authority (South Africa. Government, 1995b). This authority was established to oversee the implementation of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF). The *White paper on Education and Training* (South Africa. DoE, 1995) together with the *South African Qualifications Act* (South Africa. Government, 1995b) and resulting outcomes-based education approach to qualification design embody international qualification framework trends and are one indication of the integration of global influences in South African education and training systems (Jansen, 1999). Other

international influences are seen in the introduction of the *Whole School Evaluation Policy* (South Africa. DoE, 2001d) developed in consultation with United Kingdom experts (Griffiths, 2003).

Chisholm (2004) states that although South Africa's transition to democracy occurred at a time when the Washington Consensus was breaking down this nevertheless also had an influence on initial post 1994 policy. With the move towards a post-Washington consensus the role of markets and the state were seen to be more complementary, however "its policy principles continue to be based on those of neoclassical economics and the methodological individualism of mainstream economics, which pays scant attention to the complexities of social and historical context and consequences of market processes" (Fine, 2001, as quoted in Chisholm, 2004:4). Similarly the emphasis of a human capital approach, which highlights a strong link between economic growth and education, is promoted in the policy that emerged in the initial transition towards a more democratic and economically empowered society.

Unterhalter (2003:8) describes the human capital as a framework where there is "a narrow conception of the contribution of education to a limited range of indirect benefits for individuals, for example improving production, or family income over generations". The human capital framework, like that of capability which widens the scope of the impact of education to include "enhancing well-being and freedom of individuals and peoples, improving economic production and influencing social change" (Sen, 1999, as cited in Unterhalter, 2003:8) is problematic in that it fails to examine broader issues of inequality and difference within the education system.

Chisholm (2004) proposes the notion of education as a "system of provision" as an alternative approach to analysing the complexities of economic, social, political and cultural relations that impact on and exist with education and particularly schooling. This approach differs from human capital theory in that it focuses on concepts of class, power conflict and equality (Chisholm, 2004). The examination of the interplay of these concepts within the historical and current context of education and training in South Africa is critical to understanding many of the current developments and logjams within this system.

### **2.3.2 The introduction of new education and training policy**

The "first wave" of policy reform in South Africa, while providing a foundation for the type of education and training system envisioned, has also proved to be a learning curve in

terms of policy design and implementation (Kraak, 1999; Kraak & Young, 2001). Reasons for problems with implementation have been levelled at policy from a number of perspectives. Criticism of some policy (such as Curriculum 2005) has been based on the premise that it is fundamentally flawed and pedagogically unsound (Jansen, 2001; Muller 2001). Rensburg (2001), Cosser (2001) and Macun (2001) accept the departure point for the design of policy, stating that it is in keeping with international trends, but identify issues of implementation to do with capacity and a lack of leadership at national, provincial and institutional levels as being responsible for policy failing to be actualised in certain contexts.

Kraak & Young (2001:4) stated that while much of the policy resulting from the first wave of policy reform was the result of visionary and "somewhat utopian" debate "all had to face the enormous practical difficulties of implementing radical change". While policy can be interpreted as political symbolism that "establishes the credentials of the new system required for an overarching symbolic discourse about transformation" (Jansen, 2001:50), interpreting how policy filters down to schools within a "system of provision" approach raises key questions and issues regarding implementation success to date.

Concern has particularly been expressed about the lack of appropriate capacity to manage the education system (South Africa. DoE, 2001a). While both the Provincial Review Report (1996) and the Education Sector Review (1998) recognise that considerable progress has been made since 1994, concern has been expressed about "serious managerial dysfunctions, poor performance and systemic inefficiencies" (South Africa. DoE, 2001a:2). In the case of the Eastern Cape Province these issues were of such major concern that the President appointed an Interim Management Team to investigate the situation and to develop an interim management strategy for the province (Interim Management Team (IMT) Report, May 2003) (see 2.5.1). In 2001 the Minister of Education recommended that links between national and provincial legislatures and Members of the Provincial Executive Councils responsible for education be strengthened in an attempt to create a link between national norms and standards and implementation (delivery) on the other (South Africa. DoE, 2001a). The degree to which the plethora of policies have been successfully realised within the South African education system needs to be analysed within broader political, social and economic contexts. Furthermore issues relating to culture and class need to be included in this analysis (Chisholm, 2004).

This mismatch between policy intention and implementation is further challenged by the fact that the core education and training policy and related norms and standards are

developed at a National level with a National agenda. While Section 43 of the South African Constitution gives provincial legislatures the authority to promulgate provincial legislation on education issues specific to the province (Oosthuizen, 2003), the policy essentials are set nationally. The National Educational Policy Act (South Africa, DoE, 1996c) gives the Minister of Education the power to determine national norms and standards for educational planning, provision, governance, monitoring and evaluation. Provincial ministers or members of the Executive Council can develop legislation in the form of regulations and proclamations regarding the implementation in their specific context. At a micro level schools have the authority to develop and enforce subordinate legislation such as a code of conduct for learners (Oosthuizen, *ibid.*).

While the centralisation of policy and decentralisation of education presents a number of dichotomies, this is not unique to South Africa. Hopkins (2001b:3) says a "general strategy has been to centralise education policy while at the same time placing the responsibility for implementation on this school. This tension has made the task of implementing change both complex and challenging. The balancing of centrally directed change and locally developed improvement has proved most difficult to achieve in practice". Hopkins (2001b) also speaks of the "policy endemic" of the past decade where international educational systems have tended to review policy based on international trends. This has especially been the case in South Africa where the move to a new democracy entailed the radical transformation of the previous education and training system.

In keeping with one of the key commitments of the National Education Policy Act (South Africa, Government, 1996a) attempts have been made at a national policy design level to include and consult with stakeholders from all provinces and relevant education and training organisations. This however seldom translates into reality and national policy is often far removed from the needs and resources of rural communities (Grant Lewis & Motala, 2004). Kraak & Young (2001) state that while the inclusion of stakeholders in policy development has strong ideological roots there is a need to develop "a different political culture" that focuses on developing the capabilities of those both designing and implementing education policy (p.3). The complexities of stakeholder representivity and involvement have resulted in the diminution of stakeholder participation in the design of various policies (Sieborger, 1997). The National Department of Education's report on *Education change and transformation in South Africa* states, "intensified and extensive training are necessary (which in turn require resources and support), as is time ... one concern is the shortage of strong social movements in communities and civil society which

could strengthen participation in governance” (South Africa. DoE, 2001a:3). This is reiterated in the Nelson Mandela Foundation report, *Emerging Voices* (2005).

### 2.2.3 The implementation of policy at a school level

Thus while policies can “establish a new *macro* framework or system of education and training as the goal and a vision to inform and shape future practice and policy ... such a framework is not something that can be put in place in the short term” (Kraak & Young, 2001:4). The sheer volume of policy that has been generated since 1994 that directly or indirectly affects schools is in itself a problem. Schools barely have the opportunity to digest one policy before they are faced with another (Davidoff & Lazarus, 2002). The replacement of “flawed” policy with new policy during a relatively short time period has also resulted in much confusion linked to the need for training and retraining of educators and principals (Davidoff & Lazarus, 2002; Du Plooy, 2003). Each new policy involves the introduction of a new set of norms, standards, procedures, systems, interactions, tasks or responsibilities particularly at a school level all of which require a large amount of time and commitment from school stakeholders (Jansen, 1999b; Delta Foundation, 2002).

While Curriculum 2005 and the Revised GET (Grades R-9) National Curriculum Statement have had a significant impact on secondary schools both in terms of implementation and effects, the introduction of a new Further Education and Training National Curriculum Statement (NCS) in 2006 poses a serious challenge for most secondary schools. The introduction of new subjects and scrapping of old together with a complete revision of certain subjects means that many educators will have to be retrained and teachers may have to move to different schools. This curriculum, like the Revised GET (Grades R-9) National Curriculum Statement requires that teachers adopt an outcomes-based approach, something that many FET teachers will not have been previously exposed to. Again the introduction of this new curriculum will require a substantial amount of training, retraining, support and resources – ideally provided by the Department of Education. In addition to curriculum policy, the implementation of other policies such as the *policy on the management of drug abuse by learners in public and independent schools and further education and training institutions* (South Africa. DoE, 2002) and the *national policy on HIV/AIDS for learners and educators in public schools, and students and educators in FET institutions* (South Africa. DoE, 1999) remain a challenge for most historically disadvantaged schools. National Initiatives such as the safe schools project are also slow to roll out into some provinces (South Africa. DoE,

2004a) and where material is provided it is sometimes not followed up by additional support and training.

According to Chisholm (2004) the initial phase of policy implementation and education reform in South Africa has tended to favour an "expanding, racially-mixed middle class" (p.7). Christie (1999) supported this and stated that "the sophistication of the policies brings the unintended effect that they are likely to be of most benefit to those communities and schools that have the resources to take advantage of the opportunities they offer ... for under-resourced communities and, these policies may produce the opposite effect, acting as extra burdens rather than opportunities for improvement" (p.282). This was particularly seen in the hasty introduction of Curriculum 2005, which presented a situation in direct contradiction to government emphasis on service delivery to the poorest citizens (Mbeki, 1999 & 2000).

Kalloway, (1998) on writing about rural development as a national agenda, raised concern that policy making has tended to neglect the specific interests of the rural poor in favour of market-related policy development that is contrary to redress and equity. He quotes (p.22) a World Bank study by Kevin Cleaver (1997), which highlights that, the "poorest of the poor are often ignored in development programmes". The implementation of outcomes-based education in this context becomes a particular concern where historically and economically many parents are not in a position to support learning and education funds distribution does not as yet compensate for inadequate resources (Fiske & Ladd, 2005).

This situation is complicated by the tendency on the part of some schools to ignore or disregard new education policy (or aspects of policy). The reasons for this include ignorance, lack of motivation (Davidoff et al, 1994; Davidoff & Lazarus, 2002; Delta Foundation, 2002a; ELRC, 2005), resistance from teacher unions (Govender, 2004; Oliphant & Tyatya, 2004) resentfulness towards more change, a sense of being overwhelmed by the volume of policy as well as lack of knowledge (or guidelines) on how to practically implement certain policies or their required changes (Davidoff & Lazarus, 2002; Grant Lewis & Motola, 2004; Harley & Timm, 1998; Harley & Wedekind, 2004; King, 1998). Jansen (2001) is also cynical of the ability of the majority of schools to effectively interpret, adapt and apply new curriculum policy. Although he concedes that in some instances education policies can result in some degree of positive change within the education system, he interprets these changes as not only being the work of government

but essentially the outcome of resulting debate (in this instance pedagogic). In general change is more evident in well-resourced schools.

On an international front Hopkins (2001b) is of the opinion that policy driven educational reform is not even having the desired impact on better-resourced schools in the United Kingdom especially with regards to systemic reform in the form of improvement of learner achievement

#### **2.2.4 The move towards a decentralised education system**

A centralised approach to policy design is juxtaposed by the adoption of an international trend, with a strong social capital (World Bank, 20 September 2004) emphasis, towards a decentralised education system (Coombe & Godden, 1996) to support the institutionalisation and implementation of policy. The Department of Education District Offices created in this system are established to provide service and support schools as they move towards becoming fully functional self-managing organisations. The reality, however, is that schools are finding themselves in a situation where they desperately need support from the Department of Education to deal with the complexity of the challenges that face them, but this support is not forthcoming. The *Report of the Public Hearing on the Right to Basic Education* (HRC, 2006:44) emphatically states that “many district office officials are not rendering adequate support at a local level” and that this means that policies at a national level are not transformed into reality at a school level. The report further expresses concern at the lack of adequate monitoring systems within the Department of Education to ensure that quality education is being delivered. Mseleku, previous Director General of the National Department of Education, highlighted the need for District Offices to be crucial agencies in the implementation and sustainability of strategies aimed at “improving education through teacher development interventions, school leadership development and whole school development” (as quoted in Fleish, 2004:3). Most of these strategies are driven by national initiatives and grounded in policy. In essence one of the major current dichotomies facing the majority of South African schools is that of greater central accountability versus increased demands for schools to be self-managing and ultimately self-reliant institutions (Fleisch, *ibid.*).

While a decentralised model of education (see 2.2.2) is often motivated by economic and political aims (Grant Lewis & Motala, 2004) it generally has the altruistic aim of more participatory democracy, populist localism and pedagogical professionalism (Lauglo, 1996). If not supported with sufficient resources and training ,however, decentralisation,

especially initially, can be particularly problematic for historically disadvantaged schools (Grant Lewis & Motala, 2004). Mseleku, (as quoted in Fleisch, 2003:3) reaffirmed the current inability of district offices to support schools when he stated that while “there is growing recognition that district offices are key to the implementation of policies aimed at large scale systemic transformation in the schooling system ...many district offices are still unable to fulfil their core functions due to lack of skills or personnel, or though lack of access funds”. In addition to resources to support decentralisation Grant Lewis & Motala (2004:134) in their research into “educational de/centralisation” saw the current South African approach as primarily involving structural change that neglected important issues such as process and values. In their view current government research investigated whether policy was being implemented as intended but failed to question the appropriateness of centrally designed policy for all contexts and communities.

Thus while the Department of Education grapples with the practicalities of decentralisation, schools find themselves having to deal with the majority of the current challenges with which they are faced with their own resources and support. Again it is obvious that more resourced schools will cope better in this situation while schools that serve poorer communities and do not have sufficient financial and human resources will lag even further behind their counterparts.

## **2.4 Factors that impact on the quality of South African schooling**

### **2.4.1 The long-term impact of political instability**

Schollar and Associates (1998:10) in a study conducted for the Equip Project state that in many urban secondary schools order and personal responsibility have been compromised by “previous years of political instability”. Similarly in her research following the 1994 elections Pam Christie (1998 & 2001) documents that there is a “prominent and problematic legacy of apartheid education in South Africa which is commonly termed the breakdown of the culture of teaching and learning” (Christie, 1998:283). Her findings confirm Schollar & Associates and indicate that this is more prevalent in “secondary schools located in the poor and disrupted communities spawned by apartheid” (*ibid.*). According to Christie (1998:283) this “breakdown” takes the form of “disputed and disrupted authority relations between principals, teachers and students; sporadic and broken attendance by students and often teachers; general demotivation and low morale of students and teachers (see 7.2.3); poor school results; conflicts and often violence in

and around schools; vandalism, criminality, gangsterism, rape, and substance abuse and school facilities in a general poor state of repair”.

Meerkotter (1998:50–51) describes South African schools as triply disadvantaged. Firstly through the long, difficult years of struggle of liberation against a very powerful white minority regime, which often resulted in feelings of despair and hopelessness. “Secondly, schools were, correctly, viewed by students and teachers as instruments of ideological oppression,” and thirdly through political unrest during the period of 1990–1994. He states that therefore while “much of the blame has to be put at the doorstep of the previous apartheid regime it would be misleading not to look at the negative effects of struggle for liberation as well” (Meerkotter, 1998:53). Apartheid education linked to South Africa’s liberation struggle has created a critical problem in the capacity of historically disadvantaged schools to deal with their current circumstances (Kalloway, 2002).

#### **2.4.2 Socio-economic challenges**

Internationally schools are faced by many challenges. Senge et al (2000) go as far as to say that schools face a unique set of pressures these days that are unknown to any other type of organisation. He highlights that in developing countries this is even more so where “schools are increasingly expected to compensate for the shifts in society and family that affect children: changes in family structures, rapidly shifting trends in television and popular culture, commercialisation without end, poverty (and the inadequate nutrition and health care that go with it), violence, child abuse, teenage pregnancy, substance abuse, and incessant social upheaval” (Senge et al., 2000:10).

Historical and current socio-economic issues impact directly on South African education and pose complex challenges for schools in historically disadvantaged communities. Research into these schools indicates that school reform and development in South Africa is a highly complex process challenged by issues of extreme poverty, violent crime, disintegration of family support structures, non-governance, lack of motivation of many teaching professionals, and lack of systemic support for the improvement of the quality of schooling (Christie, 2001; Davidoff, Kaplan & Lazarus, 1994; Delta Foundation, 2002a; Moloi, 2002; Schollar & Associates, 1998; Taylor, Muller & Vinjevold, 2003). The *Report of the Public Hearing on the Right to Basic Education* (HRC, 2006) supports these findings and further highlights issues such as children infected and affected by HIV/AIDS and infrastructure as areas that need urgent attention if the right to basic education is

going to be honoured in South Africa. The results of the School Register of Needs (SRN) 2000 survey reported that infrastructure remains a problem and that schools in many parts of South Africa were still “haunted by the legacy of disparities – large classes, inadequate or no resources, and a large number of schools that were accessible only by footpath” (cited in South Africa. DoE, 2003:1). The survey also reported a decline in the number of schools with buildings in an “excellent and good” condition and an increase in the number of schools with “weak and very weak” buildings.

Poverty has resulted not only in parents not being able to pay schools fees that are very much needed by schools, but also in many learners (both primary and secondary) not receiving sufficient nourishment and health care (Delta Foundation, 2004; Delta Foundation/NMMU Department of Social Development study, 2005; HRC, 2006). Harber & Davies (1997) state that while previously just feeding was a concern in South African schools now infestations of tapeworm and other health issues also have to be addressed.

The increase of reported incidents related to violence in schools has been highlighted by a number of sources. *The Report of the Public Hearing on the Right to Basic Education* (HRC, 2006:22) expresses concern that schools are no longer experienced as safe environments in that the high level of violence experienced in South Africa spills over into classrooms and playgrounds. Of particular concern is the high level of abuse of learners by educators and learners by learners. The high level of violence was also reflected in the media. The following are some of the articles that appeared during the latter part of 2006 alone: *Pupil violence makes war zones of schools* (Govender, 2006), *School violence reflection of society not poor curriculum* (Enoch, 2006), *Alarm rises over increase in child-on-child sexual abuse* (3 June 2006), *Pupils are out of control say desperate teachers* (Hayward, 2006), and *Teen fights for his life after school stabbing* (Jack, 2006). Carte Blanche, a documentary based programme, also highlighted the increasing level of violence in South African schools during 2006 (Barry, 2006). The introduction of legislation that prevents corporal punishment in schools without the subsequent training and equipping of educators and schools in alternative discipline methods and options has also left them feeling frustrated and disempowered (*Department should lead way to school discipline*, 2006).

### 2.4.3 Educator challenges

One of the most serious challenges that South African schools face is the looming educator shortage. The Ministerial Committee on Teacher Education estimates that the higher education system produces 5000 educators annually whereas the estimated attrition rate of 5% (17000) far exceeds this (Morrow, 2004). These statistics are supported in Fiske & Ladd's (2005) research. Both of these sources highlight the fact that they have not taken the impact of HIV/AIDS into consideration but estimate that this will result in a further increase in the number of South African educators leaving the profession in years to come. A report commissioned by the ELRC (Phurutse, 2005) which surveyed 21 358 teachers in more than 1700 randomly selected schools indicates that more than half of South Africa's teachers intend leaving the profession. The report cites low morale (see 7.2.3), job dissatisfaction, HIV/AIDS and the premature mortality rate as reasons for the decline in educators over the period 1997-2004. In addition educators listed reasons such as inadequate remuneration, increased workload, lack of career development and professional recognition, dissatisfaction with work policies, job security, violence in schools, and lack of choice about where they work as reasons for wanting to leave the profession (*ibid.*). Linked to this stress is identified as one of the dominant reasons for the high rate of educator leave of absence (Haywood, 2006). The *Report of the Public Hearing on the Basic Right to Education* (HRC, 2006:26) estimates that by 2008 it is estimated that there will be a projected shortfall of between 32 000 and 34 000 educators in South Africa. If the initiatives that are currently underway to address this have some impact the best scenario still indicates a shortfall of 15 000 educators (*ibid.*). In addition this report highlighted that 30 000 educators in South Africa are still estimated to be unqualified.

Teacher Unions have also identified the impact of HIV/AIDS as having a noticeable impact on the high number of educators leaving the profession (Govender, 2004). The role of educators has broadened significantly with the introduction of new policy which defines seven different roles for educators and which includes a "community, citizenship and pastoral role" (South Africa. DoE, 2000b). The educator performance measurement component of the Integrated Quality Management System (ELRC, 2004)(see 4.8.4 and 6.5.2.5) not only provides criteria for assessing the educator's role in the classroom, but also their role in school development. The impact of decentralisation together with the socio-economic challenges facing schools has also resulted in a challenging role for principals. A survey conducted by Johan Crous, a principal in Cape Town, indicated that twenty-one percent of the principals interviewed were suffering from depression. When

discussing the reasons for depression one principal responded by saying the following “you have to be a detective, you have to be a lawyer, you have to be a financial expert, you have to be a psychologist, you have to be everything” (Edmunds, 2002:1).

#### **2.4.4 Learners infected and affected by HIV/AIDS**

The impact of HIV/AIDS not only on educators but also on learners has become another factor that requires both the Department of Education and schools to develop new coping mechanisms to deal with the resulting challenges (Fiske & Ladd, 2005; Phurutse, 2005). The *Education Change and Transformation in South Africa Review 1994 – 2001* published by the Department of Education (South Africa. DoE, 2001a) identifies a number of direct results of HIV/AIDS on the South African education system these include: the increase in drop-out rates due to poverty, illness, lack of motivation and trauma as well as absenteeism among children who are care-givers or heads of households, those who help to supplement family income, and those who are ill, is likely to increase. As the proportion of potential parents decreases there is also likely to be a decline in school enrolment rates. The report also raises concern about orphaned children who need education and the housing of these children, an issue which the Novalis Institute in Cape Town (2003) is investigating and which Fiske & Ladd (2005:199) anticipate will place severe stress on schools. The findings of the *Report of the Public Hearing on the Right to Basic Education* (HRC, 2006) state that policy related to HIV/AIDS makes very little difference in the lives of learners who experience the lived reality of HIV/AIDS and that South African education needs to display sufficient adaptability to cope with this reality.

#### **2.4.5 Parental support for education**

Harber & Davis (1997) state that research on the role of education in developing countries indicates that the quality of schooling in these countries plays a large role in terms of learner achievement as compared to that of “developed” countries. They refer to research in developing countries which indicates that “few parents are able to provide *cultural capital* to their children in coping with the demands of school” (Harper & Davis, 1997:37). In South Africa, especially schools in historically disadvantaged communities, therefore have to ensure maximum input into teaching and learning in addition to having to compensate for factors such as those listed by Senge et al. (2000). The role of the school becomes more prominent in the light of disintegrating family structures as well as low literacy and general education rates amongst many parents (Fiske & Ladd, 2005). These

influence the extent to which they can support learning, particularly at a secondary school level (see 2.2.), and especially outcomes-based learning. There has recently also been a move by the Department of Education through initiatives such as the *Saamtrek: values, education and democracy in the 21<sup>st</sup> century conference* (2001) and the *manifesto on values, education and democracy* (2001) to emphasise the role that education should play in promoting values to learners (South Africa. DoE, 2001c; 2001d). In many ways schools in historically disadvantaged communities are expected to compensate for what is not provided or reinforced at home.

#### **2.4.6 Learner employability and repetition**

Meerkotter (1998); Sterling & Davidoff (2000) and Fiske & Ladd (2005) identify lack of job prospects on completion of school as a factor that contributes to learner hopelessness and lack of motivation which can be linked to lack of interest and discipline amongst secondary school learners. Sterling & Davidoff (2000:3) state that "socio-economic conditions in South Africa also impact on the school in many different ways ... perhaps the worst is that few students can expect to be employed after they have completed their studies. This contributes to a feeling of despondency and demotivation amongst students, who often express their frustration through absenteeism, a lack of commitment to their own education, or other forms of negative behaviour". This may also contribute to the high level of drop out rate amongst learners after Grade 9 (Rault-Smith, 2004). Fiske & Ladd's (2005) research shows that while there is a high level of learner enrolment in South African primary schools this decreases dramatically at a high school level. They also raise concern over the number of learners repeating grades within the system especially at a secondary school level and query the relationship between this and the national focus on matric results in that there is evidence that schools retain learners at the lower grades so that they can ultimately achieve better matric results (Fiske & Ladd, 2005; Taylor, 2007 (forthcoming)).

### **2.5 The Eastern Cape education context**

#### **2.5.1 The state of education in the Eastern Cape**

The Eastern Cape has been identified by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Country Cooperation Framework as being one of the poorest provinces in South Africa (Eastern Cape Department of Education, 2002). The socio-economic factors

discussed in 2.4. are escalated in the Eastern Cape, especially in rural areas, and complicated by the lack of management and delivery capacity in some government departments (IMT Report, 2003). The Eastern Cape has also faced the immense challenge of integrating the homelands into new educational structures. In addition during the period 1995–2004 the Eastern Cape was a “revolving door for heads of education” (Fiske & Ladd, 2005:76). Instances of non-delivery, nepotism and corruption in this department have been reported in both local and national media (Fiske & Ladd, 2005). The deployment of officials to the Eastern Cape by the national government in 2003 provides an indication of the severity of the problems affecting this province at a top managerial level. This national intervention resulted in the formation of two integrated structures (i) a Joint Management Team (JMT) which assumed control over the Department of Education, and (ii) an Interim Management Team (IMT) which co-ordinated and directed the activities in the four Departments (education, health, public works and roads, and social development) (Edley, 2004).

In his 2004 Annual Report to the Eastern Cape Minister the previous Superintendent General of the Eastern Cape Department of Education, Dr Dave Edley, stated that despite all odds the Eastern Cape Department of Education managed to meet its infrastructure project targets and the results of the senior certificate exams increased to a provincial average of just over 60%. He, however, highlighted a number of issues affecting the ability the department to perform. These included the lack of permanent appointments at a senior official and management level as well as budget constraints related to the JMT to settle previous debts.

### **2.5.2 Infrastructure and material resource challenges**

The Eastern Cape is the province with the highest number of schools in South Africa. These schools are spread over a wide geographical area that includes both urban and rural environments each with its unique set of contextual challenges. According to the School Register of Needs (Bot, 2001) in 2000 the Eastern Cape had 6260 schools. Research conducted by Fiske & Ladd (2005:91) indicates that the Eastern Cape had a total of 2103913 learners enrolled in schools (primary, secondary and intermediate) across the province in 2001. In 2000 more than 40 percent of the Eastern Cape schools did not have basic amenities such as telephones, water or electricity, 19 percent did not have toilets, 90 percent did not have library facilities and 95 percent did not have

computers (Bot, 2001). Schools also reported and protested against lack of delivery of textbooks and other teaching and learning resources (Fiske & Ladd, 2005).

### 2.5.3 Human resource and school support challenges

While research indicates that the Eastern Cape Province has a 1.35 ratio of educators to learners the reality is that non-teaching or absent principals are included as educators and “disarray in the Eastern Cape Department of Education has led to ‘double-parking’ of teacher slots; that is, some schools are hiring new teachers before excess teachers in other schools are actually laid off” (Fiske & Ladd, 2005:126). A further influencing factor is the shortage of physical classrooms especially in rural Eastern Cape primary schools which results in a dramatic increase in the number of learners per class (*ibid.*). The process of redeployment to “even out” the learner to educator ratio across the province has also caused unhappiness in school communities and amongst educators and has resulted in an undersupply of matric educators to some schools. In addition projections of the impact of HIV/AIDS on the teaching profession estimate that the Eastern Cape teaching profession and schooling system will be one of the provinces most affected by this epidemic (Fiske & Ladd, 2005:199). In their current research into the Eastern Cape education environment Fiske & Ladd (2005) highlight that it is not only the shortage of educators that is problematic, but the high number of underqualified educators is also a significant problem (see 2.2.1). This is aggravated by the introduction of new learning areas and subjects by the new GET and FET National Curriculum Statements.

The introduction of a decentralised education model has resulted in the creation of twenty four District Offices to manage identified areas in the province (Fiske & Ladd, 2005). While it is hoped that decentralisation will ultimately result in the specific needs of communities being addressed and in more immediate and personalised delivery in the long term, this system presently has its own challenges. In addition a constantly changing organogram, with related threats of redeployment of district officials, impacts on stability and makes it difficult for district officials to settle into posts and receive training for specific positions.

Edley reports that in 2004 a new organisational structure was introduced but never fully implemented as it was disputed by the South African Union of teachers (SADTU). As a result of this the process of person to post matching could not be completed (Edley, 2004) leaving many human resource issues in limbo. He further states that high vacancy rates in both Districts and Head Office especially in the areas of finance and human resource management have resulted in personnel-related backlogs which were eventually paid

resulting in over expenditure. The Eastern Cape Province's education problems were highlighted at a conference hosted by the South African Teachers' Union in 2005 where it was stated that "among the department's problems are a crippling 60 per cent vacancy rate at a managerial level, inadequate funding and, until recently, uncontrolled spending" (The Herald, 27 April 2005). At this conference Edley outlined items of the strategy developed by the Joint Management Team to address critical areas of overspending as well as staff instability and shortfall. These included the secondment of a Human Resource Chief from the Gauteng education department, the appointment and training of sufficient subject advisors and the creation of a staff training college.

## **2.6 A whole school evaluation and development approach**

In 2001 the National Department of Education launched a national policy on Whole School Evaluation (South Africa. DoE, 2001e). This policy builds on the *Implementation Plan for Tirisano (January 2000 to December 2004)* (South Africa. DoE, 2000a) programme of school effectiveness and educator professionalism and together with the Developmental Appraisal for Educators is aimed at "improving the overall quality of education in South African schools" and strives to improve "school performance through approaches characterised by partnership, collaboration, mentoring and guidance" (South Africa. DoE, 2001e:1). The National Whole School Evaluation Policy together with the Developmental Appraisal System and the Performance Measurement System form part of the Integrated Quality Management System (ELRC, 2003), which has as its goal the overall improvement of teaching and learning in South African schools. A Directorate of Quality Assurance has been established within the National Department of Education to oversee the dual processes of Whole School and Systemic Evaluation. Systemic evaluation is based on learner achievement and focuses on the national assessment of learners literacy, numeracy and lifeskills levels at identified stages of the education process (i.e. Grade 3, 6, 9 and 12).

While the National Whole School Evaluation Policy provides the external impetus for school development, various governmental and non-governmental initiatives are working in different provinces in an attempt to initiate and sustain school improvement processes within schools. The aim of both the externally driven policy and various development initiatives is to provide the framework and processes to assist schools to become quality centres of teaching and learning despite the many historical and socio-economic challenges that they face. This study explores such an initiative (see Chapter six) and

documents the nuances and complexities of whole school development within the context of the South African education and training environment.

## 2.7 Concluding summary

In light of the above, the many challenges that contemporary South African schools face on the journey to become self-managing organisations that deliver high quality teaching and learning cannot be underplayed. In addition to internationally shared problems South African schools have unique problems that they have to deal with from a position of previous disadvantage within an unsettled policy environment. Less resourced schools, particularly those that serve poor urban and rural communities, are struggling to cope with the immensity of change and challenge.

The intention of this chapter was not to sketch the South African education and training environment as being fraught with challenges that are insurmountable, but rather to highlight the extent and complex nature of the South African education and training context. Internationally schools are bombarded with change (see 4.12). South African schools have to deal with these changes within the historical context of apartheid and the long-term damage inflicted by such a system.

However, despite a rather bleak past and complex future there is evidence to suggest that with the right leadership, support and circumstances South African schools can become fully functional centres of learning (Christie, 2001; Davidoff & Lazarus, 2002). Christie (2001:1) describes the characteristics of what she terms "resilient" schools that obtain high standards despite their circumstances and challenges (see 4.8.3). Further examples of this resilience and proactivity can be seen in the South African video-production, *Achieving out of the Dust: School Communities Making Things Happen* (Delta Foundation, Shuttleworth Foundation & National Department of Education, 2004). The dynamics of what makes school development succeed or fail is explored in more detail in this research with a particular focus on two schools within the context of a specific whole school development initiative. Chapter three provides an overview of the international and national development context in which this research is situated. It discusses different approaches to development and refers to international and national education projects. It situates the GMSAF within this field and discusses its development approach and initiatives with particular focus on the *Learning Schools Initiative*.

## CHAPTER THREE

# DEVELOPMENT APPROACHES AND INTERVENTIONS

### 3.1 Introduction

This research examines a corporate affiliated, non-governmental development organisation's intervention in two pilot secondary schools. Chapter two outlines the historical and socio-economic context in which this research takes place and provides a basis for understanding some of the nuances of school development in South Africa and more specifically Port Elizabeth (Nelson Mandela Bay). This intervention, however, also needs to be positioned within the broader international and national development context and within the South African Corporate Social Investment context. It is not possible to conduct an in-depth exploration of the fields of development and corporate social investment in this study. This chapter therefore provides an overview of development at an international level and traces the move from a dominant economic growth perspective to a broader perspective that incorporates environmental and people-centred development. It also discusses some of the different approaches to development highlighting key issues such as the international move towards adopting a basic needs approach that focuses on poverty alleviation goals. Sustainability, as a concept that moves beyond mere environmental sustainability to a more generalised sustainability of development initiatives, is of critical concern to most development agencies and is discussed in this chapter. The move towards an emphasis on social capital as opposed to human capital by many development agencies is also discussed within this context. The focus on a basic needs approach and social capital has resulted in a decrease of expenditure on education interventions by development agencies on an international level. However, in South Africa many agencies, specifically those that form part of the Corporate Social Investment sector, continue to invest substantially in improving education in South Africa. While it is not possible to discuss all such interventions, this chapter briefly outlines the agencies and interventions that have published books and/or reports on their initiatives, or which are commonly referred to in South African school development literature (see 4.8.2).

This chapter focuses on the GM South Africa Foundation, the development arm of the motorcar manufacturer GM South Africa, which is the implementing agency of the *Learning Schools Initiative*. It describes and positions the GMSAF and its initiatives (projects) within the international and national development context and describes the GMSAF's corporate

social action approach that is centred on developing and replicating development models to address development logjams.

### **3.2. The concept of development**

The term development is applied in a variety of different contexts often with different nuances of meaning. Within the field of development studies, development is seen to be the achievement of economic growth linked to improved living standards (Clark, 1991). At a most quantifiable level it is defined as the increase in a country's Gross National Product (GNP) which is seen to be directly linked to the measurement of a country's human, natural and institutional resources. However, recognition that there has not been any definable long term change based on this narrow definition of development has resulted in the move towards a broader interpretation of development. There has also been a move in thinking away from viewing the end goal of development as modernisation and towards more intangible concepts such as empowerment (Corbridge, 1995) as well as a more people-orientated interpretation (Swanepoel, 2000). Clark (1990) proposes that at its broadest level development can be defined as a process, rather than a statistic or weighted measure, aimed at "improving society" and "enabling people to achieve their aspirations" (p.22). Harber & Davis (1997) support this definition in stating that development is not necessarily an either/or but that there might not only be a continuum of development but also a number of different continua and interpretations.

Haines (2004) states that whereas previously development was viewed as progress, especially in economic terms, towards the closing decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century definitions of development took more "explicit cognisance of human empowerment and environmental concerns" (p.9). He, however, cautions that despite the broadening of what development means the central pillar by which development is measured by First world countries remains that of economic growth.

Despite debates regarding what progress implies and what areas qualify as important progress indicators there is a general consensus that development implies various degrees of change (Clark, 1990; Haines, 2004; Swanepoel, 2000). There is also growing awareness of the complexities of the development process. Swanepoel (2000:71) highlights this when he says that because development is about people "it is cloaked in uncertainty – the uncertainty of changing circumstances, changing experiences, changing needs, and eventually changing people". The development process also involves no givens in that it is based on action hypothesis, experimentation and continuous learning at all levels

(Swanepoel, 2000). Bernstein, Berger & Godsell (2000) draw a distinction between "good" and "bad" development. "Bad" development is synonymous with pure economic growth where as "good" development is when "increasingly large numbers of people experience a dramatic upturn in their own or (at worst) their children's standard of living" (p. 15).

This thinking is extended into the overarching field of school development (see 4.5) where issues of quantifiable indicators of development, the process of development, the centrality of people to the process as well as the complexity of change all form part of the debate and discussion. Hopkins (1996) states that development and change are inextricably linked. While school development tends to focus on organisational change and transformation – this happens within a wider socio-economic and political context (see Chapter two). This context which is itself part of the broader development environment also impacts on the school development process. The relationship between these two environments is seen in Hopkins' (1996) definition that school development is "the process through which schools adapt external changes to internal purpose" (p.33). The process of school development and related concepts and influences is discussed further in Chapter four.

### **3.3 Terminology related to development role players**

Various publications tend to use different terminology to describe the various role players in the development field. Some refer to the "North" versus the "South" (Clark, 1991; King & Buchert 1999), others make reference to the "First" versus the "Third" world (Coetzee, Graaf, Hendricks & Wood, 2001; Corbridge, 1995; De Beer & Swanepoel, 2000) while others refer to "developed" versus "developing" countries (Haines 2004). Some publications make use of a combination of these terms depending on the historical context and origin of the discussion (Haines 2004). Each of these classifications has different connotations and can be criticised at various levels. The terms "First" and "Third" world countries are used in the discussion that follows except where different terms are applied by the authors and developed in their arguments.

### **3.4 Macro development theories and approaches**

Prior to 1970 macro theories such as "growth and modernisation", "structuralism and dependency", "neo-marxist and marxist" and the "regulation approach" dominated the way in which development was perceived and addressed (Haines, 2004). "Growth and modernisation" theory assumed that all societies develop in a linear fashion towards

modernisation and were assisted or curtailed in this process by their historical industrialisation processes. Modernisation was assumed to be a comprehensive process that had the potential to transform all other aspects of society (Haines, 2004:15). In the post-war period a structuralist view of economics emerged which emphasised the structural obstacles to development especially in the third world. Structuralists focused on conceptualising more workable models of local and national economies that would enable national development (Martinussen, 1997; Preston, 1996; Raphley, 1996). Dependency theory, which was criticised for its pessimism and over generalisation, moved away from modernisation theory by emphasising the dual economies of agricultural sectors with low productivity and small industrial sectors with high productivity in Third world countries. Baran (1957) links the lack of prosperity of developing countries to both external competition by first world countries and internal control of industrialisation by third world bourgeoisie and traditional landed elites (Haines, 2004:17). Dependency theory views underdevelopment as being created by pre capitalist society as opposed to an "original" state (Frank, 1967). While there are different versions of dependency theory the more radical versions state that economic dependency generates the development of underdevelopment and that development cannot take place as long as this continues (Haines, 2000).

Marxist theory reacted critically to dependency theory and focused on the relationship between underdevelopment and class relations, modes of production and capitalism. Regulation theory arose during the late 1980's and refers to forms of regulation such as price formation and other measures of control that impact on the ability of Third world countries to compete internationally.

### **3.5 Alternative influences on and approaches to development**

The macro theories outlined above focus on the impact of broader systems and economic relationships on development and the ability of Third world nations to compete internationally. During the 1970's the concern that "underdeveloped" countries could never hope to compete effectively with so-called "developed countries", despite sizeable injections of aid, came to the forefront of discussion in major development agencies (Haines, 2004). This resulted in growing support at an international level for social scientists and policy makers to analyse the development process and to make recommendations for improvement (Harcourt, 1997). It also resulted in the promotion of alternative development approaches and strategies. The first of these was the programme for a New International Economic Order (NEIO) which was presented to the United Nations in the early 1970s, and the second

was the promotion of a “basic needs” approach that emphasised the transfer of resources to the poor (Haines, 2000:47).

Both of these strategies involved a rethinking of the emphasis on economic progress as the primary indicator of development and broadened the international development focus to include ecological and environmental issues. This included a shift in focus away from production to distribution in underdeveloped countries.

The NIEO strategy stressed the need for a “thoroughgoing reform of the world’s economic system” to support development policies aimed at Third World growth (Haines, 2004:24). The NIEO programme, however, failed to bring about the trade and monetary reform, resource transfers from the First to the Third World and the debt relief anticipated.

The “basic needs” approach, which involved a shift from grand theory to more practical approaches aimed directly at education, health and welfare proved to be more successful (Haines 2004). Agencies such as the World Bank in particular, and orthodox development circles, adopted a reworked version of the “basic needs” approach that involved a more direct targeting of the poor. This approach also entailed a more technical approach that involved setting quantifiable indices and performance indicators, such as the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) and World Development Indicators (WDI) (World Bank, 2005). The approach also included a range of interventions into identified priority areas by primarily Western “experts”(Haines, 2004: 24).

The first Human Development Report of 1990, prepared by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) emphasises a more comprehensive view of human development as a process of “enlarging people’s choices” (Martinussen, 1997:38). The 1993 UNDP Human Development Report extended this to include central features of the “people-managed strategy” (*ibid.*: 332) which relates to social capital as discussed below.

The global economic recession during the early 1980’s and increasing third world debt resulted in the majority of third world nations turning to the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank for financial assistance. This funding was generally conditional on the recipient countries shifting towards “outward-orientated” and “market-liberalizing” development policies (Haines, 2004:32). The neo-liberalist approach has a strong individualist focus and supports a competitive market linked to innovation and entrepreneurship. Haines (2004) states that while certain developing countries were able to show some benefits from this approach the measures were generally problematic –

especially in poorer more indebted countries. While this approach increased the debt of third world countries particularly to the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank, the motion of the G8 countries summit in 2005 to cancel the debts of the majority of underdeveloped countries provides an opportunity for these countries to channel state funds into new initiatives. The post-Washington consensus heralded a recognition of factors additional to those purely related to capital accumulation. This approach focused on new endogenous factors that could support development and emphasised the role that civil society can play in complementing the state and markets (Molinas, 1998). This concept of "social capital" is seen to play a number of productive development roles including "a high level of civic engagement in public affairs, horizontal relations of reciprocity and cooperation rather than vertical relations of authority and dependence, networks of solidarity, trust and tolerance and high levels of participation in various kinds of voluntary associations" (Haines, 2004:35).

Social capital also embodies the "people-centred" or "human-centred" approach with an emphasis on gender development. This approach stresses the participation of the majority of the population in the development process and this involvement is considered critical for the successful implementation of any development project or programme (Roodt, 2001). It is embodied in the *Manila Declaration on People's Participation and Sustainable Development* which was drawn up by thirty one NGO leaders in June 1989 (*ibid.*:474). The United Nations development wing and other development agencies have started to focus on a growing systematisation of work on people-and-human-centred development (Haines, 2004:31). This approach assumes some of the themes of the "basic needs" theory and includes a range of theory from alternative development thinking (Pieterse, 1998). Central to people development is the theory that growth without equity and some redistribution of wealth and resources does not necessarily constitute development. It also recognises that poverty is not just an issue of poor material living standards but is also related to capability and choice (Haines, 2004). Development therefore needs to extend to take into account the restoration of basic human capabilities and freedoms. This embodies empowerment and a political dimension with an emphasis on democratic structures and processes.

### **3. 6 Sustainable development**

In this section sustainable development is discussed within the broader development and corporate application of the term. The sustainability of school interventions is discussed in more detail in Chapter four.

The concept of sustainability was introduced into the development field in 1980 by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) in response to dissatisfaction with existing development pathways that tended to favour a westernised approach (Munslow, 2001; Verhelst, 1987). The concept rose to prominence in 1987 with the publication of the Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development (the Bruntland Report). Initially this term was applied in an environmental context but later was included in the discussion of other key development dimensions (Bellis, 2005a). One of the most familiar definitions of sustainable development is that developed by the World Commission on Environment and Development which defines it as “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs (World Commission on Environment and Development. (WCED), 1987:43). By the beginning of the 1990's more than one hundred definitions of sustainable development were in existence (Holmberg & Sandbrook, 1992). Munslow (2001) highlights the need for consensus on a definition of sustainable development that can guide international thought, policy and action in a common direction. His own description of sustainable development extends beyond that of the WCED (1987): “sustainable development means improving the way that human and the natural resource base is managed both to maximise human welfare and to maintain the environment for current and future generations” (Munslow, 2001:507).

The concept of sustainable development has been embraced by international organisations such as the United Nations and the World Bank who are critically engaging with how to integrate and implement it in various development initiatives. In 2001 Kofi Annan, Secretary General of the United Nations, stated that “our biggest challenge in this new century is to take an idea that seems abstract – sustainable development – and to turn it into a reality for all the world's people” (Annan, 2001). Much of contemporary thinking about sustainable development involves increasing the role of social capital (Munslow 2001) participation (Roodt, 2001; Treunicht, 2000) and local ownership (Munslow, 2001) in the development process. Munslow (2001:506) also suggests that that sustainability is enhanced through a link between natural capital and human capital. This has direct implications for education both in terms of equipping people for participation in civic structures and the economy as well as directly through courses such as “education for sustainable development” (<http://www.nc.uk.net/esd/gq1.htm>). In addition to the philosophy and process of sustainability, Bellis (2005a: 24) stresses the importance of the intended outcome of the development intervention. He states that “... whether a project is perceived as having sustainable outcomes may greatly depend on the purpose or purposes of the project and the nature of the project itself” (see 3.10.5). Interventions that have inherent political objectives,

as opposed to objectives related to community enrichment and advancement, are less likely to be successful and sustainable (*ibid.*). Bellis (2005a) also stresses that sustainability is the result of change and development at a deep level as opposed to a series of superficial improvements (*ibid.*).

In 2002 the United Nations provided a platform for dialogue and debate about sustainable development in the form of the World Summit on Sustainable Development that was hosted in Johannesburg South Africa. Following the summit Ian Johnson, Vice President of the World Bank's Environmentally and Socially Sustainable Development Network (ESSD), stated that, in alignment with the discussions and outcome of the summit, the World Bank had "sharpened the poverty focus of our work, expanded support for social services, equitable broad-based growth, good governance, and social inclusion and are integrating gender and environmental consideration in to our development focus" (Johnson, 2002).

Sustainability has also become a key criterion in corporate performance. Corporates are now accountable not only for their financial performance, but also for performance in terms of what has become known as "the triple bottom line". The triple bottom line, a term introduced by John Elkington of SustainAbility, refers to achieving balanced and integrated economic, social and environmental performance (Freemantle & Rockey, 2004). The King II report (King 2002) which provides a comprehensive range of recommendations for corporate governance for all South African companies with securities listed on the JSE, banks, financial and insurance entities and certain public sector enterprises strengthens the concept of a "triple bottom line" approach. This report has a specific section devoted to integrated sustainability reporting which includes a recommendation that corporates should report at least annually on the nature and extent of their social, transformation, ethical, safety, health and environmental management policies and practices (Freemantle & Rockey, 2004) (see 3.6). Corporate Social Investment (see 3.8) forms an integral part of corporate citizenship and triple bottom line reporting.

### **3.7 International development assistance and education**

#### **3.7.1 New approaches and focuses in international development**

International development assistance has presented itself in many different forms through a variety of individual and aligned development agencies. International agencies such as the IMF, World Bank, United Nations as well as agencies linked to specific countries such as

Danida (Danish International Development Assistance), DFID (Department for International Development), the GTZ (German Organization for Technical Co-operation), SIDA (Swedish International Development Co-operation Agency) and USAID (United States Agency for International Development) have engaged with development in different ways in ODA (Official Development Assistance) countries. Initially countries that required aid, "developing" countries were identified on the basis of their GNP (Gross National Product) and development models were initiated by agencies with the initial aim of increasing economic productivity (see 3. 4) with the belief that this would eventually trickle down to benefit the poor (Forster, 1999: 32).

The failure of many international development initiatives to impact on poverty and to bring about intended transformation, especially as far as Africa is concerned, has resulted in a questioning and revisiting of development perspectives and policies (Clark, 1991; Habte, 1999; Haines, 2004; Leys, 1995). There is a growing question of whether International aid can focus on more non tangible issues such as transformation, or whether this aid should be earmarked for the achievement of some minimalist poverty alleviation goals (Theil, 1996). Clark (1990) states that there is now near universal recognition that international development interventions should focus on "eradication of hunger, protecting the environment, grassroots development and protecting the poor from debt crises" (p.4). Clark (1990) perceives these to be areas where official agencies have limited experience especially at an operational level and require the assistance of partners such as NGOs to intervene effectively.

One of the most significant changes in the development field over the past few decades is the recognition that development aid and cooperation is not just about uplifting the South but also about bringing about change in the North (King, 1999). King (1999) states that the number of aid recipients in countries such Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union has increased. Countries such as Germany are channelling funds into their own developing sectors. This reinforces the recognition that a growing number of countries are beginning to adopt a "charity begins at home" approach to development (McGrath, 1999). A large proportion of ODA funds are also being channelled into emergency relief operations (Forster, 1999) and into initiatives that impact on global concerns (e.g. environmental issues such as global warming and health concerns such as HIV/AIDS)(McGrath, 1999). Countries and aid agencies are also channelling funding into what they rank as priority intervention areas. An instance can be seen in the redirection of a significant amount of the DFID budget that was earmarked for the Eastern Cape Province in South African to Iraq (Rajie, 2005).

In addition to evidence of continued reduction of aid from the North there is a growing trend for more "symmetrical interrelations or partnerships" between North and South (King, 1999:15). This assumes different forms in different countries affiliated to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) but the general trend appears to be a move towards "genuine" partnerships (United Kingdom. DFID, 1997) and "a more equal and respectful relationship" (Sweden. Ministry for Foreign Affairs, 1997:22). The World Bank has also embraced a partnership paradigm which incorporates the need to be a good partner and to listen to criticism and constructive comment (Wolfensohn, 1995).

There is also a move away from individual development agencies funding a selection of development projects to a number of agencies supporting a number of nationally determined sector development programmes (King, 1999). According to King (1999) this approach has its own problems including tensions between Northern partner priority funding areas (e.g. basic education) and national sector priority areas (e.g. further education and training). These movements are captured and set out in the Paris Declaration which resulted from a conference attended by Development Assistance Committee (DAC) donors, 16 multilateral agencies and 62 partner countries in 2005. This declaration consists of a set of 12 indicators (four mainly for partners and eight mainly for donors) against which all donors agreed to be monitored by 2008 (Pedley, 2005).

### **3.7.2 International aid and education development**

Most International Aid organisations and government leaders esteem the role that education can play in development (Cornwell, 2000). The World Bank policies highlight education as directly and indirectly assisting to alleviate poverty through increasing individual incomes, reducing reproduction rates and increasing awareness of health, nutrition and environmental issues (Psacharopoulos & Woodhall, 1985). However, despite the identification of education as a key determinant of economic development (Stewart, 1996; World Bank, 1990 & 2005) international interventions in education are not perceived to have made a significant impact in this area, especially in sub-Saharan Africa (Cornwell, 2000; Habte, 1999; McGrath, 1999). International development agencies have tended to assume a strong "human capital" (see 2.3.1) approach to education development. Cornwell (2000:161) states that this approach falls within a "neoclassical" view of education development which places emphasis on the role that education can perform in assisting countries to modernise their economic, social and political systems.

Attempts to determine a direct correlation between education and economic development remain questionable specifically in relation to comparative variables (see 4.1). Quantitative studies in this area have compared variables such as school enrolment with Gross Domestic Product (GDP) (Stewart, 1996). McGrath (1999) highlights the inadequacies of such comparisons and raises questions concerning the consideration of the performance of the informal sector as well as a lack of comprehension of the overall education process. The quality of education in itself remains unquestioned in such studies and similar studies that focus on the relationship between examinations and successful economic performance. The recognition that examination results provide a flawed mechanism for the evaluation of the quality of education are long documented (Dore, 1976). Studies that attempt to link acquired knowledge and skills to improved economic performance are shown to use measurements other than those of formal school examinations (Adam, 1996; Obura, 1996, cited in McGrath 1999).

Thus the very nature of education is a challenge to development agencies, especially those working from a paradigm outside of the recipient country. McGrath (1999:69) illustrates the complexities of contemporary education environment when he states that “across the globe there has been a massive though uncoordinated, international re-examination of education” (see 3.10.5 and 4.2). This review has been wide-ranging in its scope, including ...”the growth of competency/outcomes based learning, national qualifications systems, national curricula, challenges to teacher autonomy, and reappraisal of pedagogical principles” (see 4.1 and 4.2). Central to this debate is the tension between the vocational-instrumental and liberal intrinsic functions of education (McGrath, 1999). The result is the move by some countries towards a vocationally based model of education and others towards a “back to basics” model (Kenya. Ministry of Education, 1997). Many additional philosophical, pedagogical, practical and capacity related issues are further debated from neoclassical, reformist and radical education development points of view within the proposed paradigms of these models (McGrath, 1999, Reich, 1991). While reformists, like the neo-classicists, emphasise the link between education and development, specifically economic growth, this perspective challenges the relevance of education and advocates minimum learning needs which include communication skills and general knowledge, lifeskills and production skills (Cornwell, 2000; Noor, 1981). The radical perspective perceives the role of education to be broader than that of economic enhancement and supports a less formal education paradigm, such as that promoted by Paulo Freire (Freire, 1982), linked to empowerment and practical application of knowledge. The impetus and nature of school reform is discussed further in Chapter four.

The World Conference on Education for All ([www.unesco.org/education/efa/ed\\_for\\_all](http://www.unesco.org/education/efa/ed_for_all)) held in Thailand in 1990 provided a forum for debating various perspectives and for extending international development focus beyond enrolment and primary level education. Following the conference additional issues such as completion, attainment and quality and relevance of education were added to the international education development agenda (McGrath, 1999).

However the anticipated improvement in the quality of international interventions has not transpired (Bennell & Furlong, 1997) and the proportion of funding allocated to education by major development agencies appears to be decreasing rather than increasing (Burchet, 1995) possibly due to new priority funding areas as discussed above as well as the complexity of determining the nature and impact of educational interventions in developing countries (McGrath 1999). The increased emphasis on good governance has resulted in some development agencies taking an audit of the efficiency, honesty and commitment of government leadership before making loans. There is also a growing awareness that education reform is “not a single event but a process” and it has to have “strong local roots and a longer time horizon” (Habte, 1999:5)(see 4.12 and 8.5).

### **3.8 Corporate Social Investment and development**

There is increasing pressure on Corporates internationally to contribute not only to the economy, but also to society as corporate citizens. Corporate citizenship involves a wide range of activities, including environmental stewardship through concern for sustainability (see 3.6). One of the areas identified as key for good corporate citizenship is that of Corporate Social Investment (CSI), also sometimes referred to as Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) or Corporate Social Action (CSA) (see 3.10.1). (Commonwealth Business Council, 2003; Freemantle & Rockey, 2004). CSI is not the only way in which business contributes to development and other overarching systems such as democracy (Bernstein & Berger, 2000). It provides, however, a public channel for engaging with in-house and external development.

CSI involves community development through intervention in all sectors (education, health, social development, training, job creation, community and rural development, sports development, environment, arts and culture, safety and security, and housing). Different corporates have different sector focuses. Some focus on developing only one sector while others focus on a number of sectors. Corporates also target specific groups of people. Some only target their employees, others target a community or town, while others try and

intervene at a national level. For example, funding HIV/AIDS research can have national benefit.

CSI took off in South Africa in the 1970's when Meyer Feldberg, a professor of business at the University of Cape Town urged business leaders to learn from other countries, particularly the United States, and to get involved in the communities from which their workers were drawn and on a broader level the communities that brought or used their products. The 7<sup>th</sup> edition of the Corporate Social Investment Handbook (Rockey, 2004) states that this was based on the "common-sense, good-for-business notion that socially responsible behaviour is fundamental to the long-term growth, prosperity and profitability of the company". Bernstein et al. (2000) state that business is a powerful social actor both in influencing policy and in contributing towards development especially in "developing countries". During the 1970's non profit organisations, such as the Kagiso Trust and the South African Council of Churches, were formed and many businesses donated money towards their work. While many large and small NGOs have closed due to lack of funding, especially as South Africa's new democratic government takes on some of their previous roles, organisations such as The National Business Initiative continue to provide a channel for corporate funding (see 3.9).

After 1994 the corporate sector continued to refine what shape "best practice" CSI would take in South Africa in order to have meaningful and sustainable impact on development. Companies explored different types of partnership with NGOs, other corporates and government in order to have maximum impact. Prior to 1994 most CSIs had taken the form of donating money to various forms of NGOs or developing employee-benefit or local community projects. The latter half of the 1990s saw corporates experimenting with more hands-on approaches to CSI where Corporate Social Investment departments were established not only to make donations to worthy organisations or causes, but in some instances, also to run community-based projects (see 3.10.1). Whereas previously corporates contracted or funded NGOs to manage more grassroots projects there is a move towards a more hands-on management approach. Some corporates, such as the GM South Africa Foundation, refer to a more active involved form of CSI as Corporate Social Action (CSA)(see 3.10.1).

Dialogue's survey of South African corporate social investment from 2000 to 2004 (Rockey, 2004) indicates that, despite the international development trend of decreasing spending on education interventions, education has remained the priority corporate investment sector in South Africa. Dialogue estimates that annual corporate social investment expenditure in the

country amounted to 2.4 billion for the 2003/2004 period. This figure of 2.4 billion represents a nominal 2% increase over the 2.35 billion budget recorded in Trialogue's 2003 research, but corresponds to a real decrease relative to the recorded inflation rate of 3.4 % for the year ending March 2004. Trialogue's database of Top-100 CSI programmes accounted for approximately 1.3 billion of the corporate development funding for the 2003/2004 financial year. Thus, while international aid is changing funding focus to directly address poverty alleviation (see 3.7.2) South African corporates continue to invest in education as a top priority focus area.

### **3.9 Education development agencies in South Africa**

The South African education, training and development sector is comprised of various role players and stakeholders. These range from government departments such as the Department of Education and the Department of Labour, to corporate social investment trusts and funds, non-profit organisations (NPOs) and international funding agencies (i.e. DFID, Danida, etc.). There are no clear cut criteria regarding how these role players operate or partner. In some provinces (e.g. the Western Cape) there has been a move by the Department of Education towards controlling education interventions in schools. This involves agencies obtaining approval from the Provincial and/or District Departments of Education (and in some instances the National Department of Education) prior to working in identified areas. Development agencies operating at a school level are expected to respect teaching and learning time and to work within the ambit of the overarching education and training policy environment. The move towards the funding of national sector priorities (see 3.7.1 ) has also resulted in the majority of international development agencies forming closer partnerships with the Departments of Education and Labour as opposed to previous tendencies to fund identified non-governmental organisations. This approach can be seen in the statement made by DFID at the May 2005 Donor PGDP (Provincial Growth and Development Plan) Conference in East London in keeping with the indicators set by development agencies and countries in the Paris Declaration (see 3.7.1) that "development results are delivered in country – by governments for their people" and that "donors need to align with government plans rather than work across them" (Pedley, 2005:4).

Since 1994 there has also been a tendency for business, NPOs and government to form partnerships to accomplish nationally determined goals. Though a large number of NPOs have closed due to funding and priority focus shifts, those that have survived or have recently come into being work closely with government often through a project tendering

process. In the education sector a number of government/NPO organisations have been formed that are primarily funded by the Department of Education to carry out national and provincial projects. Examples of these are the Gauteng Institute for Education Development (GIED) and the Matthew Goniwe School of Governance and Leadership.

Government, NPOs and partnerships of these two forms of entities have engaged with education development through various initiatives since 1994. A study conducted by Christie and Potterman (1997) indicates that there were fifteen different NPOs working in school development at this time. These NPOs (then referred to as NGOs) ranged from CSI initiatives (e.g. Toyota Teach Primary School Project) and school outreach programmes (e.g. St Mary's DSG Outreach) to government partnered initiatives (e.g. KwaZulu Natal Effective School Programme). A survey conducted by the Joint Education Trust (JET) research project *Research on School Development* (Roberts, 2001) also indicates that there are a significant number of school reform initiatives in South Africa and highlights that these vary widely in terms of philosophical perspectives and approaches presenting a somewhat fragmented picture of school development. It is impossible to list all of these initiatives or to describe them in detail within the context of this study. Therefore only the major initiatives that relate directly to or impact on whole school development and/or are mentioned in this study are discussed in this section.

The Joint Education Trust was established in 1992 and was spearheaded by a consortium of South African companies who committed a significant sum of money towards the Trust. Initially JET managed donations to over 400 NPOs which targeted teacher development, early childhood development and adult basic education and youth development. It has since changed roles and offers Project Management Services to donors generally in partnership with national and provincial Departments of Education. These services include school development and support. Within this approach JET has worked with various projects such as MAHLAHLE (a school development project in the Northern Cape which works in eighty six schools in two districts), IMBEWU (a DFID funded school development project in the Eastern Cape which initially worked with 523 schools and has since been incorporated into the Eastern Cape Department of Education with the objective of reaching all schools in the Province), the QLP (Quality Learning Project which worked in 500 secondary schools across the nine provinces funded by the Business Trust), SIYATHUTHUKA (a project targeting seventy five primary schools in Kwazulu-Natal funded by the Royal Netherlands Embassy and NGOs) and the DDSP (District Development and Support Project funded by USAID which targeted 610 schools in the four poorest provinces: Eastern Cape, KwaZulu-Natal,

Northern Province and Northern Cape. JET has also assumed a leading role in hosting conferences and producing publications on education and whole school development.

The National Business Initiative (NBI), which is funded by South African business, initiated the EQUIP (Education Quality Improvement Partnerships) programme which worked in fifty-six Eastern Cape schools. This initiative works within a whole school development framework based on nine-principles. Other smaller agencies working in the field of whole school development include the Catholic Schools Institute that works as a contract provider, the Shuttleworth Foundation that works with identified schools in the Western Cape and the GM South Africa Foundation that is discussed in detail in 3.10. Fleisch's (2003) research indicates that a number of NPOs in South Africa are working in partnership with the Department of Education to address systems issues in the form of District structuring and support in parallel with whole school development interventions (see 3.10.5). These include the QLP model as well as initiatives such as SEED (Systemic Enhancement for Education Development), DDSP (District Development Support Programme), DIP (District Improvement Programme), SQIP (School Quality Improvement Project) and the Delta Foundation's (now the GMSAF) Decentralised District Office Model.

### **3.10 The GM South Africa Foundation as a development agency**

#### **3.10.1 The background to the GM South Africa Foundation**

The GM South Africa Foundation (previously known as the Delta Foundation) is a development agency affiliated to General Motors South Africa (previously the Delta Motor Corporation). The Delta Foundation was established in 1993 following a comprehensive internal evaluation by Delta Motor Corporation of the real impact that all the CSI funding over the years had had on South Africa's state of socio-economic development. The Delta Motor Corporation came to the conclusion that a far more dynamic development approach was needed and established the Delta Foundation as a legally independent development agency to actualise this purpose (Matlock, 2002). Following General Motor's takeover of the Delta Motor Corporation in 2004, the Delta Foundation was renamed the GM South Africa Foundation in June 2005. This study focuses on the *Learning Schools Initiative*, which is a GM South Africa Foundation initiative aimed at piloting and documenting a particular whole school development approach.

### 3.10.2 The GM South Africa's Foundation's development approach

The GM South Africa Foundation differentiates its development approach from that of Corporate Social Investment (see Section 3.8) by applying the term Corporate Social Action (CSA) to its work. Matlock (2002:2), the General Manager of the Foundation states that this approach is "unique among companies in South Africa in that it is not based on grant making for projects or operating costs of other agencies but on formulating and managing developmental models which can be replicated on a national level". The 2004 Corporate Social Investment Handbook refers to a more action based approach as a "hands on approach" which involves "being fully engaged with projects through a variety of ways including, for example, site visits, community participation, providing mentoring, products, services, venues and so on" (Rockey, 2004: p.34). While more companies, disappointed with the low return on making grants to agencies, are leaning towards a more active form of involvement in projects (Rockey, 2004), the emphasis on developing and actively promoting replicable models to other agencies remains unique to the GM South Africa Foundation in this sector.

The GM South Africa Foundation also differs from other Corporate Social Investment approaches in that it has a strong focus on policy influence. First prize for the GM South Africa Foundation is to promote practically implemented experiences to positively influence policy development and change. All GM South Africa Foundation initiatives are aligned to government policy and take official commitments into account (Matlock, 2005). All current GM South Africa Foundation initiatives involve the practical implementation of policy in the relevant context. The GM South Africa Foundation initiatives work with a flexible approach to the implementation of policy in that contemporary trends, theories and international and national expert input are used as touchstones and the results of the implementation are monitored and evaluated against desired outcomes (Matlock, 2005). Innovation is also considered key to the GM South Africa Foundation Initiatives. This innovation involves exploring alternative solutions which are likely to have long-term impact in identified logjams. Innovative, workable solutions to logjams are explored and designed in consultation with field experts who work within a similar innovative paradigm.

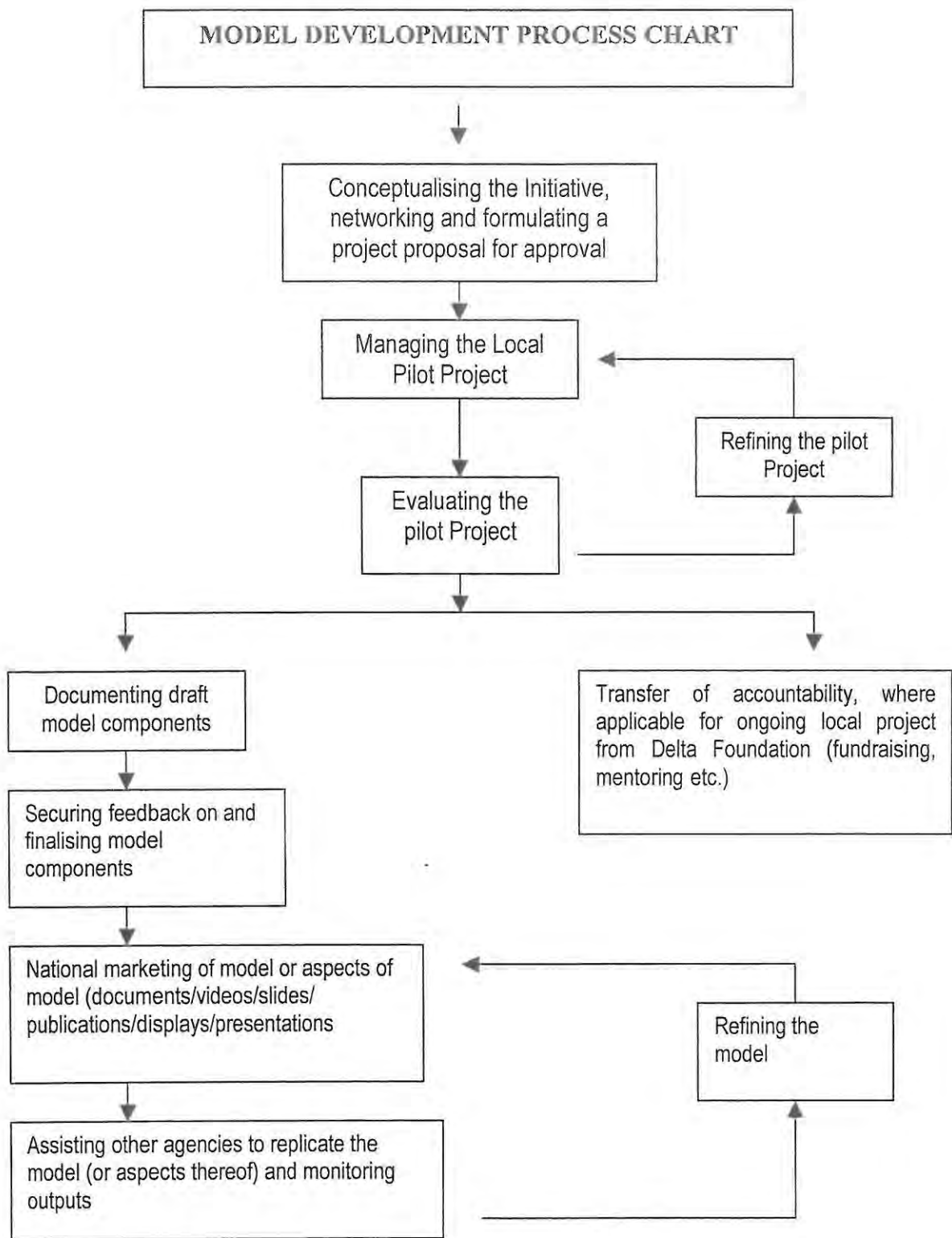
The GM South Africa Foundation places a strong emphasis on the documentation of both the products and processes of all initiatives. Documented interventions are shared with relevant governmental and non-governmental organisations who can use the information when implementing or reviewing the policy concerned (see 3.10.5 & and Chapter six on the *Learning Schools Initiative*).

Four integrated strategic objectives underpin the GM South Africa Foundation's CSA approach. These are:

- Formulating and managing a local pilot project which experiments with new approaches to addressing a major national socio-economic problem area.
- After external evaluation, and probable re-piloting of a modified version of the project, writing up all of the lessons which were learnt in the form of a comprehensive set of implementation guidelines.
- Sharing this model with other development agencies in order to encourage scale replication across the country.
- Assisting the authorities at national, provincial and local levels to adjust their policies and procedures in order to provide a supportive environment for national replication of the various "models" (Matlock 2003: p.iv).

As can be seen from figure 3.1 the GM South Africa Foundation's development strategy is process orientated and incorporates several action learning and action research cycles. The most intensive learning cycle takes place during the initial piloting phase where an initiative is developed and implemented. Several cycles involving feedback and refinement of a particular intervention may take place during this phase before initiative lessons are transformed into a tangible document or series of documents that can be shared with other agencies. This learning process in itself has proven to be of considerable value. For example the GM South Africa Foundation's New Education Paradigm Initiative's experimental outcomes-based education case study at Ethembeni Enrichment Centre became the basis of the Eastern Cape's Provincial Secondary School pilot study. National teams including representatives from the Curriculum 2005 review committee visited Ethembeni Enrichment Centre and consulted with the project co-ordinators. Information from the piloting process was incorporated in the C2005 Review Report (South Africa. DoE 2000a).

Thus within the ethos of the GM South Africa Foundation *modus operandi* the outcome of an initiative is not just a final product in the form of implementation guidelines. The documentation of the development of the model or aspects of the model (see 3.10.5) which when conducted with research rigour also becomes a valuable source of information for other implementation agencies addressing similar issues. The documentation of the piloting process has a strong focus on "lessons learnt" linked to descriptive detail and explanatory insights generated by both internal and external role players (e.g. project co-ordinators, evaluators, project participants, etc.).



**Figure 3.1 : The GM South Africa Foundation' Model Development Process Chart**

An additional refinement cycle takes place when feedback is received from other agencies who apply the model in a different context to that in which it was initially piloted. Once received this feedback is incorporated into the model documentation and shared with existing and interested implementing agents (see 3.10.5).

### **3.10.3 The structure and capacity of the GM South Africa Foundation**

The GM South Africa Foundation has two full time employees: a General Manager and Secretary. The modus operandi, ethos and vision of the GM South Africa Foundation (e.g. innovation, replication, partnerships, etc.) are considered essential to both the nature and the outcomes of an initiative. All current projects are therefore managed by the four contracted GMSAF co-ordinators and tightly monitored by the GM South Africa Foundation. This means that while outside proposals are considered, and consultation with other development agencies is considered essential when drafting proposals and implementing initiatives, all current initiatives are overseen by GMSAF project co-ordinators.

All other work is contracted out as the need arises. At present the GMSAF has three education project co-ordinators and one housing co-ordinator. These co-ordinators are intensively involved with the development and piloting of the initiatives so as to develop an on-the-ground feel for what is happening within the initiatives. They are also actively involved in both the documentation and promotion of the initiatives. The total budget of the GM South Africa Foundation ranges between three and five million rand per annum (Matlock, 2002). Most of the budget is spent on piloting and documenting the various initiatives. Other agencies then replicate the models at their own expense. To date, for every one million rand spent by the GM South Africa Foundation in the area of education substantially more has been spent by other replicating agents (Rockey, 2004).

### **3.10.4 The GM South Africa Foundation and partnerships**

The GM South Africa Foundation places strong emphasis on partnerships. In the 2004 CSI handbook Matlock states that "partner organisations enable us to pilot on a larger scale or access different parts of the country" (Rockey, 2004:12). The GM South Africa Foundation enters into different forms of partnerships with different agencies. The partnership objectives differ according to the nature of the partnership. For example in some cases, especially during the initial model conceptualisation and development stage, a partnership may be formed with an agency such as the Department of Education to increase ownership and buy-



in and to tighten communication regarding contemporary policy and implementation thereof. Other partnerships such as those entered into with higher education institutions provide a way of sharing high level expertise and capacity (Rockey, 2002). In other instances a funding partnership is formed and the partner (i.e. the Shuttleworth Foundation) shares the costs of developing and piloting an initiative. Some partnerships such as the one entered into with the Mathew Goniwe School of Leadership and Governance is a combination of sharing both high level GMSAF expertise and the replication of GMSAF concepts to achieve the partners objectives. The latter type of partnership is primarily funded by the partner organisation, but GMSAF expertise and input in order to advance replication is carried by the GM South Africa Foundation. All partnerships that the Delta Foundation enters into essentially involve some concrete form of contribution by the partner agency. In some cases, as with the GMSAF Principals' Training Initiative a formal agreement is entered into with the partner organisation, in this case the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University.

### **3.10.5 The concepts of “replicability” and “model”**

The GMSAF differentiates its approach from that of other agencies with its emphasis on the development of housing and education models and the replication of these models throughout South Africa. The Foundation's primary areas of investment are therefore the piloting, development and refinement of models and the promotion of these models to other implementing agencies. Thereafter, it is expected that the implementing agency will cover costs of replication of the model. The primary implementing agency is identified as government and in education specifically the Department of Education. It is therefore of utmost importance firstly that projects are conceptualised within the framework of national policy, and secondly that projects are developed in consultation with different levels of the Department of Education (Matlock, 2005). Other education-based implementation agencies include NPOs, other development agencies and at a micro level individual schools and individuals within schools.

The application of the terms model and replication are not unproblematic and in 2002 the Delta Foundation hosted a conference in Port Elizabeth to discuss issues around the use of these terms within an education and training context (Du Plooy & Westraad, 2003). The multifaceted concept of model was discussed together with the narrowness and traditional use of the term replication in contexts such as the transferral of images and genetic engineering that suggests making exact replicas of what exists (Du Plooy & Westraad, 2003).

In his summary of the conference Bellis (2003) stresses the need to distinguish between the terms “approach”, “model”, “methodology” and “method”. This provides a way of viewing replication of the model as whole. He argues that “approach” is that nexus of concepts, values, convictions and principles that govern what is done and the way that it is done (*ibid.*: 15). A “model” is a structured representation of the major components that will interact in the work to be tackled. “Methodology” is a systematic way of identifying, sequencing and putting into effect that which the model aims to achieve and “methods” are the techniques used for each particular stage of the methodology. Bellis (2005a: 15) states that an approach may be operationalised in more than one methodology and methods will be determined by a range of factors. Bellis (2005) sees this interpretation to be of value to the greater education and training system and highlights the need for deliberately thought through approaches to different elements of the system (e.g. curriculum development, teacher training, quality assurance, standards generation, etc.) that result in the development of consistent models. Linked to this is the need to pilot and refine models prior to national implementation to avoid large-scale confusion as was seen with the implementation of C2005.

Euvrard (2003) highlights the need to distinguish between a “practice” and “process” model and discusses the need for agencies to replicate outcomes and not necessarily practice. Agencies can therefore adapt the process and practice to suit the needs of particular target groups rather than being confined within a particular approach. However where the essence of the model is good practice then implementation agencies may want to replicate this as a means of being able to achieve identified outcomes. Thus implementation agencies may choose to replicate process, outcomes or the elements discussed by Bellis (2003:15). The provision of a National Qualifications Framework with qualifications linked to outcomes but a lack of piloted methods and programmes to meet these outcomes within this system is such an example of the need for replication of process.

Spady (2003:238–241) also emphasises the need to focus on the replication of outcomes, but highlights the need to duplicate best practice in this process. He states that this educational best practice should be measured against a standard by which it can be judged as “superior” or “significant” and that as such standard should reflect the following areas of focus and results:

- functional improvement of infrastructure
- professional enhancement (of the culture of the organisation)
- instructional improvement (in the methodology applied)

- learner improvement (in outcomes achieved), and
- societal benefit (the outcomes would demonstrate this is the life of the community).

Euvrard (2003) stresses the need to adapt whatever aspect of the model that is applied to suit the need of a particular environment and therefore questions the notion of “replication”. The question, as with copyright, is about the degree to which a concept is changed when applied within a new context so that it becomes something other than what was initially developed for replication. The Foundation is not concerned with copyright, control and publicity issues but promotes models and their various components for replication by other agencies. The degree to which models are applied as is or adapted is not a primary concern provided the desired outcomes are achieved. At a macro level the overarching outcome is the improvement of teaching and learning in different contexts. This research investigates some of the deeper level generative mechanisms that impact on the desired outcomes of a particular model. These mechanisms, in turn, are identified and documented as key components of the model.

In addition to questioning the nature of replication Morrow (as cited in Bellis, 2003), like Spady (2003), emphasises the need to question the broader system in which models are promoted. Morrow poses the question of whether we ought to be wondering if the very concept of “school” does not represent a model that is failing almost universally. The rooting of models in dysfunctional systems is a question that continues to be debated and links to issues relating to strengthening South Africa's new decentralised model of education (see 2.3.2) so that district offices are capacitated to support good practice within schools and secondly for schools themselves to display an identified level of functionality prior to the introduction of more innovative education initiatives. Thus the debate arises of the extent to which a development agency works at a systems and paradigmatic level as opposed to a within systems level. The Foundation attempts to address both these levels by working within policy to assist officials, educators and schools in the short term, to examine existing systems and policies and to challenge problematic aspects of these.

### **3.10.6 The GM South Africa Foundation Initiatives**

The GMSAF initiatives essentially fall within the categories of education and housing. Other areas that interweave with these categories such as environmental impact studies, environmental education, community development, safety and security, and health and welfare (HIV/AIDs, feeding schemes), etc. are addressed within the context of the overarching categories of education and housing. Initiatives were initially selected and

funded through a process involving (i) the identification of a logjam that has local, provincial and national impact, (ii) the investigation of the logjam by a team of interested stakeholders and role players led by a GMSAF project co-ordinator, and (iii) the submission of a proposal to the GMSAF's Board of Trustees for consideration.

Currently initiatives tend to be identified by the GMSAF in consultation with major stakeholders, rather than from external proposals. This appears to primarily be a result of the intensity and scope of the needs as observed by the co-ordinators and expressed by participants, officials and other stakeholders during implementation. As each initiative progresses further logjams become evident. These are sometimes the result of the introduction of new policy or systems (e.g. IQMS) or are a result of the direct influence of socio-economic conditions on the initiative. In the case of the *Learning Schools Initiative* it became evident that issues related to the feeding of learners as well as safety and security needed to be addressed over and above the overarching focus on the Whole School Development process. Another example is that of the Missionvale Housing project, where the main focus was on building cost effective houses for an identified community. In the process, however, it was recognised that other social and skills training issues needed to be addressed through education and training interventions. Thus in effect new initiatives seem to evolve within existing initiatives providing more than ample opportunity for Delta Foundation intervention linked to national impact.

The GMSAF has recently undergone a process of consolidation of initiatives. This has resulted in the creation of overarching categories and new initiatives which incorporate some of the original initiatives or aspects of these initiatives (see 3.10.5). At the end of 2003 the GMSAF had a total of nine education and training initiatives. These were grouped under two main categories: Effective Practices and Programmes and Effective Education Systems.

The Effective Practices and Programmes Category incorporated:

- The Early Childhood Development Initiative
- The Further Education and Training Coalition Initiative
- The New Education Paradigm Initiative
- The Ready for Business Initiative
- The Ukuqonda Maths Programme Initiative
- The Video-based Education and Training Initiative

The Effective Education Systems Category incorporated:

- The District Office Initiative

The Principal's Training Initiative  
The Centres of Learning Initiative

At the end of 2003 a decision was taken to create a Whole School Intervention Initiative that would provide opportunity for the GM South Africa Foundation to apply all existing initiatives within a Whole School context. Thus while all the above mentioned initiatives continued as separate projects and are promoted individually, the *Learning Schools Initiative* (see Chapter six) was launched as a way of consolidating different aspects of the GMSAF initiatives. The *Learning Schools Initiative* has since developed into a project that stands separate from those mentioned above. It, however, draws on the development ethos of the previous GMSAF initiatives, as well as the expertise of other school development interventions and programmes (see 6.5.3).

### **3.11 Concluding summary**

As can be ascertained from this chapter - development priorities and approaches differ between agencies. The interwoven relationships of government versus non-government interventions and international versus local aid and investment often have different goals and objectives. The outcomes and long-term sustainability of initiatives are dependent on a range of both explicit and implicit factors. As discussed, the intention of an initiative linked to a broader development and education paradigm, philosophy, ethos and approach can influence how much actual development takes place. The criteria defining the nature of development required are also critical in the "measurement" thereof. In addition the extent to which development can be "measured" quantitatively versus qualitatively is also crucial in determining whether development has actually transpired. An investigation of the generative mechanisms that contribute towards or hinder development is useful in assisting to determine the degree to which an initiative has achieved specified development goals or/and has brought about substantial sustainable change.

This chapter situates the GMSAF *Learning Schools Initiative* and this research within the broader development context and raises and discusses critical issues related to education development. Chapter four focuses on the impetus and nature of school reform. It introduces the two dominant school reform approaches and explores national and international research in this field. It also locates the concept of whole school development within this context, provides a brief overview of school development and associated research in South Africa and discusses the key characteristics associated with school reform.

## CHAPTER FOUR

# SCHOOL REFORM APPROACHES, INITIATIVES AND FINDINGS

### 4.1 Introduction

The 20<sup>th</sup> Century was a period of immense political, economic and social change. The global move towards democracy, changing work requirements and opportunities together with a greater focus on accountability and quality at all levels have had a major impact on schooling. Linked to democracy, the decentralisation of government (2.3.2) has in most cases resulted in the decentralisation of schooling and with this greater local responsibility for the delivery of high quality education despite frequently diminished financial support (Dalin, 1998). The question of equality remains central to the decentralisation debate especially where communities are responsible at a district or local level for schools and where central policy stipulates national performance standards (Hopkins, D., 2001b)(see 2.3.2). A “value-added” approach (Gray et al., 1996; Roberts & Roach, 2006) is often applied by researchers to counterbalance inequality, however, this is generally not applied by government and schools, educators and learners are often expected to perform well despite challenging circumstances. In addition despite high hope for education as a vehicle of social transformation (Jonathan, 2001; Wolf, 2002), the importance of the “early ecology of learning” (Muller & Roberts, 2000:2) remains an enormous challenge for many schools especially those in developing countries (see 3.7.2).

However, despite the challenging conditions that many schools face, and high expectations for all, research initiatives to improve schools and to measure schools' performance have indicated that some schools succeed despite the odds (Ansell, 2004; Christie, 2001; Hopkins, D., 2001c). Recent research has focused on why certain schools succeed and others fail (Christie, 2001; Hopkins, D., 2001a), despite facing similar circumstances. While the criteria for success often differ vastly from one research and intervention approach to another, many of the key success (or failure) factors identified are similar. Understanding the integrities and complexity of the mechanisms and conditions that constitute success, particularly when these are supported by rich description of context, provides valuable insight for those working within the field of school development. It is the aim of this research to generate such insights through an in-depth analysis and contextualisation of the *Learning Schools' Initiative*.

It is not possible within the scope of this chapter to review the vast volume of school reform theory, studies and initiatives. I have therefore selected to focus on what I consider most relevant to this study commencing with an overview of the different theoretical approaches in this field (i.e. school effectiveness and school improvement) and clarification of terms followed by a discussion of relevant research. Again, it is not possible to touch on every school improvement and development study internationally or nationally; I have attempted to mention the most prominent and overarching studies. I then examine and discuss in more depth some of the key characteristics that relate to successful school improvement and performance laying the foundation for further discussion of these within the context of this research. It is important to note that each of these characteristics merits their own scholarship review. I have tried to extract the most pertinent information related to these characteristics with particular focus on how they relate to school development. There is of course much more that could be added and some that could be detracted but this is inevitable given the vastness, interrelatedness and complexity of the field.

## **4.2 The impetus for and nature of school reform**

Given the nature of this research and the relationship between school reform and school development it is important to highlight and discuss key studies, processes and trends in this area. It is not, however, possible within the scope of this study to do full justice to describing the impetus for reform and the vast amount of research that has been undertaken in this area over the past four decades. This section provides the background to school reform and provides the basis for a more in-depth discussion of the primary research approaches and priority development foci.

For more than a century the process of, and desired outcome of schooling have been highly contested issues. At the beginning of the twenty first century Macbeath & Mortimore (2001:1) wrote, "... we have entered a new millennium with sophisticated science and spectacular technology but still without knowledge of how to educate our children. We have discovered how to engineer the blueprint of living beings but we are still searching for an environment in which children can learn with enjoyment and effect". The fact that public schools are an integral part of society, are entrusted with a nation's children and youth for a significant period of time and receive a substantial segment of most country's budgets (Wolf, 2002) means that they will naturally be the objects of intense scrutiny.

School reform has assumed different forms and has been directed at various levels of schooling. Large-scale school reform is primarily associated with the response to the landmark research of Coleman (Coleman et al., 1966) and Jencks (Jencks et al., 1972). Ratvitch (2000) traces the beginnings of school reform in the USA and documents a century of school reform which commenced in the late 1800s and which focused primarily on the classroom level with the introduction of progressive education methods and approaches followed by a questioning of the very purpose of schooling in the late 1950s. Fullan (2001a: 5) refers to the period following the 1950's and throughout the 1960's as the school reform "adoption era". Despite this initial flooding of reform the impact was not significant and much of this reform was considered to be a failure (Fullan & Pomferet, 1977) as "putting ideas into practice was a far more complex process than people realised" (Fullan, 2001a: 5).

Concern about the results of progressive education intensified particularly as Western countries became more globally competitive and Scholastic Aptitude Tests (SAT) in the late 1970's revealed that learners were performing significantly poorer than they had done previously (Ratvitch, 2000). The publication of *A Nation at Risk* (National Commission of Excellence in Education, 1983) by a commission established by the secretary of education in the USA confirmed these concerns and warned that schools had not produced the desired results and that education had to be drastically improved for all if the United States was to keep pace with social and economic change. Thus, despite the pessimism of the Coleman (1966) and similar research reports (Jencks et al., 1972, Thorndike, 1973), nations continued to place high expectations on education, and school reform remained high on the agenda of most developed countries. In her publication *Does Education Matter? Myths About Education and Economic Growth*, Wolf (2002) states that education is still seen to be a precondition for economic success and survival even more so than in the previous century. Publications such as *Schools Can Make a Difference* (Brookover et al., 1979) and *School Matters* (Mortimore et al., 1988) also contributed to a restored faith in the potential of schools to make a difference. During the same period Coleman, Hoffer & Kilgore (1981) conducted a major federal study of public and private schools and made the statement that schools could make a difference in terms of addressing socio-economic background, but that this was dependent on the nature of the schools. He concluded that schools that promoted higher academic achievement regardless of the learners' backgrounds were more likely to make a difference (Ratvitch, 2000).

However, as Scheerens (1992) points out, taking most major correlation studies on the effect of schooling into account, background characteristics of pupils (especially those such as parental milieu and intelligence) still account for the most variance in pupils' performance. Thus while schools are increasingly expected to compensate for societal factors (Ravitch, 2000; Senge et al., 2000) and to be one of the major social vehicles for reducing social inequality (Fullan 2001a) their ability to do so is limited and "failing" schools (Hopkins, D., 1996) can expected to make very little difference at all. Ravitch (2000:454) states that by the end of the twentieth century few believed "...that schools alone could remedy the great ills of social and economic life or eliminate poverty... their capacity to effect large-scale social and economic change is inherently limited by the specifics of their mission and institutional nature".

Recent school improvement literature (Creemers, 1996; Elmore, 1992; Muller & Roberts 2000) emphasises the concern that the expectations of schools to focus on issues outside of their core mission is a threat to maintaining high standards of teaching and learning (see 4.9.5, 7.2.5 and 8.2.4). This has to an extent been pre-empted by a move towards the introduction of external accountability structures and processes. In reaction to growing concern over the quality of school education and the move towards decentralisation (2.3.3.), more stringent school assessment, evaluation and monitoring measures have been introduced especially in countries such as the United Kingdom and United States. This accountability has primarily taken the form of the national (or in some cases more local) monitoring of learner achievement through vehicles such as league tables in the UK and school report cards in the USA. In South Africa matric results, which will be replaced by the new National Senior Certificate results in 2008, have traditionally been a measure of school effectiveness (Crouch & Mabogoane ,1998) and continue to be used as a yardstick for school and educator performance (Naledi Pandor, Minister of Education's speech on 5 April 2006 at the most improved schools awards)(see 3.7.2).

However, while it is acknowledged that schooling only has a marginal impact, World Bank research indicates that schooling in developing countries is attributed greater impact on learner achievement than that in developed countries (Heneveld & Craig, 1996). Fuller (1997) supports this and states that in developing countries school factors do influence student achievement and identifies the school's social organisation, teaching practices and teacher qualifications as important factors. He also notes that more expensive inputs such as class size, teacher salary level and science laboratories do not necessary mean higher levels of academic achievement while textbooks and writing materials have more influence on achievement than in developed countries. Levin & Lockheed (1993) further

show that school checklists or performance indicators play less of a role in developing countries, as the priority focus is often on getting the basics (minimum inputs in place). This research correlates with Hopkins' (1996) typology of school intervention strategies (see 4.4.2). Levin & Lockheed (1993:8) suggest that schools in developing countries essentially require three interrelated elements: basic inputs, facilitating conditions and the will to change.

The reform of public services in all OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) countries has also called for more accountability in terms of spending and performance in the public sector (Dalín, 1998). In most of these countries this process has been coupled with the decentralisation of public service management with the emphasis on "site-based" management (Dalín, 1988:14). While there has been no uniform approach to the restructuring of public schooling there has been a tendency in some countries (e.g. Denmark, Sweden, Norway, New Zealand, United Kingdom, United States, etc.) to centralise policy development while decentralising governance, management and administration of schools (see 2.3.2.).

Accountability at a site level and municipal, state/provincial and/or national level has become a key factor in attempting to strike a balance between the periphery and the centre (Dalín, 1998). However, while there is an international move towards decentralisation of schooling there is also a growing trend to set curriculum and achievement standards at a national (or slightly lower) level (see 2.3.2). This systemic reform takes different forms and has different foci. The United States systemic reform, introduced in the 1990's focused specifically on policy coherence (Muller & Roberts, 2000) and was a clear attempt to improve learner achievement, especially in disadvantaged schools. The two central elements of this reform are "standards-based" reform and "accountability" which together contribute towards a model of "steering by results" where the main levers are rewards, sanctions and assistance (*ibid.*:11)(see 4.11). While systemic reform creates a framework and identifies key principles for reform, as already mentioned, there is growing emphasis on developing and supporting quality teaching and learning at a classroom level (see 4.9.5.) Currently there is a trend in many countries to adopt a two-pronged approach which involves standards and accountability at the head of reform (*ibid.*:14) and "bottom-up" improvement of teaching and learning at a site level.

### 4.3 Terminology in the field of school reform

In South Africa the introduction of a new education and training policy and supporting guidelines has been confused by conflicting terminology that is often applied to the same concept (Bellis, 1997). This has been particularly prevalent in school-based education where schools are expected to produce School Development Plans and School Improvement Plans and there is no clarity on whether these are the same or different documents. Similarly the merging of the Developmental Appraisal System (DAS), Performance Measurement (PM) and Whole School Education (WSE) into an Integrated Quality Management System (IQMS) has created similar confusions. In an attempt to avoid confusion I have attempted to differentiate between some of the terminology applied within this study. The overarching term *reform* is generally used as reference to any initiative that aims to improve or change something for the better. Educational reform takes place at many levels ranging from the systemic to the classroom.

*School effectiveness* and *school improvement* are two separate approaches or fields also sometimes referred to as paradigms (Harris, 2001) that developed in response to the need for intensified research and initiatives to improve and reinstate the impact of education. These are discussed further in 4.4. below. The term *school development* (explained further in 4.7), although sometimes used interchangeably with school improvement, generally refers to a specific school planning process at the school level (Hargreaves, Hopkins, Least, Connolly & Robinson, 1989). School development can therefore be seen as a particular approach to school improvement. *School restructuring* was an effort introduced in the United States aimed at transforming the organisation of the school with the goal of enhanced learner achievement (Hopkins, 2001a: 32). School restructuring is accredited by some as undertaking the implementation of the findings of early effectiveness research (Murphy, 1992).

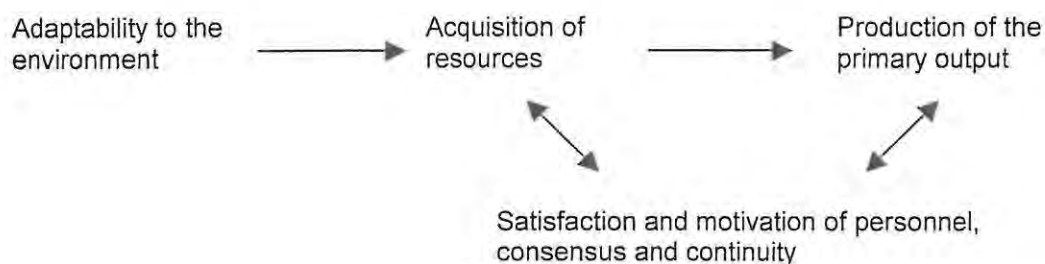
### 4.4 The school effectiveness and school improvement approaches

The initial response to the Coleman Report (Coleman et al., 1966) and similar research (Jencks et al., 1972; Thorndike, 1973)(see 4.2) essentially took two forms (Muller & Roberts 2000). The first involved research to demonstrate that schools did make a difference and an exploration of the different variables that contributed to different degrees of "difference" (Edmunds, 1979; Mortimore et al., 1988; Rutter, Maughan, Mortimore & Ouston, 1979; Smith & Tomlinson, 1989). The second response involved a more holistic

approach which focussed on developing identified key areas in schools through specific intervention initiatives (Ainscow, Hopkins, Southworth & West, 1994; Hopkins, 1987). The first approach was categorised as school effectiveness and the second as school improvement (initially restructuring in the United States). It is necessary to provide a brief overview of some of the key literature and research in this field as the initiative examined in this study, the *Learning Schools Initiative*, draws on both a school effectiveness and school improvement approach. The use of a combination of these two approaches has become accepted practice in the field and is discussed in 4.5.

#### 4.4.1 School Effectiveness

Internationally school effectiveness research has adopted a “means-end” (Harris, 2001:8), also referred to as “means-goal” (Scheerens, 1992:10) or process based “input-output” (*ibid.*), approach. Scheerens (1992:8) states that as a rule school effectiveness is analysed at a school level. When considered broadly within the context of organisational theory effectiveness is related to the extent to which a school achieves its core business (output) i.e. learner achievement (*ibid.*). In school effectiveness research learner achievement is correlated with identified school effectiveness characteristics. Attempts are also made to ascribe differences in outputs to certain school characteristics through “...breaking open the ‘black box’ of the school by studying characteristics related to the organisation, form and content of schools” (*ibid.*:38). Scheerens’s (1992:14) model for means-goal relationship between effectiveness criteria is presented in figure 4.1. He identifies what he terms process-support criteria such as solidarity, motivation and continuity as important parts of this model. Examples of these process support criteria include working on a shared vision of education within a teaching team, working with specialist departments and their accompanying consultative bodies, and a certain amount of decision-making delegated from the school management to the school staff. Scheerens (1992:104) also identifies what he terms levers for enhancing school effectiveness and school improvement (these are discussed further in 4. 11).



**Figure 4.1 Means-end relationships between effectiveness criteria (Scheerens 1992:10)**

The School effectiveness movement has contributed to the classification of schools in terms of varying degrees of effectiveness or functionality. In South Africa various measures are being applied to address problems associated with "dysfunctional" schools (Ramatswana, 2005). In this context functionality (or effectiveness) is associated with a focus on outcomes specifically learner achievement and, in a South African context, on matric (Grade 12) results. The recent introduction of a national systemic evaluation at identified grade levels also provides more information in this regard. Programmes such as the Matric Intervention Programme (MIP) or in severe cases more extreme measures (Ramatswana, 2005) are introduced to schools whose learners do not achieve desired results in their final examination. Hopkins (1996) has recently developed a typology of the "growth rate" of schools (from a school improvement perspective) that suggests different interventions for different types of schools. This is presented and discussed in section 4.4.2. A "value-added" approach (Sanders, 2001) is applied to measuring schools performance so that socio-economic factors are taken into account and schools facing challenging circumstances are not disadvantaged in such studies.

School effectiveness studies have tended to focus on the assessment of learner achievement in the cognitive domain (Reynolds, 2001) with a particular emphasis on fundamental skills such as language and arithmetic in primary schools and mother tongue, mathematics and foreign languages in secondary schools (Scheerens, 1992). Suggestions on how school effectiveness should move forward have included the recommendation that the range of outcomes should be broadened (Harris, 2001) and that they should also include outcomes related to the learners' social and affective domains (Fidler, 2001; Reynolds, 2001).

While early school effectiveness research suggested that schools were equally effective across a range of outcomes (Rutter et al., 1979) recent research that applies more statistical techniques has found significant differences in schools as regards their impact on learner achievements (Wilms, 1992). Research has also shown how schools perform differently across subjects and socio-economic areas (Jesson & Gray, 1991). While Hopkins (1994:14) states that the "...single most important contribution of the effective schools movement is that it helped push the dominant behavioural psychological model of learning off centre stage in schools throughout the world", which has resulted in a more optimistic attitude towards the effect of schooling, studies in Sweden (Grosin, 1993) and in the United States (Teddlie, 1996, in Harris & Bennett, 2001) still reveal that once one "...has controlled out the effects of individual pupil background factors and achievement levels there is still a tendency for schools in low socio-economic status areas to do worse

than one would have predicted and for schools in middle-class areas to do better" (Reynolds, 2001:30). Reynolds (2001:30) highlights that of particular concern is the existence of a group of schools "below the regression line" despite the fact that such schools have often received additional financial resources and considerable attention from educational reformers. Ansell (2004) supports this in his research on *Improving Schools Facing Challenging Circumstances* in the United Kingdom and Australia. Ansell (2004) found that while findings suggest that performance in schools facing challenging circumstances (SFCC) has broadly improved since the initial wave of reform in the 1980's this has been less significant than in other schools. His research also indicated that those interviewed felt that "... the gap between those schools that faced challenging circumstances and those not categorised as such had grown" (Ansell, 2004:5). Thus, as mentioned in 4.2, while schools can make a difference, the quality of the school and the socio-economic environment in which it is situated influence the extent to which a school can make difference.

The question is also raised concerning "when is a school considered to be effective?" According to Teddlie and Reynolds (2000) school effectiveness evaluations tend to provide "a snapshot of a school rather than a moving picture" (as quoted in Harris, 2001:12) and tend to neglect conditions outside of the school as well as internal organisational issues that impact on overall effectiveness. Scheerens (1992:9) states that schools only deserve the label "effective" when they have maintained high performance levels over a number of years – when school effectiveness is a stable factor. Perhaps the most common criticism of school effectiveness is its failure to produce theory specifically on what is needed for improvement (Harris, 2001). As Scheerens (1992:14) and others state school effectiveness often focuses on the "what" but not the "why".

Criticisms of school effectiveness research (Harris, 2001:10) further include (i) the approach tends to encourage a view that blames schools and teachers (Elliot, 1996), (ii) educational success is reduced to measurable factors, (iii) it is located in a technical-rationalist framework which includes a discourse of failure and obsession with performance, and (iv) it assumes a narrow mechanistic view of education as process. Ansell's (2004:5) research also indicates that schools facing challenging circumstances felt that a "norm referenced" approach to measure the performance of schools together with a standards model of schooling for inspection was unhelpful as these reinforced the categorisation of "good" and "bad" schools and that there was need for a greater recognition of the problems that schools serving disadvantaged communities faced and an appreciation of how difficult it is for these schools to improve learner achievement. Ansell

(2004:6) does, however, point out that achievement driven research and evaluation has assisted with the more ready identification of schools facing challenging circumstances which has implication for both policy (Reynolds, 2001) and external intervention.

School Effectiveness research has also, through much intensive research, highlighted key areas that contribute towards school effectiveness and which are relevant to the conceptualisation and piloting of the *Learning Schools Initiative* as well as to the focus of this research. It is important to mention that most effective schools research has been carried out in primary schools, in inner cities and in working-class neighbourhoods (Scheerens, 1992:39). South African research yields slightly different findings (Christie & Potterton, 1997)(see 4.8.2). As already mentioned it is not possible within the scope of this research to do justice to the vast volume of school effectiveness research. I have tried to extract key information from primary studies and to draw on work that has already worked on synthesising some of these.

The role of educators in learner achievement is highlighted in both school effectiveness and school improvement studies; it is perhaps important to discuss this upfront together with other findings relevant to this study which are not directly related to specific school effectiveness research. Harris (2001:11) states, "...one of the most powerful and enduring lessons from this research base is that teachers are important determinants of children's educational and social achievements". There is a direct correlation between teacher effectiveness and educational effectiveness (Creemers, 1994). Reynolds (1998) supports this and indicates that the classroom learning level may have two or three times the influence on student achievement than the school level does. In referring to the meta-analysis of school effectiveness research Muller & Roberts (2000:20) support this in their statement that "...the hard evidence says unambiguously that it is in the classroom that the difference is made". Thus while a variety of characteristics are identified as crucial for effective schools in school effectiveness studies the most crucial are those that relate directly to the classroom (see 4.9.5.).

Having said this Harris (2001:11) also highlights that school effectiveness studies have continuously shown that "...effective schools are structurally, symbolically and culturally more tightly linked than less effective ones". They operate more as an organic whole as opposed to loosely joined sub-systems.

Another factor that I feel that is important to separate, although it is only loosely referred to by Scheerens (1992:10) is the question of "...what priority a school gives to increasing

effectiveness or productivity amid other competing value positions". This is perhaps more a characteristic that is on the opposite side of the spectrum in terms of being a 'missing' characteristic but has important implication for school development initiatives. This together with the cultural ethos of a school are closely linked to leadership which tends to be at the top of the list in most school effectiveness research studies (Scheerens, 1992, Sammons, Hillman & Mortimore, 1994). Leadership, especially at the level of head or principal is critically important. Good leadership at this level should ideally promote good leadership at all levels of the school. The role of leadership in effective schools and in school development is discussed in more detail in 4.9.1.

Scheerens (1992:39) states that school effectiveness research findings appear to converge on five factors generally referred to as the five-factor model of school effectiveness:

- strong educational leadership;
- emphasis on acquiring basic skills;
- an orderly and secure environment;
- high expectations of pupil attainment;
- frequent assessment of pupil progress.

Borger , Ching-Lung-Lo, Sung-Sam-Oh & Walberg (1984) produced an analysis of twenty four studies and twenty four review articles and identified eight factors that appeared to be linked to achievement: leadership, school climate, teacher-pupil relationship, curriculum/teaching, evaluation, physical characteristics, financial resources and pupil socio-economic background.

In an analysis of twelve British and American school effectiveness studies, Ralph & Fennessey (1983) state that in attempts to draw commonalities between studies reviewers often conjure up myths and that the following need to be taken into account:

- there is a broad divergence between the various effectiveness studies;
- this divergence is on points like school type (primary/secondary education), selection and operationalisation of independent variables, level of analysis (school, class, pupil), and the statistics by which the effect is expressed;
- basic quantitative data are often missing from the publications, such as the size of the between schools variance. (Adapted from Scheerens 1992:55).

When concluding his overview of major school effectiveness studies, Scheerens (1992:80) identifies three key factors that make a school effective:

- The determination to achieve better results
- Maximisation of actual net learning time.
- Structured teaching.

In addition to these he identifies three supplementary factors related to a multi-level structure:

1. School organisation and management inwardly focused on creating favourable preconditions for effective class instruction.
2. School organisation and management externally focused to safeguard favourable preconditions for effective instruction.
3. Environmental stimuli to motivate the school to be effective (Scheerens, 1992:81).

Scheerens (1992:95) draws his analysis of school effectiveness research together into an integrated model of effectiveness based on promoting conditions at various levels: the classroom, the school and the school environment. He works on the premise that high-level conditions should reinforce lower level conditions. Conditions at the classroom level are: structured teaching, effective learning and opportunity to learn. At the school level (meso) he identifies the following characteristics:

- pressure for achievement as an explicit choice in school policy;
- aspects of instructional leadership;
- recruitment of qualified staff;
- evaluative potential of the school;
- financial and material resources of the school;
- school climate.

Scheerens (1992) does not specifically describe the school environment necessary to support the above but rather focuses on variables that need to be taken into account when analysing this level (i.e. incentives, involvement of parents, etc.).

A further review by Bosker and Scheerens (1997)(as cited in Macbeath & Mortimore, 2001) of seminal school effectiveness studies lists 719 factors associated with school effectiveness. Sammons et al. (1994) conducted a meta-analysis of school effectiveness factors and reduced these to eleven salient factors:

1. professional leadership;
2. shared vision and goals;
3. a learning environment;
4. concentration on learning and teaching;
5. high expectations;
6. positive reinforcement;
7. monitoring progress;
8. pupil rights and responsibilities;
9. purposeful teaching;
10. a learning organisation;
11. home-school partnership (MacBeath & Mortimore, 2001:7).

Although research aligned with school effectiveness has traditionally steered away from examining “non effective” schools for fear of further damaging the image of public schooling (Reynolds, 2001:39), Reynolds (2001) stresses the importance of analysing dysfunctional schools. He states that it is important to understand how non-effective schools became effective. Meyers’s 1994 study (referred to in MacBeath & Mortimore, 2001) further emphasises that it is important not to assume that ineffective schools are simply lacking in the characteristics of effective schools. She refers to “troubled” schools as having their own individual clustering of “antithetical” factors such as “...a dynamic mix of student ambivalence, low staff expectations, a pervasive negative ethos, weak or inconsistent leadership” (MacBeath & Mortimore, 2001:8). Rosenholz (also referred to in Macbeath & Mortimore, 2001:8) affirms this in a comparative study of high consensus (“moving”) and low consensus (“stuck”) schools. The latter tend to be characterised by boredom, punitiveness and self-defensiveness.

While lists of characteristics linked to learner achievement provide a guide for those working with schools, especially in the area of school improvement and development, there is need for an intensive unpacking of the dynamics that activate, support and sustain these characteristics. The school improvement movement has to some extent attempted to do this through actively engaging in these areas through various improvement projects and more recently the move towards a merger between school effectiveness and school improvement approaches (see 4.5) provides greater opportunity for an in-depth analysis and explanation of what makes a school effective and how to apply different strategies to activate and change components within different types of schools (Hopkins, 1996).

#### 4.4.2 School Improvement

The school improvement movement has primarily focused on improving schools from within. The history of school improvement can be divided into three phases (Reynolds, Hopkins, Potter & Chapman, 2004:1). During the initial phase of school improvement (1970s and early 1980s) initiatives in the field tended to be “free floating” (*ibid.*) and only loosely connected to student learning outcomes. Phase two (early 1990s) emerged from initial interaction between the school improvement and school effectiveness communities. This resulted in a greater multi-level focus and more consideration of “what works” in terms of improving learner outcomes. The third phase also referred to as the third age (*ibid.*) focuses on attempts to draw lessons and exemplars from various school reform initiatives.

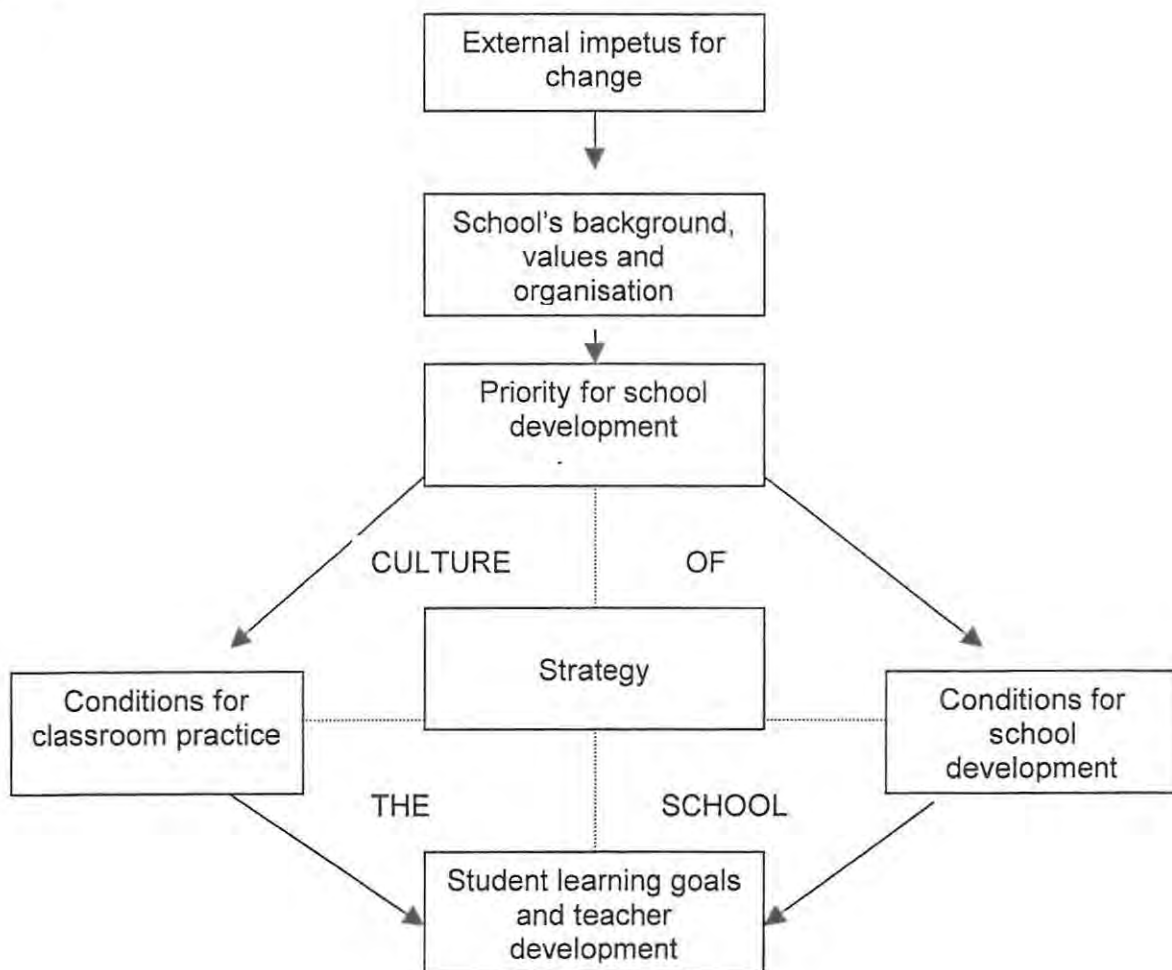
School improvement movements have highlighted development with an emphasis on process measures as opposed to achievement outcomes (Harris, 2001). More recent developments in this field indicate a move towards broadening this focus. Central to school improvement is the identification and implementation of improvement strategies (process) necessary to bring about identified change (Fullan, 1992). Hopkins (1996:31–32) identifies two ways in which school improvement is generally used:

- (i) the common sense meaning which relates to general efforts to make schools better places for learners to learn, and
- (ii) a more technical or specific definition which regards school improvement as a strategy for educational change that enhances student outcomes as well as strengthening the school’s capacity for managing change (see 4.12.).

As Harris (2001) points out, the diversity of school improvement initiatives makes it difficult to provide a succinct analysis of the field. Most school improvement initiatives, however, rest on two key assumptions (i) that schools have the capacity to improve themselves, and (ii) school improvement involves cultural change that is best achieved through working within each school (Harris, 2001:13). The first assumption must also be linked to the factor identified by Scheerens (1992) and mentioned in 4.3. that the school not only **can** change, but also has the **desire** to change (see 4.12). Thus, while school improvement is packaged in different forms by different initiatives, central to most is the principle of the self-renewing school (Hopkins, 1996) and related to this the development of organisational capacity for change and growth (Hopkins, et al., 1994). Hopkins'

(1996:41) framework for school improvement rests on three major elements: the “givens”, the “strategic dimension” and the “capacity-building dimension” (see figure 4.2).

The “givens” are aspects that are more resilient to change such as the school’s background, organisation and background. Hopkins (1996) points out that while most school improvement initiatives mention these as explanatory factors little is done at a coal face level to address them. He also highlights that a school’s organisation is a reflection of its values and that this is often a barrier against change. The “strategic dimension” symbolises the practical dimension of the link between priorities, strategy and outcomes and is the “...deliberate actions taken by a school staff in order to implement identified curriculum or organizational priorities” (*ibid.*:43). The final aspect “capacity building” involves a direct focus on creating supportive internal conditions to support and sustain change.



**Figure 4.2. A framework for school improvement (Hopkins 1996:42)**

Hopkins et al's. (1994) categorisation of school improvement into (i) organic, and (ii) mechanistic approaches provides a broad framework for considering initiatives and research in the field. Organic projects are those with broad principles of general strategies in which schools are likely to flourish, while mechanistic ones have direct guidelines and highly specific strategies prescribed (Harris, 2001: 13).

Fidler (2001:57) suggests an alternative classification based on locus of control which he describes as "...the expression of where the power to make decisions lies and, coincidentally, the extent to which the activity is situational". Fidler (2001) identifies two types of initiatives with subcategories:

- (i) external initiatives which are generated at a national, state or local level in which schools and a generic improvement approach is generally promoted. These are divided into external imposition and external invitation.
- (ii) internal initiatives are also externally driven but are tailored to each schools' needs (e.g. The School Development Project, Hargreaves & Hopkins, 1991). These are divided into projects that focus on internal school improvement processes and those which focus on internal school improvement outcomes.

As with school effectiveness, it is impossible to discuss all school improvement initiatives within the scope of this study. I have, therefore, focussed on key initiatives that have direct bearing on this study. Two of the most significant international school improvement projects are the International School Improvement Project (ISIP) and Improving Education for All Project (IQEA). Both of these are categorised as "organic" projects (Harris, 2001) and both, although initiated by external agencies, take the specific context of the project schools into account. The ISIP was conducted over a period of four years (1982–1986) and was co-ordinated by the OCED and involved fourteen countries. This project centred on the principle that the school is the centre of change and promoted the long-term goal of moving schools that were in a position of self-renewal and growth (Harris, 2001). It also highlighted a multi level as well as a holistic and systemic approach to development and change. The project worked towards producing case studies and development strategies for school improvement (Hopkins, 1987; Van Velzen, Miles, Ekholm, Hameyer & Robin, 1985). The ISIP suggested that school improvement rested on the following assumptions:

- *The school as the centre of change* – external reforms need to be sensitive to the nature and needs of individual schools. Also highlighted the need for a classroom exceeding perspective without ignoring the classroom.

- *A systemic approach to change* – school improvement is a carefully planned and managed process that takes time over a number of years.
- *A key focus for change is the 'internal conditions of the schools'* - not only teaching and learning activities but also aspects that support this such as school procedures, role allocation and resource use.
- *Accomplishing educational goals more effectively* - this focuses on educational goals as the central mission of schooling but assumes a broader view than just scores on achievement tests.
- *A multi-level perspective* – while the school is the site of change, other influential layers need to be taken into account and roles of teachers, heads, governors, parents, support people and local authorities need to be defined, harnessed and committed to the process of school improvement.
- *Integrative implementation strategies* – implies a link between “top-down” and “bottom-up” approaches. “Top-down” provides policy aims, an overall strategy and implementation plans whereas “bottom-up” involves diagnosis, priority goal setting and implementation to complement this.
- *The drive towards institutionalisation* – this is based on the premise that change is only successful when it is integrated into the school culture. Implementation by itself is not sufficient (Hopkins, 2001b: 55).

The IQEA project, initiated in 1991 (and still ongoing), commenced with geographical clusters of schools within the UK and later adopted by clusters in other countries. It is recognised as one of the most successful school improvement projects in the United Kingdom (Harris, 2001). Like the ISIP this project focused on building collaborative cultures in schools (*ibid.*). It is based on a holistic “classroom exceeding” (Ainscow & Hopkins, 1991:4) design that aims to “...enhance student outcomes through focussing on the teaching-learning process as well as strengthening the school’s capacity for change” (Hopkins, 2001b:63). Scheerens (1992:107) describes the overall vision of the IQEA as “...to produce a model of school development (see 4.7) and a programme of support that strengthens the schools’ ability to provide quality education for all pupils” (see 4.7). The project includes a contract between the partners in the project [i.e. the school and its teachers and in some cases the LEA (Local Education Authority) or sponsoring team and the IQEA team] (Hopkins, 2001b). The contract aims at clarifying expectations and establishing conditions necessary for successful development (Scheerens 1992). The project also requires each school to appoint project co-ordinators and to ensure that a critical mass of teachers was actively involved in the development work. Like the ISIP the

school is perceived as the centre of change and specific contextual factors are taken into account in an effort to improve outcomes for staff and learners.

The IQEA is based on the following principles:

- School improvement is about enhancing students' learning.
- Vision of the school is shared by and contributed to by all members of the school community.
- External pressures are internal growth opportunities.
- Encouragement of collaboration and empowerment.
- Monitoring and evaluation are everybody's responsibility (Reynolds et al. 2004).

A key finding of the first phase of the IQEA was that "...school improvement works best when a clear and practical focus for development is linked to simultaneous work on the internal conditions within the school" (Ainscow & Hopkins, as quoted in Gray et al., 1996:43). In keeping with Hopkins' typology of schools the IQEA found that where the internal conditions of the school did not support change and development, then the initial phase of the project was spent creating internal conditions (both school and classroom level) to support change (Gray et al. 1996). Hopkins (1996) states that work on identified priorities is limited until the internal conditions facilitate change.

Other significant school improvement projects are the *Schools Make a Difference Project* (Meyers, 1995) and the *Lewisham School Improvement Project* both of which emphasise the role of the Local Education Authority in development (Harris 2001). The *Cardiff School Improvement Project* (Reynolds, Davie & Phillips, 1989) is also recognised as a watershed school improvement project especially in the light of its sustained results. This project was evaluated as being successful due to the following characteristics which it embodied: ownership, interaction between local knowledge and effectiveness literature, strong involvement of senior staff, incentives (higher degree for participants), focus on real-life problems and change which was "joined-up" (Reynolds et al., 2004:20).

Of a more mechanistic approach are those such as the *High Reliability Schools Project* (Stringfield 1995) that worked on comparing schools to highly effective corporate organisations. Other examples include: *Success for All* (Slavin et al., 1996), the *Barclay Calvert Project* (Stringfield, 1995) and the *Models of Teaching Approach* (Joyce & Weil, 1996). The *Success for All Project* was introduced to schools following a process where the school staff examine the project concept and materials and a secret ballot is taken where at least 80% of the staff must vote in favour of the project.

There are many other school improvement projects which have significant findings (see Reynolds et al., 2004; Catalogue of School Reform Models); as previously mentioned, it is not possible to touch on all of these within the scope of this study. The field of school improvement also consists of many different approaches, perspectives and frameworks each with its own vast body of information. School improvement, especially during its infancy, was criticised for its neglect of the “primacy of instruction” (Teddlie & Reynolds, 2000: 47). The “third age” of school improvement (Hopkins, 2001b:70) sees a far greater emphasis on the classroom level in an attempt to improve learner achievement. In his summary of this “new paradigm” (*ibid*:70) Hopkins identifies a salient feature as “...an enhanced focus upon the importance of pupil outcomes. Instead of the earlier emphasis upon changing the processes of schools, the focus is now upon seeing if these changes are powerful enough to affect pupil outcomes”.

While Hopkins (2001b) states that the research base on the effects of school improvement strategies is very weak there is, however, consensus similar to the school effectiveness distinction between different levels of school functionality (refer to 4.4.1) in that different schools often require different intervention strategies. Recent research into schools facing challenging circumstances (SFCC) supports the concept of a “competence line” (Meyers 1995, as cited in Reynolds, 2004) below which “...the school cannot use normal processes to avert decline or sustain improvement” (Reynolds et al. 2004:4). Hopkins’ (2001b:45) typology for the categorisation of intervention strategies is useful for those working with schools at different levels of effectiveness. Hopkins (2001a; 2001b) presents a three-level categorisation of schools: “failing” or “ineffective”, “low-achieving” and “good” or “effective” and proposes different strategies to target each level of school. He refers to these as Type I, Type II and Type III strategies (Hopkins, 2001b) and describes them as follows:

*Type I* strategies are used to assist failing schools become moderately effective. These need to deliver a high level of external support as failing schools cannot improve themselves. They also have to involve a clear and direct focus on a limited number of basic curriculum and organizational issues in order to build the confidence and competence to continue.

*Type II* strategies are those that assist a moderately effective school to become effective. These schools need to refine their developmental priorities to focus on specific teaching and learning issues and to build the capacity within the school to support this work. These

strategies also involve a certain level of external support but it is possible for a school in this position to improve by itself.

*Type III* are those strategies that assist effective schools to remain so. In this case external support although welcomed is not necessary and these schools can search out their own support and networks (Hopkins, 2001b)

Hopkins (2001b:46) is optimistic that further action research in this area will assist in a more specific identification of the nature of these strategies and towards a "...full conceptualisation of school improvement by linking 'type' of strategy to various stages of school development".

#### **4.5 Towards a merging of school effectiveness and school improvement**

Recently the strength of using school effectiveness and school improvement as complementary perspectives has been recognised and applied in initiatives and studies (Gray et al., 1996; Harris & Bennett, 2001). While I have considered the IQEA project under 4.4. above, it is cited as a project which draws on both school effectiveness and school improvement literature (Harris, 2001). There are other examples of such projects that were initiated during the 1990s (e.g. the *Barclay Calvert Project* and the *Halton Project*). Harris (2001:17) states that while on the one hand "...school improvement research offers an excellent testing ground for school effectiveness theory and a means of exploring the link between process and outcomes... school effectiveness offers school improvement a secure basis for making evaluative judgements about programme impact". However, Harris (2001) highlights concern about the lack of theory across both fields, and that a closer merging should result in greater theory-building especially through "empirical testing and refinement of existing models" (Sammons, 1999, as quoted in Harris, 2001:18). Reynolds (2001:35) sees the value of merging the two fields but cautions about transference of findings into different contexts and the need for projects to take school contexts into account and then to find suitable interventions based on findings from both fields. Fidler (2001:47) perceives the merging of school effectiveness and school improvement to be logical in that school effectiveness research identifies the features that make a school effective and school improvement identifies a process of how to achieve this.

School effectiveness and school improvement essentially converge in improving school quality. Reynolds (2001) identifies the key aspects of this as follows:

- Pupil outcomes in academic (and often social) areas are regarded as the key “success criteria”.
- These outcomes are increasingly assessed by use of “hard” quantitative data that is regarded as necessary to build commitment and confidence amongst those taking part and to measure the success or failure of the project initiative.
- Bodies of knowledge from school effectiveness, school improvement and school development are used to resource programmes. A problem-centred orientation is used in terms of “what works”.
- The learning level, the instructional behaviour of teachers and the classroom level are increasingly being targeted for explicit programme attention as well as the school level. This relates to the “nested” layers approach (Purkey & Smith, 1983).
- Multiple “levers” are pulled to encourage school and teacher development with the focus on the school owning the process of change being replaced by a concern to utilize all reinforcers and initiators of change from outside the school (the local education or district authority) and indeed the political agenda to stimulate and provoke change.
- Not all initiatives have been “taken up” equally by all schools there is therefore a need for programmes to share commitments to enhanced “fidelity” of implementation and to enhanced organisational reliability in the take-up of the various programme characteristics (adapted from Reynolds, 2001: 35–37).

Taylor et al. (2003:5) in their work on systemic school reform in South Africa highlight the need for a combination of a “...systemically constructed combination of accountability and support measures to break the poor record internationally in South Africa of success in improving poorly functioning sections of the school system”. This requires a combination of what they term “outside in” and “inside out” approaches (*ibid.*:4) and giving attention to capacity building at higher levels of the education system to enable long term sustainability of initiatives. Thus while it is still acknowledged that the school is the site of change there is growing recognition that many schools cannot obtain quality without quality external intervention and support, not just from project partners in the short term, but from the Department of Education in the long term (Taylor, 2007 (forthcoming))(see 4.10).

There is also an expressed need from researchers linked to both the school improvement and school effectiveness approaches for more context specific research that advances understanding of the field (Harris, 2001; Reynolds, 2001; Scheerens; 1992). This is particularly relevant to schools facing challenging circumstances internationally as well as schools in developing countries. Harris (2001:19) states that finely grained case studies are not within either the school improvement or school effectiveness traditions and consequently "...rich case study explanations combining the expertise from both fields are much needed". In addition Harris (2001) promotes the use of both process and outcome measures to determine the success of combined school effectiveness and school improvement initiatives. She anticipates that in doing this researchers in both communities will be in a better position to determine the causal relationships between school process and outcome.

#### **4.6 The influence of organisational development**

Both the school improvement and school effectiveness movements have drawn on different theoretical aspects of organisational theory. Where relevant, school effectiveness studies have drawn on organisational theory and research in terms of what constitutes effective organisations and linked this within a school context to learner achievement (Fidler, 2003; Scheerens, 1992; Scott, 2003). Improvement studies have essentially consulted and integrated effective practice related to "what makes organisations work" and applied techniques associated with this (Dalin, 1998; Davidoff & Lazarus, 2002; Harris & Bennett, 2001; Harris, Bennett & Preedy, 2003). Christie (1998:286) states that schools provide the "...organisational environment for systemic, formalised learning and teaching" which is structured around the axes of time and space (*ibid.*:287). She points out that while schools may differ widely as individual institutions, it is rare to come upon a school and not know it as such. While it is acknowledged upfront that schools are different to other types of organisations, especially in the light of their growing role of social responsibility (Senge et al., 2000) and educational purpose (Davidoff & Lazarus, 2002), there is much organisational theory that can be applied to schools and other educational institutions (Harris & Bennett, 2001; Harris et al., 2003). Organisational theory is a field on its own with volumes of research and theory which must be touched on here but cannot be covered in depth. In this section I introduce certain concepts within the context of organisational development (i.e. change, relationships, school culture) which are discussed in greater depth in subsequent sections of this study.

In *School Development: theories and strategies*, Dalin (1998) groups organisational theory into five broad perspectives (structural, humanistic, political, symbolic and integrated) and discusses how various aspects of these theories relate to the school as an organisation. Scheerens (1992) adopts a different categorisation of organisational theory and discusses different organisational-theoretical views on effectiveness. Harris et al. (2003) provide a collection of papers that draw on different perspectives of organisational theory and which discuss these within the context of school improvement and school effectiveness. Dalin (1998:65) sees organisational perspectives as "...nothing more than tools, ways of looking at reality, kinds of windows". He uses this analogy to promote the view that the particular frame limits each of these "windows" and each new window provides a new view and deeper understanding of the school as an organisation. Researchers and practitioners should therefore, where relevant and applicable, draw on different organisational perspectives which in turn should lead to a deeper understanding of school improvement (*ibid.*).

Organisational theory is applied within an organisational development approach (Davidoff & Lazarus, 2002; Harris & Bennett 2001; Schmuck & Runkel, 1985) in an attempt to bring about positive change linked to organisational improvement and effectiveness. An organisational development approach acknowledges that schools are complex living social organisations that function within a particular culture (Davidoff & Lazarus, 2002; Whitaker, 1998). It also recognises that essentially organisations involve people, and if the psychological climate of change is not addressed then all attempts at development will fail (see 4.9.3). In addition Senge's (Senge, 1994; Senge et al., 2000) work on learning organisations has become a key component of organisational development and especially in relation to sustaining development. Organisational development also recognises that important factors such as entry to the school as an organisation (Schmuck & Miles, 1971) and, linked to this, organisational readiness (Armenakis & Harris, 2002) form an integral part of any intervention and can derail an initiative if not considered prior to implementation. Organisational readiness is also related to Hopkin's (2001) strategies typology (see 4.4.2) in that organisations may be ready for certain interventions but not for others. In South Africa entry into schools and more specifically into classrooms remains a sensitive area. In her work in South African schools Davidoff (1993:82) highlights the importance of first steps such as "...teachers welcoming outsiders into their classrooms, wanting to become more creative, or actively engaging in materials development". While sometimes overlooked, these initial commitments can be considered significant developments in themselves.

Davidoff & Lazarus (2002:xviii) describe organisational development as a process that looks at change from a developmental point of view which involves "...greater changes over time, involving restructuring of the system towards more complexity and more differentiation". Differentiation provides opportunity to focus on and gain greater understanding of the individual aspects of an organisation and implies internal restructuring of an organisation to meet identified goals. Organisational development therefore becomes synonymous with whole school development when the sum of the parts is addressed to improve the performance of the whole.

Dalin (1998:72–78) identifies the important dimensions of the school as an organisation that either facilitate or safeguard organisational improvement and effectiveness. These are: (i) *values* -school values as they appear in ideologies, philosophies, ceremonies and symbols, (ii) *structures* – decision-making, task structure and communication structure, (iii) *relations* –human relations in the school system and considers power, interaction, and norms of both the individual and the group, (iv) *strategies* –the way the school is run, including mechanisms and methods for developing the school and strategies for solving problems, making decisions, setting boundaries and giving rewards, and (v) *surroundings* – both the local community and society at large. Dalin (1998:132) identifies three main groups of strategies for school improvement: individual strategies, organisational strategies and system strategies and highlights that while development at the site of the school (organisation) is a priority, the relationship and interaction between these three levels is essential if reforms are to be successful at a national level (*ibid.*:252).

#### **4.7 School development**

The term "school development" is primarily applied within school improvement literature to refer to a particular approach of improving schools that is structured around the identification of priorities, planning to address these priorities and the implementation of action plans or school development plans (Hargreaves et al., 1989). However, as mentioned in 4.3, the terms school development and school improvement are often also used interchangeably. For example Hopkins' (1996) definition of school development is the same as his definition of school improvement. Hopkins (1996:33) states that "...school development is a process through which schools adapt external changes to internal purpose". The success of this process is measured through enhanced outcomes for teachers and learners, an accommodating school culture and relevant internal organisational structures (*ibid.*). Hopkins (1996:32) describes school development as a dynamic concept and describes "developing schools" as those "...that are able to 'survive

with integrity' in times of change". Both school improvement and school development suggest an active process centred on bringing about positive change and actualising change theory and sustaining growth within a school organisational (and often broader systems) context (see 4.12).

Whole school development, as the term states, involves a multi-level approach that attempts to address all aspects of a school that work together to ensure quality teaching and learning. Akyeampong (2004:7) relates the treatment of schools as the "site of change" within school improvement initiatives as the origin of "whole school" change. Van Velzen et al. (1985:48) define the process of school improvement as involving systematic programmes that focus on the school as a whole and which extend over a period of time. Whole school development refers to a "...range of interventions which are based on the principle that schools are social organisations which need sustained efforts in order to improve; and that such change must of necessity encompass a range of activities which address the school as a whole rather than a set of discrete parts" (Bayona & Sadiki, 1999:8). Hopkins (2001a:6) states that in order to be effective "...individual initiatives have to be linked together into a whole school improvement strategy designed to meet the learning needs of students in a particular school". He further highlights that this strategy is most likely to be successful if it also addresses the organisational capacity of the school.

Some school development approaches are explicitly located within an organisational development paradigm (Dalin, 1998; Davidoff, 2002; Harris & Bennett, 2001), while others integrate aspects of organisational development approach but focus more directly on the improvement of teaching and learning (Hopkins, 1996). This appears to be linked to the priority needs of the school where schools facing challenging circumstances, particularly those in developing countries, may need to secure basic functionality. This in turn relates to Hopkins' (1996) identification of different strategies for different schools. However, the school development process appears to unfold according to variations of a common pattern (Hargreaves & Hopkins, 1991; Hopkins, 1996).

The school development planning process initiated by OFSTED and described in the document *Improving Schools* (OFSTED, 1994) generally follows the cyclical process suggested in the *Planning for School Development Project* (Hargreaves et al., 1989; Hargreaves & Hopkins, 1991) which involves a school audit (identifying developmental priorities), construction (developing supporting action plans which spell out targets, tasks, responsibilities and timeframes) and then implementation and evaluation. This approach has a strong focus on implementation where priorities are addressed through coherent

strategy. Other key aspects of this approach are (i) the anticipation of “internal turbulence” (Huberman, 1992 in Gray et al, 1996:34) and the anticipation of an “implementation dip” (Fullan, 1991 in Gray et al: 34), and (ii) the analysis and adaptation of the school’s internal conditions to support initiated change. The internal conditions that facilitate development include a focus on the school’s management arrangements that involve transformational frameworks (policies, systems and strategies), clearly defined roles and responsibilities and ways of working which are largely cultural (Hopkins, 1996). Hargreaves & Hopkins (1991) also differentiate between a school’s development and maintenance activities and stress that, if there is not an element of the schools activities dedicated to development, then change will not be sustained. The interplay between development and maintenance activities is a dynamic process whereby development supports maintenance and development changes are integrated into maintenance. Hopkins (1996:40) identifies the interrelationship between structure and culture as the key dynamic necessary for effective and sustained development (4.9.2). The transformation of school culture within this context is addressed through adaptation of internal conditions to accommodate change (Hopkins, 1996)(4.1.2).

Hopkins (1996) highlights that since there is little known about school improvement (development) strategies there is a need for greater exploration of these within a more differential framework (i.e. schools at different levels of functionality, see 4.4.2). He also poses the question of whether school development is a naturally occurring phenomenon or whether it requires some form of external support and “...are different support strategies required for different schools at different stages of development?” (see 4.4.2) (Hopkins, 1996:47). Thus both intervention strategies and support strategies need to be context specific and may vary within and across developed and developing countries. Schools facing challenging circumstances (Ansell, 2004) will also require different strategies to other schools (Hopkins, 1996; 2001a). Schools facing challenging circumstances in South Africa may also require different strategies to those facing challenging circumstances in New Zealand (Ansell 2004). It is therefore appropriate that a generic model such as that of the *Comer School Development Program* (Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, 2005:1) states that this model is implemented differently “...depending on the personalities of the staff and the specific needs of the school and its students” and this could be extended to include many other differentiation factors.

In addition Hargreaves & Hopkins (as cited in Hopkins, 1996:46–47) raise the following questions about the school development process:

- What is the impact (intended or unintended) of the selection and sequencing of a particular set of priorities and chosen strategies on the deeper level of school structures and change?
- Can measurable links be made between the impact of development work on a priority and changes in (i) student outcomes, and (ii) school culture?
- How far does the chosen strategy for development itself affect the dialectical relationship between changing structures and cultures?
- How are those forms of social organization that generate and sustain certain values and belief systems (from structure to culture) and vice versa (from culture to structure) created?

Research into South African school development projects (examined in more detail in 4.8.2), prior to the introduction of the Whole School Evaluation policy in 2001, indicates that most of these projects follow a similar process (Christie & Potterton, 1997) to that described by Hargreaves & Hopkins (1991) of prioritising needs and drawing up school development plans. Christie & Potterton (1997:38) state that, given the number of schools in South Africa that are organisationally dysfunctional, many school development initiatives adopt an organisational approach. In her reflections as a Circuit Manager in the Western Cape, Colyn (2001) highlights how the need to focus on management issues can detract from advancing to curriculum interventions. She also highlights the complexities of school development within a highly politicised South African context where defensiveness and dependency are both dominant factors. While numerous initiatives aim at improving aspects of teaching and learning in South African schools, these are often ad hoc initiatives and are generally not contextualised within the broader school development process. The National Whole School Evaluation policy (South Africa. DoE, 2001e) stipulates that schools should have school improvement plans (also sometimes referred to as school development plans) (see 4.2 and 6.5.2.4). In addition the Integrated Quality Management System (6.5.2.5) stipulates that schools should produce a staff improvement plan. Ideally these documents should support each other or be merged to form an integrated and comprehensive school improvement plan.

Each Provincial Department of Education in South Africa is responsible for designing and promoting a process by which schools develop both a school improvement and a staff improvement plan. Education Development Officers are tasked with supporting their schools in the development and implementation of these plans. Some provinces adopt a more intensive process to school development planning than others. For example the

Eastern Cape Department of Education through the Imbewu Project has initiated an Education and Management Development programme (2004) and the Kwazulu Natal Department of Education has a similar programme in the form of TSEM (Towards Effective School Management 2003). Both of these programmes promote a school development process linked to vision crafting, needs analysis and planning.

## **4.8 School reform and development in South Africa post 1994**

### **4.8.1 Initial educational transformation and school reform**

The establishment of a new national department of education post 1994 heralded in a new era for South African schools. New policy focused not only on ensuring democratic school communities that respect the rights of both educators and learners and raise the standards of education through the introduction of new curricula but also on "levelling the playing fields" in terms of improving the quality of all schools (see 2.2 and 6.5.2). The White Paper on Education and Training published in March 1995 highlighted the plight of schools in historically disadvantaged communities and called for the restoration of a culture of teaching and learning together with greater accountability. In addition the paper called for planned sustainable development rooted in the restoration of ownership of schools to their communities through the establishment of governing bodies and other structures. National conferences such as *Improving Education for All* (hosted in Cape Town in 1994) and a *Whole School Development Conference* (hosted in Cape Town in 1995) provided opportunity for education researchers and practitioners to discuss challenges related to improving the quality of South African education in all schools for all learners.

In addition, both government and non-governmental organisations initiated a number of school improvement initiatives. Many of these initiatives make reference to school development and use approaches based stringently or loosely on different development models affiliated to different theoretical perspectives. The involvement of different NGOs and other development organisations has been introduced in section 3.9 of this study and will be touched on here again with reference to the nature and findings of these interventions. South Africa's political past impacts greatly on all education initiatives. School development, as with other change processes, has to be introduced and implemented sensitively so as to address South Africa's unique education and

development's cultural, historical and socio-economic features and challenges (Colyn, 2001).

#### **4.8.2 School Development Research in South Africa**

The introduction of a new education and training system in South Africa has gone hand in hand with raising the standards of school education with a not unproblematic emphasis on equality (Taylor, 2007 (forthcoming)). School improvement linked with quality enhancement has become an integral part of this vision. While it is also acknowledged that educational improvement, and hence change, is generally a complex process (see 4.12) the legacy of South Africa's apartheid system with implications for both human agency and structure further complicate this process. Determining the impact of development initiatives especially as regards success and failure requires unpacking complex dynamics often in highly politicised and sensitive contexts. Roberts (2001:31) reiterates this in the conclusion to her report for the Joint Education Trust when she states "...while the dedication of project implementers and their commitment to change has been evident ...the scale of the problem which they are trying to address is enormous".

Although the "state of knowledge about South African schools" has improved dramatically especially since 2003 (Taylor, 2007:1 (forthcoming)) there is still a dire need for in-depth research particularly regarding the practicalities of developing schools (Christie & Potterton, 1997) into safe environments that support quality teaching and learning and how to address the improvement of basic education (HRC, 2006).

Two of the initial primary research reports on school development initiatives are those produced by the University of the Witwatersrand Education Department (Christie & Potterton, 1997) and the Joint Education Trust (as part of the Research on School Development Programme established in 2000)(Roberts, 2001). These together with other key research papers and evaluations are discussed below.

Christie & Potterton's research (1997) was conducted with thirteen non-governmental agencies (identified by NGOs working in school development) engaged in whole school development and explored their aims and approaches to school development as well the nature, duration and frequency of their interventions. This research revealed that the aims of these organisations were broadly to:

- Develop strategies to improve teaching and learning in schools.

- Improve leadership and management capacity.
- Involve all stakeholders in the school.
- Embark on strategic or development planning to improve the school (Christie & Potterton, 1997:38).

As mentioned in 4.7 this research also revealed that the approaches taken by these organisations to school development were similar. Most involved a situational analysis, prioritisation of needs and school development planning. Some of the organisations adopted organisational development approaches in an attempt to address the lack of organisational functionality in many schools. Most of the organisations also included a process of self-evaluation and some had developed performance indicators to monitor the schools' progress. Nine of the thirteen organisations acknowledged that school change was a long-term process while the others adopted a short-term workshop approach. Christie & Potterton (1997:41–42) compiled a set of guidelines for school development planning based on this research. In summary these guidelines suggest:

- Agencies need to create opportunities for schools to engage in their own development planning and where necessary to initiate the process and offer support.
- Agencies engaged in school development planning should be encouraged to assist schools in identifying problem areas and take responsibility for tackling these.
- Structures in the schools must be legitimate to facilitate school development.
- The entire school staff and representatives, from the parent to the student community, should be involved in the initial meetings to discuss the school development process.
- A process must be established for assessing the schools needs. This must not be a once off event and must include classroom observation, interviews with role players, SWOT analysis and other types of reflection.
- A meeting where all the needs in the school can be discussed should be organised. Key development areas in the school need to be prioritised.
- A school development committee (led by the principal and including SGB parent and student representatives) should be mandated to take planning further.
- The school development committee (SDC) should draw up the school development plan, which should include action plans, time frames, area of

responsibility and budgets. The SDC should establish subcommittees to assist in areas such as curriculum, discipline, etc.

- The SDC must provide the school community with regular feedback on progress.
- At an agreed time the school community needs to meet to review progress and establish further needs.
- Achievements accomplished in the development process need to be celebrated.

In addition to the above, Muller & Roberts (2000:21) in their analysis of school reform in South Africa state "...the design and specification of the intervention must be as tight, concrete and clear as possible". They also highlight that school improvement in high poverty areas requires "external interventions" that must be capable of building instructional capacity (educators, learners and materials) in a co-ordinated way that will make large and lasting changes in this area.

In 2001 the Joint Education Trust conducted research into twelve South African school reform projects forms. Roberts (2001) does not refer to the names of the projects in her research and hence the names are not mentioned here. Some of these projects were categorised as specifically following a school development planning approach where "... there is a singular focus on organisational development and no engagement with curriculum-related matters" (Roberts, 2001:7) while others applied "combination" (simultaneous focus on management -and curriculum-related matters) and "multi level interventions" (where projects simultaneously work with institutions at various level of the education system e.g. schools and district offices) (*ibid.*). While some form of school development was inherent in all these initiatives it took different forms. Most of the school development projects in the study were initiated between 1996 and 1997 while the combination projects were developed and initiated in 1998 and 1999. Four of the projects in this study were categorised as specifically having adopted a "school development planning" framework where the focus tended to be more on organisation development as opposed to specific classroom interventions. These projects drew heavily on organisational development theory and aimed at developing greater self-reliance and stakeholder involvement in schools. They also placed high emphasis on the role of human agency in bringing about qualitative change in school. Roberts (2001:9) states that school development planning projects essentially "...placed greater emphasis on personal mastery and personal change as a pre-requisite for organisational change" (see 4.9.4) It was assumed that organisational development would have a ripple effect and ultimately improve the quality of teaching and learning. These projects essentially followed a process of reflection, needs analysis, developing a vision, mission and development plan

and implementing development projects. In addition to specialised training on development planning, the projects also provided specialised input in areas such as leadership development (for a range of staff), management skills, administrative skills training and School Governing Body and Representative Council of Learners training. They also often focused on the development of “soft skills” (*ibid.*) such as conflict management, team building and management styles. Following external evaluation all but one of these projects was adjusted to include classroom interventions and/or a multi-level intervention.

In keeping with recent trends towards a multilevel approach to school reform most South African school reform projects have tended to focus on both classroom and organisational development. This is supported by the findings of the Joint Education Trust (Roberts 2001), which indicated that seven of the twelve projects in this study followed a multi-level approach. All of these were introduced following the implementation of Curriculum 2005. As with the development planning projects, there was an emphasis on human agency and empowerment of the individual so as to bring about positive change at both a classroom and school level (see 4.9.4). In these projects there was a greater weighting on classroom level as opposed to other levels based on the assumption that teacher development would automatically impact on learner achievement.

The three multi-level projects which addressed both schools and the Department of Education (usually the district office) promoted a school-by-school approach to school reform. They worked on the premise that large-scale reform needed to be implemented by the Department of Education and that development practices needed to be integrated into the educational process as opposed to being “add-on” components. A primary focus of these projects was building Department of Education capacity to support curriculum delivery. One of these projects was noted as a model with great potential for changing schooling and has promoted an approach that has become popular in the South African school reform movement. This approach entails offering change management programmes to a cross section of the school system (i.e. from school managers to the head of the provincial department of education). Problems associated with this approach include lack of buy-in and lack of role clarity on the part of District officials (e.g. monitoring versus support) as well as integrating structures and processes into the existing functioning of the District Office.

Eleven of the twelve projects in the study were implemented by NGOs whose project objectives embodied empowerment, development and participation. However, a common

problem experienced by these projects was that they "...lacked the mechanisms to compel schools to change or institute the reforms which they promoted" (Roberts, 2001:14). The twelfth project implemented by the Department of Education with the specific goal of improving Grade 12 results placed less emphasis on participation and more on monitoring and accountability. This project was noted as being highly successful in that by the end of a year of intensive intervention 90% of participating schools had achieved the goal. However, it must be noted that this was a very specific quantifiable goal that was more measurable than some of the less tangible goals of the other projects.

This research also indicated that there was a fairly weak relationship between existing benefits and intended benefits (Roberts, 2001:20). This was sometimes due to lack of specified project objectives. There was also a lack of correlation between school development planning and improvement in learner performance. It must, however, also be noted that some of the projects had only been initiated for a short period of time prior to this research and it is well documented that school change is a long term process (Fullan, 2001a). Common to these projects was that most adopted an "inside out approach" (Taylor et al., 2003) which tended to be "...empowerment focussed, privilege the self-identification of needs, promote high levels of stakeholder participation in various dimensions of the project and have a strong process orientation" (Roberts, 2001:29). Roberts (2001) attributes this to South Africa's socio-political context, which follows that of the international move to democratisation of schooling processes (see 4.2). Recent school development initiatives, especially those aligned to the Integrated Quality Management System (see 4.7), place greater emphasis and focus on learner achievement and the transformation of classroom practice. However, while this has become a key objective in many initiatives, actualising it is a complex process.

The report of the *President's Education Initiative Research Project* (Taylor & Vinjevoold, 1999) also produced a number of external evaluations of school development projects. In their report on four schools participating in the EQUIP project of the NBI, Schollar & Associates (1998) noted that levels of participation, alignment and motivation of stakeholders of all three elements of the school community improved as the development plans began to bear fruit. They highlighted the success of the investment in the school infrastructure (i.e. school security, photocopying and video machines computers and science kits) in contributing towards the success of the project. This report stressed that in order for larger scale implementation of similar projects to take place a dramatic increase in district level capacity to manage, monitor and support the schools is needed.

The research by Bayona & Sadiki for the PEI on *Appropriate Ways of Implementing Whole School Development* (Taylor & Vinjevold, 1999:266) highlights numerous constraints to whole school development in disadvantaged schools, these include: principals, teachers, students, curriculum, decision-making, teaching styles, learning obstacles, matric examinations, infrastructure, resources, and community involvement. Bayona & Sadiki (1999) recommend a number of strategies for implementing whole school development in Thohoyandou (the area in which the research was conducted). These focus on educators, school management, resources, community involvement and external monitoring of educational standards (to compensate for the disempowerment of school principals)(see 4.9.1).

As noted in the research conducted by Roberts (2001), NGOs lack real authority to enforce accountability, this is primarily the realm of the Department of Education. While NGOs can work on the moral imperative to improve the quality of education sometimes the legal imperative carries more weight (see 4.10). Most NGO school improvement projects lean towards the inside-out approach which is often linked to their core philosophy and national democratic values. The introduction of an external whole school evaluation system and emphasis on measuring matric performance has put pressure on schools and provided opportunity for NGOs to use this as an external lever (see 4.11). It cannot, however, be denied that NGOs do not carry the same authority as the Department of Education, and where the moral imperative is often lacking the legal imperative contributes towards developing commitment to and participation in quality improvement initiatives. There is a growing trend for NGOs to partner with government at various levels to achieve a balance between inside out versus outside in interventions.

Taylor (2002) identifies the *Education Action Zone Programme* (EAZ) adopted by the Gauteng Department of Education (GDE) in 2000 as the first post apartheid programme to break the ranks of the outside in reform initiatives. The EAZ was a comprehensive systemic initiative that that focused on monitoring schools and included the provision of support and training to principals, teachers and pupils (Taylor, 2002). The project monitored attendance and punctuality of teachers and pupils and provided "pace setters" for the coverage of the curriculum. This project is credited with having a direct impact on the improvement of matric results (*ibid.*). Other systemic level reform projects include (i) the *Systemic Enhancement for Education Development Project* (SEED), the *District Development Support Programme* (DDSP), the *District Improvement Programme* (DIP), the *Quality Learning Programme* (QLP) which adopted a multi level approach working with all nine provinces, the *School Quality Improvement Project* (SQIP), the Delta Foundation's

(now the GMSAF) *District Office Project* and the *Soshangwe School Development Planning Project* (SSDP). Research into these projects focuses on the level of the district and province as opposed to the school (Fleish, 2003) and is therefore not covered in this study. In conclusion to his overview of District Development Projects and lessons learnt, Fleish (2002:41) states "...while some projects clearly show the way forward, we cannot say much about whether programme models actually work (i.e. to improve schools or to increase learner achievement), or which programme models work better than their alternatives." Fleish (2002) further emphasises that before moving to scale replication of models it is important to obtain reliable and valid findings about the effects of these programme models.

In an overview of recent large-scale testing initiatives; school effectiveness studies and evaluations of school improvement studies in South Africa, Taylor (2007:17–20 (forthcoming)) highlights the following as important lessons regarding which intervention models are the most effective:

1. Learning gains are difficult to achieve in poor schools in South Africa, and where achieved they only occur in a fraction of the schools targeted, this is even when interventions are sustained for as long as five years. The poverty of the homes from which these learners are drawn is a major inhibiting factor and impacts on educational progress.
2. Learning gains are achieved through programmes with a clear focus on a specific area (i.e. the improvement of reading) accompanied by intensive teacher training and sufficient materials.
3. School management is important in terms of providing the conditions that optimise learning. Key levers at this level include: time management, curriculum leadership and the provision and deployment of textbooks.
4. It is only through evaluations which use objective measures of pupil performance that it is possible to ascertain whether or not any progress has been made and to identify the factors responsible for that effect.

Taylor (*ibid.*) states that although the available data on the quality of schooling has increased in recent years, "...more is left unexplained than can be explained" (*ibid.*) and perhaps what is needed are detailed case studies of effective schools that would "illuminate" (*ibid.*) what constitutes effective management. In addition studies need to focus on exploring effective teaching practice linked directly to the improvement of learners' reading ability.

### 4.8.3 Key factors of 'resilient' South African schools

It is a temptation, given the challenges of the South African socio-economic context which impacts directly on schools in historically disadvantaged communities (see 2.2.), to dwell on the negatives and impossibilities of improving schools facing challenging circumstances. These "negative scripts" (Harber & Davies, 1997:116) tend to encourage a "rhetoric of resignation", whereas "positive scripts" support change, ownership, motivation and hope (*ibid.*).

In keeping with this, Christie & Potterton's (1997)(see 4.8.2) report highlights the need to identify the characteristics of schools that "succeed against the odds" (Christie 2001). These schools were identified by NGOs working in the school environment according to "deliberately vague criteria" (Christie & Potterton, 1997:5). In the same spirit as Lawrence Lightfoot's (1983) "portraits" of schools succeeding in different circumstances in the USA, Christie & Potterton (1997) unravel the key factors of schools surviving despite their circumstances and extend this beyond a school effectiveness list to a richer description and discussion of some of the dynamics associated with these factors. Christie & Potterton (1998:2) use the term "resilience" (Wang & Iglesias, 1996) to describe schools that are able not only to survive but also to develop in contexts of extreme adversity. Christie & Potterton (1998) stress that while the key features identified cannot unproblematically be transferred from school to school, they are manifested in different relational forms and ways in the thirty-two schools identified. These key features are mentioned here and integrated where applicable under the relevant sections in 4.9. In summary Christie & Potterton (1998) identify the following key features of resilient schools:

- (i) Sense of responsibility
- (ii) Leadership
- (iii) Centrality of teaching and learning
- (iv) Safety and organisation
- (v) Authority and discipline
- (vi) A culture of concern
- (vii) Governance and community relationships
- (viii) Parental involvement
- (ix) Relationships with education department

It is interesting to note that in a South African context "sense of responsibility for themselves and their functioning" (*ibid.*:11) is identified as the primary key feature of resilient schools. This echoes concerns about lack of human agency in many South African schools (see 4.9.4.) as well as Heneveld's (1994) identification of the will to act as an important dimension in developing schools. Cohen & Ball (1999:1) also stress the role of internal accountability in "high-poverty" schools stating that such schools will only pick up an innovation with external help. Harber & Davies (1997:31) in their research on education in developing countries state that "...one of the fatal flaws in school effectiveness and improvement programmes is the assumption that everyone - teachers, principals, governments - would like total school effectiveness but that they are merely prevented from achieving this through lack of resources or know how". They explore a number of reasons why the reality may be different noting factors such as power struggles, secondary income and methodological individualism.

While Christie & Potterton's (1998) identification of "leadership" together with a "culture of teaching and learning" correlates with research done in developed countries (see 4. 4.1), additional factors such as "safety and organisation" and a "culture of concern" are also identified as priority features for South African schools. Safety at school, especially with reference to extreme violence and abuse of learners both by peers and educators is often the topic of South African media (see 2.4.2). It is also important to note that with the growing number of children affected directly or indirectly by HIV/AIDS other key factors such as "pupil feeding" (Walberg, 1991 in Harber & Davies, 1997) together with health and welfare may fast be becoming priority factors in South African schools.

#### **4.8.4 Balancing accountability and support**

Given South Africa's past, school interventions both governmental and non-governmental, have tended to adopt inside-out school improvement approaches that focus on organisational development and empowering educators to deliver new curricula. Taylor (2003:6) states that up to 1995, INSET for teachers or principals was the predominant form of school interaction activity in South Africa and that the Teacher Education Audit (1995) estimated that there were over one hundred INSET programmes in operation in the NGO sector alone. During this same period whole school development (school-by-school) programmes also began to emerge (Taylor et al., 2003) as an alternative and sometimes complementary inside-out approach. As is generally the criticism of such school

improvement initiatives (see 4.4.2) Taylor et al (2003:7) states that "...this exclusive focus on persons rather than systems by inside-out approaches is simultaneously the greatest strength and fundamental flaw of this perspective". The *Education Action Zone Programme* is heralded as the first South African programme to apply an outside-in approach (Taylor, 2003)(see 4.8.2). This programme was, however, still managed as a project rather than capacitating department of education systems to monitor and support identified schools.

Similar accountability measures together with a focus on systemic intervention began to emerge in various projects (i.e. the *Quality Learning Project*, the *District Development and Support Project*, the *Cadbury Schools Project*, etc.) during the latter part of the 1990s. These accountability measures included assessing learners' levels of numeracy and literacy, benchmarking learner performance against curriculum standards. However only the *Quality Learning Project* and *READ* set clear goals for achieving set targets and met these with incentives (Roberts 2001).

In South Africa matric exams traditionally, and to a large extent currently, acted as the primary benchmark by which to determine the performance of schools, districts and provinces. Schools with low matric results are targeted for matric intervention and school improvement programmes. Systemic evaluation was initiated in South Africa in 2002. This focuses on assessing literacy, numeracy and lifeskills levels of learners at a Grade 3, 6 and 9 level. The introduction of the National Whole School Evaluation Policy (South Africa. DoE, 2001e) and guidelines is an attempt to provide a broader level of accountability than just learner achievement. At the *National Consultation on School Development* the then Minister of Education, Professor Asmal, promoted the aim of the Whole School Evaluation policy (South Africa. DoE, 2001e) as "...to holistically monitor and evaluate the performance of individual schools as different entities within their unique environments" (Roberts & Muller, 2002:4) and stressed that the emphasis must be on development, support and accountability. This systemic initiative aimed at setting external standards measured through specified indicators and at supporting schools to achieve these standards. The Developmental Appraisal System (DAS) was identified as one support measure by which educators could identify their developmental needs and the Department of Education would assist them to meet these. The Whole School Evaluation process is structured around a school self-evaluation process which resulted in School Improvement Plans (South Africa. DoE, 2001e) which are to be analysed at a district and provincial level and suitable support measures offered to schools to assist them to meet their identified needs. The integration of these two processes into the Integrated Quality

Management System, together with Performance Measurement, aims to provide a cohesive school assessment, development, support and monitoring process (see 4.7). However, the realities to date show that this is an extremely complex process that needs work at all levels from concept design, integration, practicality and implementation (as touched on in 4.8.2) to the capacity building of all role-players and stakeholders. The inability to meet identified needs (poorly identified needs) can lead to disheartenment, despondency and lack of will to continue with a non-fruitful process.

#### **4.9 The key characteristics associated with effective schools and school improvement**

It is not possible within the scope of this study to touch on all of the key characteristics of effective schools and school improvement, nor is it possible to cover those selected in depth. It is, however, important to discuss some of the characteristics that current literature and studies highlight as key and which are relevant to the results of this study. In the discussion below I have tried to extract the essence of each characteristic with a particular focus on findings originating from school effectiveness and school improvement research and initiatives.

##### **4.9.1 Leadership and management**

All major research on school effectiveness highlights both primary and secondary leadership as a key factor (Sammons et al, 1999). Although leadership has been studied more than any other aspect of human behaviour (Higgs, 2003), research on the relationship between leadership and school change and stability is still fairly new (Fullan, 2001a). Again it is impossible to explore the vast field and explicit nuances of leadership within the scope of this study. I have, however, tried to extract some of the key aspects of leadership that impact on school effectiveness and improvement with particular reference to the South African context.

The school principal plays a vital role in initially determining whether change is taken seriously and in sustaining change in the long term (Fullan, 2001a). It is the principal who sets the tone and establishes the conditions for successful change. Fullan (2001a:83) states that these conditions include "...the development of shared goals, collaborative work structures and climates and procedures for monitoring results". This all forms part of

the principal's role in establishing and maintaining a collaborative learning community. Those working in the field of school improvement highlight that today's principals are faced with a daunting task. Fullan (2001a:138) states that contemporary principals seem to have the "worst of both worlds". They are expected to ensure the smooth running of their school while simultaneously responding to the demands of a new era of education and to ultimately produce good results. Principals need specific knowledge, skills and values in order to achieve this.

More recent models of leadership have tended to move away from a rational structural approach towards a transformational and transactional approach (Bass, 1985; Evans, 2001; Higgs, 2003). A transformational leadership approach focuses not so much on the results of leadership as on the process with particular emphasis on relationships (Higgs, 2003). Transformational leadership focuses on building the capacity of others within the organisation to deal with continuous change. In keeping with the emphasis on "others" and "relationship", emotional intelligence is a key component of transformational leadership. In keeping with this Lawrence Lightfoot (1983:333) suggests a redefinition of leadership which includes "...softer images that are based on nurturance given and received by the leader; based on relationships and affiliations as central dimensions of exercise of power; and based on a subtle integration of personal qualities traditionally attached to male and female images". According to Lawrence Lightfoot (1983:333) the ability to break the mould of traditional authoritarian school leadership is central to the "goodness" of the schools in her study.

Transformational leadership also requires that leaders should have an understanding of the dimensions of change so as to support and guide their school community through this process (Fullan, 2001a). Macbeath & Mortimore (2001) further equate a leader's understanding of change with their ability to both plan and implement change. Personal motivation and commitment to the nature of change is identified as an important driver (*ibid.*). This relates to what Evans (1996:172) refers to as professional and moral authority of leadership. Professional authority appeals to staff to be self-motivated while moral authority emphasises responsibilities that are derived from an organisation's shared vision, values and ideals. Maldonado & Lacey (2001:79) see ethical leadership as an essential component of moral leadership. They define moral leadership as: "leading by example, taking a stand, speaking out, calling forth the best in others, and/or following one's own and/or prescribed definitions of right and wrong". They perceive moral leadership as a means of restoring moral purpose and a sense of idealism in a materialistic world.

There are many lists of effective leadership qualities that are similar in essence but differ in some areas. For example Kouzes & Posner (1998) identify the following as key elements of effective leadership (from the perspective of followers): (i) challenging the process, (ii) inspiring shared vision, (iii) enabling others to act, (iv) modelling the way, and (iv) encouraging the heart. Bryk et al. (1998 in Fullan 2001a) adopt a slightly different perspective and identify (i) inclusive facilitative orientation, (ii) institutional focus on student learning, (iii) efficient management, and (iv) combined pressure and support including strategic orientation in working with school development planning as key elements of successful principals. In his recent work on leadership Fullan (2001b:11) states that effective leaders should be able to demonstrate five key components: (i) pursue moral purpose, (ii) understand the nature of the change purpose, (iii) develop relationships, (iv) foster knowledge building, and (v) strive for coherence with energy, enthusiasm and hopefulness. Fullan (2001a) points out that leaders may apply different leadership characteristics to different situations. This approach is commonly referred to as situational leadership. For example, a principal of a "failing" school may have to apply assertive leadership until such time that the school has made progress. This concept of different styles for different situations or contexts is supported in the recent study by Roberts & Roach (2006) on South African school principals. Ansell (2004:11) identifies the following as essential characteristics of successful leaders in schools facing challenging circumstances: (i) intra and inter personal capacity, (ii) values, (iii) strategic knowledge, (iv) knowledge of external support, and (iv) knowledge of local community. He states that these may not all be embodied in one person but may be met through a strategic mix of internal and external leadership capacity. Sterling & Davidoff (2000:4–5) perceive the greatest challenges for people in leadership positions in South African schools to be those of restoring a sense of hope and possibility and "...to rekindle a sense of working together within a shifting environment". They also recommend that school principals develop an in-depth understanding of their school so as to knowledgeably lead the school development process. Roberts & Roach (2006) in their research on leadership styles and practices on effective schools state that in South Africa principles and methods related to African leadership also need to be taken into consideration. These include Ubuntu (Boon, 1996, as cited in Roberts & Roach, 2006) and consultative and interactive leadership (Boon, *ibid.*; de Liefde, 2003, as cited in Roberts & Roach, 2006) as well as a focus on the centrality of relationship and communication to effective leadership. Roberts & Roach (2006) identify six critical leadership areas for South African school principals: leadership of self, of the organisation, of human capital, of procedures and structures and of relationships.

If the essential goal of schooling is significant learner achievement, then one of the core functions of the principal is that of instructional leadership. This needs to be a key component of what the principal and other key instructional leaders do. Hopkins (2006) highlights that this role is often lost in the rhetoric of transformational and other types of leadership. He argues for a leadership style that is consistent with raising the levels of learner achievement and states that from this perspective instructional leaders are "... able to synergise between teaching and learning on the one hand, and capacity building on the other" (*ibid.*:4).

The distinction between leadership and management is useful when considering the role of the school principal. Fullan (2001a) emphasises that a good manager is not necessary a good leader and that core to effective school leadership is providing strategic direction in times of continuous change. The challenge is for principals not to channel their energy on the increasing legal and bureaucratic demands placed on them by the education system Evans (2001). Evans (2001) states that these demands often result in principals managing rather than having space to lead. In South Africa the situation is aggravated for many principals who also have to perform increasing administrative and teaching duties. The socio-economic context of schools serving disadvantaged communities, together with the under resourcing of many schools results in many principals spending a great deal of their attention on crisis management. Davidoff & Lazarus (2002: 170) stress that it is important to see management and leadership as interdependent and intertwined and hence equally important. They state that there has been a tendency in South African schools to focus on management at the neglect of leadership.

Williams (2001) states that South Africa unfortunately has a history of a lack of development opportunities for school leaders. National initiatives are currently attempting to address this through various programmes (i.e. the National Department of Education Leadership and Management Development Programme linked to a formal qualification) aimed at school leadership. Williams (2001) stresses that a huge shift in perception is required in order for school leadership to move beyond a rule-governed top down culture to making decisions for themselves and to move from passive to active agency. Research conducted by Bayona & Sadiki (1999) expresses a concern about the many cases in which the principal was not leading or managing the school but was merely a figurehead and the school was driven by the staff and learners.

While a school needs to be directed by a recognised and respected leader, other staff members need to be encouraged and developed in both formal and informal leadership roles. Volmenc (2004:14) refers to the latter as "invisible" leaders and highlights that these leaders play an important role in sustaining a positive school culture. The need for other staff's leadership capacity to be developed is essential where principals are overloaded and socio-economic conditions influence schooling. According to Fullan (2001b:137) the development of others leadership capacity is an important part of leadership. This is embodied in this statement that "...ultimately your leadership in a culture of change will be judged as effective or ineffective not by who you are as a leaders but by *what leadership you produce in others*" (Fullan's emphasis).

#### **4.9.2 Organisational culture**

Organisational culture plays an important role in either supporting or undermining change (see 4.10). Organisational culture essentially refers to the values and ethos pervasive to everything that happens in an organisation at all levels. It includes the way in which these translate into structures, systems, processes, leadership, management, governance and of course teaching and learning. The concept of culture is, however, a complex one (Davidoff, 2002) that is intricately interwoven with both structure and agency. Davidoff (2002:49) states that the culture and identity of a school is largely influenced by the values and norms of the society in which it exists. This supports Bennett's (2001) statement that the norms and rules that govern the work in which an organisation is engaged originate outside the organisation, in the environment in which it is located. Hopkins (2001b:155) considers it helpful when considering culture to distinguish between culture and structure, but to bear in mind that "...structure and culture are interdependent and the relationship between them is dialectical". This is particularly useful when considering change and sustainability in an organisational context noting that it is easier to change structure than culture (*ibid.*)(see 4.12). However authentic school improvement needs to pay equal attention to culture and structure (*ibid.*). It is with this in mind that Hargreaves & Fullan (1998:129) differentiate between "restructuring " and "reculturing" a school. "Restructuring" involves formal changes to timetables, organisational structures, etc., while "reculturing" involves "...changing the norms, values, incentives, skills, and relationships in an organisation to support (and prod) people to work differently together" (see 4.9.3). Based on their experience Hargreaves & Fullan (1998) state that "restructuring" does little to improve the quality of teaching and learning whereas "reculturing" has a significant impact. They further state that the school community needs to invest emotionally in

"...transforming the culture and relationships in the school over many years" (*ibid.*) before meaningful and sustainable structural changes take place.

Davidoff & Lazarus (2002:52) define school culture as "...the values and norms of the school, the 'unwritten rules' which determine and establish a certain set of behaviours, a particular way of being, relating, working in the context of the school". These are often promoted and reinforced through educational policy that is in keeping with a country's constitution. Lawrence Lightfoot (1983:23) in her portraiture work on schools clearly describes the culture of each of the schools in her study. She describes a school's ethos as a sum of parts that adds up to a whole which includes "...people, structures, relationships, ideology, goals, intellectual substance, motivation and will". The tangible indicators of this are items such as attendance records, instances of vandalism, numbers of learners entering college, etc. The less tangible more elusive qualities, according to Lawrence Lightfoot (1983:23) are those that can only be discerned through "...vivid description, through subtle nuances, through detailed narratives that reveal the sustaining values of an institution". A school's culture is its most enduring aspect and in many respects the most difficult to change (Senge et al., 2000). However, having said this, Senge et al. (2000) emphasise that school culture is not a static phenomenon, it involves a continual process through which specific values and norms are reinforced. Each school has its own unique organisational culture (Sarason, 1995).

Understanding a school's culture is key to bringing about changes through school improvement and development initiatives. A resistant, negative school culture can seriously hamper any change efforts. In such a case it is important to address school culture first before initiating change (Davidoff, 2002). Based on his experiences Sarason (1995:68) states that any effort to change schools without first understanding school culture is "doomed". Changes brought about by school improvement and development initiatives need to be incorporated into school culture and where necessary school culture needs to adjust to accommodate these. Hopkins (1996:44) highlights that "...changes in teaching behaviour cannot be acquired or sustained without, in some cases dramatic, and in every case some, modification to the culture of the school". In some cases changes become the very lever by which school culture is modified.

Contemporary literature on organisational culture emphasises learning as an integral part of this culture. This is particularly emphasised within educational organisations where learning is considered important for both educators and learners. Senge's (1994) definition of a learning organisation indicates that this learning should include openness to

new ideas and concepts. In his view a learning organisation is a place where "... people can continually expand their capacity to create the results they truly desire, where new and expansive patterns of thinking are nurtured, where collective aspiration is set free, and where people are continually learning how to learn together" (Senge 1994: 3). Dalin & Rolff (1993:5) reiterate this in their statement that "...an innovative school is a school that has learned how to learn". This learning process includes planning, action and reflection on changes initiated at all levels of the school. Moloj (2002) further highlights dialogue and inquiry as an important part of this process. Valuing organisational learning is critical to ensuring the long-term sustainability of change in schools (see 4.11). In addition and complementary to this Fullan (2001a:45) states that changing beliefs and values (at both an individual and organisational level) is the foundation of achieving lasting reform.

### 4.9.3 Relationships

Fullan (2001a:4) highlights the importance of focusing on relationships in reform when he says that it is "abundantly clear that one of the keys to successful schools is the *improvement of relationships*". Reynolds (2001:37) concurs that a new area of study that has emerged from both school effectiveness and school improvements studies recently is the study of relationship patterns within staff groups and student groups. He refers to this relational component as the "third dimension" of schooling that assumes a place alongside the organisational and cultural components (*ibid.*). Reynolds (2001) accredits the focus on the relational component of schooling to:

- (i) empirical work in the United States (e.g. Durland, 1996; Durland & Teddlie, 1996; Teddlie & Kochan, 1991) that successfully links the effectiveness levels of schools with their different patterns of interpersonal relations among staff members.
- (ii) more speculative work done in the United Kingdom and the United States where a factor identified in ineffective schools is the dysfunctional relationships among staff members (e.g. Reynolds & Packer, 1992). These dysfunctional relationships include "...the presence of numerous personality clashes, feuds, personal agendas and the fractured interpersonal relationships within the staff group... to make rational decision-making a very difficult process" (Reynolds, 1996:154). Reynolds (2001:38) stresses that these dysfunctional relationships generally arise through the "unique psychological history of the school" and generally continue unless drastic changes are made.

- (iii) Some school improvement studies have also indicated that the relational "shadows" or "ghosts" of the past hinder the progress of staff development (Reynolds, 2001:38)

In an article on turning around ineffective schools Reynolds (1996:160) states that at this level schools may require interventions of a "quasi therapeutic" nature to address both dysfunctional relationships and various "pathological cultural states". In her research on dysfunctional schools in South Africa, Christie (1998:290) states that the breakdown in formal relationships identified in these schools was evidence of the more complex breakdown at an organisational level. In her study stakeholders identified "lack of respect, trust or cooperation amongst the various stakeholders" as influential factors.

Blankstein (2004) also identifies positive interpersonal relationships, particularly relational trust, as a key component of successful learning communities and learner success. He quotes the report by the American Institute for Research and the U.S. Office of Educational Research and Information (OERI), based on in-depth research on student success at twelve model and six replicate schools nation-wide, which states that they noted "...several attributes of *interpersonal relations* in schools that were associated with effective programs or periods of program effectiveness" (Rossi & Stringfield, 1997:3, as quoted in Blankstein, 2004:58). Blankstein (2004:59) emphasises relationships as the "real work of school improvement" and highlights the complexity of this "subtler, less scripted and more human" component of school improvement that has to date received very little attention (Kruse, Louis & Bryk 1994:8). He poses the questions: "what *kind* of relationships are lead to school and student success? How are they formed?" His analysis of relational trust rests on four essential components: respect, competence, personal regard for others and integrity. Belinda Hopkins (2004) promotes a restorative approach to change. She describes this approach as one that "...emphasises mutual respect, inclusion, listening to the needs, feelings and opinions of everyone involved, flexibility and setting realistic achievable goals" (p.170). She highlights that for restorative practices to be successful these need to be integrated into the school day where everybody feels involved and accountable. She links this approach to Hargreaves & Fullan's (1998) concept of "reculturing" (see 4.9.2).

Based on their research in a South African context, Davidoff et al (1994) state that a school's capacity for development depends upon the capacity of its staff members, both in terms of their individual capacity, as well as the ways in which they work together. They identify areas that relate to this: staff development, interpersonal relationships and

conditions of employment. Davidoff & Lazarus (2002:150) discuss how informal relationship patterns become part of the *modus operandi* at schools and that more negative relationship patterns include cliques which impact on people's ability to think openly. They further explore the deeper reasons for negative (or dysfunctional relationships) and identify factors such as vulnerability and professional jealousy as possible causal factors. They highlight that negative relationship patterns affect the staff as a whole and impact on the culture of the school and recommend that a "culture of collegiality" be developed through processes such as providing opportunities for staff members "...to engage in some personal development processes – processes which will allow people to come to know themselves at ever-deepening levels" (Davidoff & Lazarus, 2002:151)(see 4.9.4). They stress that this aspect of school life cannot be taken for granted and needs to be worked at consistently and needs to be taken as seriously as any other aspect. The ability to manage conflict is an important part of this process (*ibid.*:152) and staff need to be encouraged to see conflict as part of the development process and to manage it positively. In their research Pym & Lazarus (2001) highlight the influence of power dynamics on relationships in South African schools and emphasise that power differentials should be understood and negotiated. Part of this understanding involves analysis of how personal life histories reflect or perpetuate particular dynamics. Section 4.9.6 examines the personal aspect of school development with specific reference to the South African context.

Change and development models that include a teamwork component (i.e. teachers working in teams to achieve identified goals and/or carry out projects)(Hopkins, 1996; Hopkins, 2001; Uline, Tschannen-Moran & Perez, 2003) need to take relationships into account, not only at the school level, but also at the micro team level. This is, however, no easy goal in an organisational setting where people are used to working in isolation (Fullan, 2001a; Sarason, 1995). Davidoff et al (1994: 178) emphasises it cannot be assumed that when people work together in a team that they automatically function as a "well-knit unit". Instead particular attention needs to be paid to developing and maintaining teamwork. Positive, trustworthy relationships furthermore add value to teachers acting as critical friends and supportive colleagues in the central educational goal of ensuring quality teaching and learning (Uline et al., 2003). Belinda Hopkins (2004) proposes a restorative practice approach to strengthening staff relationships in schools. This approach involves addressing past conflicts and equipping educators with skills that contribute towards the establishment and maintenance of healthy relationships.

Finally one relationship dimension that cannot be overlooked is that between the school and the Department of Education (or any other external agency). This is touched on more in section 4.9.8. While all external agencies need to develop a relationship that embodies both "pressure and support" (Fullan, 2001:87) the nature of this balance and the centrality of "shared meaning" (*ibid.*) is critical to the nature of relationship that is established. In addition, Bellis (2005b: 13) in his reflection on the Delta Foundation Forum on *Sustaining Education Development Projects* states that "...relationships are key to success. Relationships between the facilitators (service providers, etc.) and the participants and the relationship of all parties to the realities of the situations".

#### **4.9.4 Individual development and commitment**

Educational change essentially involves human resources, making them both the targets and implementers of change (Evans 2001:113). Fullan (1992:39) highlights this in his renowned statement that "every person is a change agent". Evans (2001:xi) points out that in many instances by "...documenting the deficits of schools and calling for sweeping changes" reform initiatives have won the support of policy makers, business leaders, legislators and many parents but they have neglected, and in some respects, tarnished the image of educators. Evans (2001) states that the first wave of school improvement initiatives adopted a rational-structural paradigm of change that focused on procedures rather than people. The second wave has focused more on the lived reality of teachers and emphasised the need to enhance educator morale, motivation and participation.

The picture of the "lived reality" of educators portrayed in literature, research and the media highlights the challenges faced by educators that range from personal threats (i.e. school violence) to lack of support and resources at a classroom level. While these problems are particularly prevalent in South Africa (see 2.4), many are also international concerns. Fullan (2001a:117) states that "...teachers all over the world are feeling beleaguered" and concludes from the increase in work related illnesses and attrition in the teaching profession that teacher stress and alienation are at an all time high. He further documents how teachers in the United Kingdom are struggling with the high stakes of inspections and increasing detailed paper accountability. In his research in the United States Evans (2001) states that many educators feel dejected and that "burnout" has become a common buzzword. This "burnout", which he correlates to stress, presents in different forms. These include educators continuously experiencing problems that are beyond their control, educators exhausting themselves in their efforts to make a difference

with very little return and thirdly boredom (*ibid.*:92). Evans (2001) sees “burnout” as a normal response when “...conditions guarantee inconsequentiality” in terms of rising demands and diminishing resources. He highlights the need for a sense of efficacy at a psychological level where educators feel (and know where possible) that they actually are making a difference and are valued by others (learners, colleagues and leadership).

The South African media has recently reported on the state of the high stress levels that educators are dealing with (see 2.4.2.) and reasons cited are lack of discipline by learners, class sizes and increased workload caused by absent educators. As, has been briefly touched on in section 2.4, other factors impacting educator performance and attrition in South Africa include HIV/AIDS and violence in and around schools (Chisholm, 2005). Chisholm (2005) expresses concern about the impact that stress (related to various factors including work overload and violence) has on the quality of teaching and learning in schools and emphasises that where possible educators should be freed to focus on their core duty. Socio-economic conditions, however, place enormous demands on educators and often in order for educators to focus on their core business, schools need to ensure that some of these issues are addressed (see 2.4).

In developing countries dimensions such as the will to act (i.e. the power of agency) (Heneveld, 1994) have also been identified as key in the development of successful schools. Christie & Potterton (1998:11) link the lack of agency in many South African schools directly back to apartheid where denial of democratic rights and hence decision making and influence reduced the role of agency. Christie & Potterton (1998) also begin to explore the link between agency and responsibility, an area that requires much more investigation in South African schools. This preparedness to act, to take responsibility, correlated with a move from victimhood to active agency is identified as a key feature for resilient schools (Christie, 2001) (see 4.8.3.). Calhoun & Joyce (as quoted in Muller & Roberts, 2000:21) concur with this in their statement that “...an absolutely central factor of whether any reform will “take” or not is the kind of teacher values prevalent in the teacher corps. Only when a high level of internalised professionalism and a strong internal accountability system is present can teachers accept responsibility for implementing a reform by themselves”.

Colyn (2001:179) in reflecting on her school development work in the Western Cape, South Africa, highlights the need for personal empowerment courses for the teachers on her project. She states that these courses entitled from “Victim to Victor” are designed “...help those who have been oppressed to understand the process of reclaiming a sense

of personal power and commitment". The need to develop and require deeper knowledge of self is emphasised by Jantjes (1998) in the documentation of her experiences as a South African educator. Jantjes (1998:175) shares how her process of introspection and retrospection "...demonstrates the force of *self* in developing a critical consciousness" and furthermore enabled her to assist her learners transform their worldviews. Other programmes, such as the *Wellness Programme* of the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University, have also been designed to boost educator morale and to enhance educators "self efficiency" (The Eastern Province Herald, 12<sup>th</sup> June 2006). Whitaker (1998) takes this further and emphasises the role of psychological theory in understanding both individual and organisational change. This covers a wide spectrum of theory including motivation, multiple intelligence, human potential, self-concept, control as well as empowerment and life cycles. This theory is particularly useful in assisting researchers and practitioners to understand the deeper dynamics of individual attitude to and participation in school development.

Bellis's (2005b: 28) model of human performance and contribution represents human performance as a series of successive ellipses. These evolve from the ability that lies within the individual to perform to the manner in which competence and capacity are managed within a work environment where systems wither support or limit performance. Bellis (2005b: 28) like Heneveld (1994) highlights that an important component of performance is the individual's will to act. He states "one can have all of the necessary information, even the 'natural abilities', even the acquired skills, even the fully developed competencies reached and possessed, but, without the will to use them, to commit them, there can be no 'performance', no results. He stresses the role of the organisation in managing, supporting, challenging and leading the individual to ensure that if there is will and capacity these result in organisational outcomes.

Another, largely under researched, factor particularly in South Africa is the cultural dimension of school improvement. Not in terms of organisational culture, but individual culture and group cultural dynamics which interplay with a historical and political context and which result in a particular approach to school improvement. Harber & Davis (1997:123) state that in order to understand recurring patterns of action and complex resistance to change, one needs to understand the cultures and logics of positions. This can only be done through bringing scripts and discourses to the surface so that they can be explored and shared (see 4.8.3).

#### 4.9.5 Primary focus on teaching and learning

If teaching and learning is the core business of schools, and learner achievement the ultimate goal for learners, then all school development and school improvement must be structured around this. Muller & Roberts (2000:7) highlight how many school improvement initiatives have neglected the classroom and tended to focus primarily on improvement interventions that deal with the “internal conditions” of the school (see 4.9.2). While it is acknowledged (see 4.8.1) that schools in developing countries generally require more development focus on supporting factors such as vision, mission, leadership and management, etc. it is stressed that this should not exclude a primary focus and ultimate goal of improving the quality of teaching and learning (Muller & Roberts, 2001, Taylor et al., 2003). West & Hopkins (1996:10) state that it is all good and well to start with broader factors but “...the school improvement strategy needs to be based on data about student performance”. Interventions aimed at schools that already have a level of basic functionality in place can immediately commence with what Hopkins (1996) refers to as *Type II* strategies aimed at building instructional capacity in the school (see 4.4.2). In this sense *whole school* development takes on the slightly different meaning of involving the whole school in instructional development as opposed to working on all the different facets of the school. The approach documented by Hopkins (1996:33–39) embodies such an approach where educators focus on “...acquiring new teaching skills or mastering new curriculum material” and organisational structures are adjusted to accommodate this. His paper, *Meeting the Challenge An Improvement Guide for Schools Facing Challenging Circumstances*, also describes a scenario where the school improvement focus is primarily structured around teaching and learning interventions. It is also worth noting that many of the more renowned School Reform Models listed in *The Catalogue of School Reform Models* ([www.nwrel.org/scpd/catalog](http://www.nwrel.org/scpd/catalog)) such as *Success for All* (Slavin et al., 1994), *Accelerated Schools* (Levin, 1993), *School Development Programme* (Comer, 1988), *Coalition of Essential Schools* (Sizer, 1992) etc., all specifically target improved teacher quality and learner achievement and benchmark success against improved learner performance in identified areas. Joyce, Calhoun & Hopkins (1999) state that new structure of school improvement essentially revolves around two critical factors: inquiring schools and achieving students. They encourage an analytical point of departure that centres on involving the staff in a thorough analysis on the quality of teaching and learning in their school.

While INSET, especially accredited programmes (Frost, Durrant, Head & Holden, 2000), is seen to be one way of improving what happens in the classroom, Fullan (2001a:253)

emphasises that educators essentially need to work collaboratively with each other within the structures in the school to develop, implement, discuss and reflect on the improvement of teaching and learning. He suggests that through daily interaction and engagement educators will develop new and powerful habits of learning. This is essential for the establishment and maintenance of a "professional learning community" (*ibid.*:124) which allows educators to pursue continuous improvement and career-long learning. Key to this is collegiality among staff members (Brighthouse & Woods, 1999; Rosenholtz 1989) in working towards the common goal of high-quality learning for all learners (see 4.9.2).

Focusing on teaching and learning in South African schools requires a different conceptualisation of school improvement to that adopted in models targeting type II or type III schools (Hopkins, 1996). The 2005 ELRC survey of factors affecting teaching and learning (Phurutse, 2005) raised concerns about issues such as the amount of time actually spent in formal contact sessions between teachers and learners, the will of agency (see 4.9.3.) and the lack of teaching resources especially in the deprived inner areas of cities and more rural areas. In addition the report expresses concern about educators ability to "...make pedagogically fruitful use of materials, student's work and their own subject matter knowledge" (*ibid.*:17). Other factors such as high rate of absenteeism of educators at some schools, diversity and class size together with lack of preparedness for the delivery of the new curriculum also impact directly on the quality of teaching and learning (Chisholm, 2004; Christie, 1998; Phurutse, 2005).

In her study of resilient schools Christie (2001:46) highlights the "centrality of teaching and learning" as an essential feature of success against the odds in disadvantaged schools in South Africa. She states that while this should be regarded as a commonplace feature of schools, one cannot take it for granted in the South African context. In her study centrality of teaching and learning is indicated in things such as timetables that were prepared well in advance, teachers and learners working inside classrooms and purposeful movement between classrooms. This research supports the findings of other school improvement and school effectiveness studies which indicate "time on task" as an important ingredient of success (Christie 2001:48).

Taylor et al. (2003) welcome increased accountability measures in South African education that they anticipate will result in significant gains in learner performance. This accountability, however, needs to be twinned with substantial intervention and support from the Department of Education (see 4.10) if educators are to be equipped with the

knowledge, skills, resources and freedom (from other factors which impact on teaching and learning) to succeed.

#### 4.10. The role of external agency

External agency has an important role to play in school improvement and development. This is particularly the case in schools and teachers without internal accountability who will generally only “pick up on an innovation” with outside help (Muller & Roberts, 2000) (see 4.4.2 and 4.12). Schools facing challenging circumstances, particularly those in developing countries require a substantial amount of external support in order to bring about meaningful change that ultimately impacts on the quality of teaching and learning. Cohen & Ball (1999:1) state that school improvement in high-poverty schools requires external interventions that are capable of making lasting changes in instructional capacity. This is supported by Ansell (2004) who stresses the need to engage people or organisations which have relevant high-level expertise during the early stages of school improvement with dysfunctional schools. The role of these organisations is to provide advice, guidance and mentoring (*ibid.*). The dire need for resources in the majority of South African schools may also mean that an additional role for organisations is to provide resources (Taylor, 2007 (forthcoming)) in a way that ensures effective utilisation of these resources. Taylor (*ibid.*) refers to Hopkins’ (1996) three part classification of schools where schools classified as “failing” and requiring type 1 interventions are unable to benefit from school improvement programmes conducted by outside agencies such as non-governmental organisations. Taylor (*ibid.*) proposes that only the government has the authority to intervene so as to make a substantial difference in “failing” schools where authoritative action such as removing the school principal or resolving situations of severe conflict may be required.

School development is primarily initiated by either government departments of education or non-governmental organisations. While the nature of external agency (governmental versus non-governmental) plays a role in how an initiative is received and sustained other crucial factors also play a role. These include: the extent to which the initiative is aligned to government policy (Hopkins, 2001b; Matlock, 2005); the nature of the intervention and the extent to which this is promoted credibly and engages with the school context in a meaningful way (Fullan, 2001a); the extent to which a shared meaning of the initiative and change process is developed (Hopkins, 2001c, Fullan, 2001a); the extent to which the school commits itself to the development process (Hopkins, 2001c); the leadership (see

4.8.1) and other skills that the external agency is able to offer (Ansell, 2004); and the manner in which accountability and support are balanced (see 4.8.4). Fullan (2001a) also stresses that it is important to know about a school's previous experiences with externally introduced initiatives so as to be able to address this if necessary. In addition it is highly recommended that external agencies present a whole school unified model as opposed to a fragmented disjointed approach (see 4.12). Taylor (2007:18 (forthcoming)) supports Hopkins' (1997) suggestion that interventions targeting "failing" schools should be clear and should focus on a specific, limited number of factors.

The use of external consultants (or other) is often necessary to equip educators with skills such as school development planning (Ansell, 2004). It is important that skills are imparted to educators so that they can take ownership of the process. Ansell (2004:15) states that it is often useful for the external agency to "do the dirty work" so as to free up the principal to focus on working with the staff and setting in place mechanisms for long term sustainability of the continuous development process. Doherty, MacBeath, Jardine, Smith & McCall (2001:139) advocate the use of a "critical friend" in school development projects. They cite Costa and Kallick (1993) who define a critical friend as "... a trusted person who asks provocative questions, provides data to be presented through another lens, and offers critique of a person's work as a friend". Doherty et al. (2001) stress that the roles and responsibilities of a critical friend must be clearly defined and are essentially that of supporting the change process – acting as change catalyst (*ibid.*).

School development literature (Ansell, 2004; Dalin, 1998; Fullan, 2001a; Hopkins, 2001c) indicates that in many countries the Department of Education's (Local Education Authority) support to schools has decreased. This is due to factors such as the call for increased autonomy for schools and the structure and capacity of many Local Education Authorities. While non-government organisations have stepped into the gap to address schools' needs, it is critical that these organisations work in partnership with the Department of Education (Bellis, 2005a) so as to have maximum impact at the school level, as well as share their project experiences with and further capacitate the Department of Education. Externally introduced large scale reform may have a nationally mandated agenda, however, care needs to be taken to ensure that implementation at a local level takes individual school context into account (Fullan, 2001a, Davidoff, 2000), particularly as regards the capacity of a school to address complex challenges without external support.

#### **4.11 Levers for improving schools**

Scheerens (1992:97) describes levers as those factors that could be thought of as "...kicking an improvement process into life". He identifies these as: (i) external influences that come into contact with the school, (ii) the internal self-renewing capacity of schools and (iii) technological developments.

The internal self-renewing capacity of schools is linked to the concept of the learning organisation (see 4.8.2). Scheerens (1992) stresses self-evaluation (at all levels of the school) as a vital component of this process and advocates training in this area to equip educators with the specialised skills that they require to collect valid and reliable information. He also advocates the use of specialised user-friendly databases to manage the vast amount of information that is collected through a thorough self-evaluation process. MacBeath (1999) identifies school self-evaluation and self-improvement as critical indicators in the state of a nation's educational health and highlights that self-evaluation should be central in any national approach to school improvement.

Additional levers identified by Scheerens (1992:104) more specifically related to a school improvement approach are "...achievement stimulating incentives, training, recruitment and development activities, technological innovation, and more pronounced evaluation activities and facilities at the various levels of school organisation". Like all interventions, levers must be context specific as not all levers are relevant in all situations for all schools. Reynolds (2001:36) states that as school improvement has progressed there is less stress on ownership and more on using multiple external levers as initiators and reinforcers of change. Fidler (2001) proposes that the extent to which some levers, such as external incentives, are required depends on the whether a school decided to participate in an initiative of its own volition or whether the initiative was externally imposed. In exploring levers more it would be useful to differentiate between internal and external levers and how these initiate and sustain organisational learning and change.

#### **4.12 Managing and sustaining change**

All school development and improvement involves change. While not possible to explore change in detail in this section, it is important to briefly discuss it within the context of school development and improvement. Fullan (2001b) uses the analogy of change as a "two edged sword" in that it provides opportunity but it also entails additional effort and

work. How change is introduced is as important as the change itself, for confusion and lack of meaning can result in frustration, discouragement and lack of buy-in (Fullan, 2001a). In order to be successful change needs to ripple through all aspects and levels of an organisation (culture, classroom, leadership, staff, curriculum, etc.) and needs to be supported by accommodating and supporting change at a systems level (Fullan, 2001a). Fullan (2001a) emphasises that meaning is central to change. Apart from shared meaning concerning the nature and implications of change, stakeholders also need to engage with the moral purpose of change (Fullan, 1999). This is particularly important, not only for implementation, but also for sustainability of change.

There are various change models linked to different theoretical perspectives. While these models differ most of these researchers identify three broad phases to the change process. These are: Phase One: variously labelled initiation, mobilization or adoption. This phase consists of the process that leads up to and includes a decision to adopt or proceed with a change. Phase Two: this is the implementation or initial application of the change process (usually the first two to three years). This involves the first experiences of trying to put an idea or reform in practice. Phase Three: usually referred to as continuation, incorporation, routinisation or institutionalisation. During this phase the change either gets built in as an ongoing part of the system or disappears by way of a decision to discard or through attrition (Fullan, 2001a:49). Phase three is obviously the phase where sustainability (see 3.6) is most crucial. However, how the other phases develop has a critical impact on whether or not there is continuation in the final phase.

External agents initiating development interventions in schools need to pay particular attention to phase one. Internationally, schools have been flooded with too many "disconnected, episodic, fragmented, superficially adorned projects" (Fullan, 2001a:21). Bryk et al. (1998, as cited in Fullan, 2001a: 21) refer to this as the "Christmas Tree" problem when whatever is the fad of the day is introduced haphazardly to schools. Fullan (2001a:22) refers to this as "innovation overload" and expands on this by stating, "...the biggest problem facing schools is fragmentation and overload ... it is worse for schools than for business firms. Both are facing turbulent uncertain environments, but only schools are suffering the additional burden of having a torrent of unwanted, uncoordinated policies and innovations raining down on them from hierarchical bureaucracies". Over the past decade South African educators have had to digest, disseminate and integrate a voluminous amount of policy related change (see 2.3.2 and 2.3.3). In discussing the introduction of the new education paradigm in South Africa, Slabbert (2001:290) says that "...not only is change taking place extremely rapidly, its intensity and scope is simply

baffling...change itself has become the only certainty that governs life". It is no wonder that many schools are sceptical of externally introduced projects and particularly weary of having to deal with any more change.

Positioning initiatives in a broader school, socio-economic and policy context, and minimising additional workload in the process is therefore critically important. Ensuring that initiatives support one another and fit together towards holistic improvement of the school is equally important. Ball and Cohen (1999:34) emphasise that interventions must not be "disconnected from deep issues" but must instead be carefully linked to practice-based inquiry for understanding and "deep" change to take place.

If people are going to buy into a process then they need to support both the process and the specific change associated with it. While people may be aware that change is required to remedy a situation they may not be supportive of the change method. Armenakis & Harris (2002:178) state that if individuals do not agree on the type of change required then they could resist and attempt to undermine the change process (see 4.9.2). Thus, an important part of introducing any change is to ensure that it takes place within a consultative framework and that concerns expressed by individuals are addressed and integrated into the process. Armenakis & Harris recommend that, in addition to *appropriateness* all interventions pay special attention to *principal support* which ensures that the leaders of the organisations "...are committed to investing the time, energy, and resources necessary to push the process to institutionalisation", and *personal valence* which addresses the question "what's in it for me?" (see 4.9.1 and 4.9.4).

The principal, who is essentially the key change agent must support and drive the change process (4.9.1). Based on their research, Berman and McLaughlin (1977:124) state that "projects having the active support of the principal were the most likely to fare well". In South Africa, involving the School Governing Body (SGB) in the change process is also important. SGB's can be instrumental in promoting or undermining change initiatives. Creating a support group of other leaders within the school to support the principal in the change process assists with securing a critical mass to initiate the change process (England 2004) (4.9.1).

A large part of establishing the value of change is done through connecting it with both collective (school) and personal vision (see 4.9.2 and 4.9.4). The importance of a shared organisational vision is highlighted in all recent research related to school improvement (Fullan, 2001a; Hopkins, 2001a; Macbeath & Mortimore, 2001) and organisational

development (Senge et al. 1999). A vision of "shared meaning" continually acts as a guide especially during difficult stages of the change process. Thus, a strategic vision "... articulates a desired change from a current state to an ideal one" (Collins & Porras, 1996:74). The desired school culture (values, morals and norms) should be encapsulated in this vision in such a way that the school community is motivated to work towards them (4.9.2). It is also important that this "shared meaning" is supported by all school stakeholders ranging from school management, SGB to the Representative Council of Learners (RCL). Deming (1993) further emphasises that a vision or guiding ideas must be fundamental in terms of thinking about education. Establishing such a vision enables schools to revisit their cultural base and to embrace the new educational paradigm through their own insights and experiences.

Implementing change (phase two) is in some respects more daunting than initiating it. The manner in which implementation is structured and supported will determine whether it can be effected amongst the complex day-to-day school affairs. Two issues are critical when implementing change in a school context. The first is that of educator motivation and commitment to change (4.9.4). The second is that of school culture and the way in which it supports the change process (Davidoff & Lazarus, 2002) (4.9.2) and the way in which it is moulded by the change process (Hopkins, 1996). Much of the initial change process may in essence revolve solely around ensuring that these two issues are addressed. Schools are social organisations and without a majority commitment to the change purpose any change initiative is likely to fail. Senge et al. (1999: 295) emphasises that "...it is the individual and not an institution or organisation that initiates, implements and sustains it (a new paradigm)" (see 4.9.4). Ideally change needs to start with the people at the heart of an organisation. Their concerns, needs and fears should be at the forefront of the change agenda. This is especially the case in South Africa where many educators are struggling with factors such as hopelessness, stress and lack of motivation (Delta Foundation, 2002a). Much of this can be attributed to policy overload, lack of preparedness for new curricula and the effects of crime and poverty (see 2.4 and 4.9.4). In essence many educators need to undertake an inner journey to rediscover their passion for education and to develop professional confidence so as to deal with the complexities and demands of their work (4.9.4).

School culture should support change in that it should encourage risk, innovation and creativity both in the classroom and in other areas related to school development. This culture must especially support the concept of the school as a learning organisation (Davidoff & Lazarus, 2002; Senge, et al. 2000) that needs to constantly adapt and grow in

order to ensure quality and to remain relevant (see 4.9.2). A process of planning, reflecting (or evaluating) and refining must also be part of this learning culture, to the extent that it eventually becomes something that the school does as part of its normal business. Educators should also be coaxed out of a 'silo' culture into a culture of interconnectedness and interdependence (Covey, 1992) in which they work together to establish new meaning and develop the confidence to tackle new challenges (4.9.3).

Sustaining change (phase three) is the most crucial part of any initiative for surely, if change is not sustained then the initiative has failed. Senge et al. (1999:240) use the following metaphor to describe the challenges of this phase:

“As your original 'seedlings' being taking root, they come into contact with new features of their environment, such as predators, rivals, and other life forms that will resist their presence. Your task is to sustain life, not just over a few months but over a period of years”.

One of the threats to sustaining change is the departure of the “champions” who are driving the process from within (Fullan, 2001a). This makes it especially important for the process to involve the buy-in of the majority of school stakeholders. While some people will always be more committed to the process than others, the support of a critical mass of stakeholder, especially educators, is essential. In addition to this, Fullan (1992) sees one of the main challenges of sustainability as that of motivating good teachers throughout their careers. Many researchers involved in school improvement support Rosenholz's (1989) concept of “moving” schools (as opposed to “stuck” schools) (see 4.4.1) in which teachers take responsibility for initiating and sustaining the improvement process.

Ultimately most accounts of sustained school improvement are linked to what is termed as the school's “capacity to improve” (Gray et al., 1996). Thus, building capacity for improvement is a critical aspect of any school development initiative. This capacity needs to be developed so that schools undergo change at a 'deep' level. Macbeath & Mortimore (2001: 206) state that “...it is change in the deeper levels of a school's functioning that is necessary to provide the environment in which improvements can be sustained”. Exactly what constitutes “capacity” and “deep” level change needs to be further explored especially in a South African context. In addition to this the extent to which large scale sustained school development can take place without the support of an outside agency (Fullan, 2001a; Hopkins, 2001b) is questionable. While international and national research (Christie, 2001; Taylor et al., 2003) indicates that some schools are able to become

quality teaching and learning communities against all odds, the majority of schools will require continuous support in order to reach this goal (Taylor, 2007 (forthcoming)). National policy is in place to support this, however, it remains to be seen whether this will be realised at a grass roots level.

#### **4.13 Concluding summary**

School effectiveness research has yielded two important claims. These being that schools can contribute to learner achievement despite the weighting of negative socio-economic factors, however, the extent to which a school can impact positively on learner achievement depends largely on the quality of teaching and learning offered by a school. Research has also indicated that the quality of teaching and learning is supported and influenced by other factors such as school culture, leadership, relationships as well as the will and capacity of individual agency. The emphasis on transforming schools into total quality learning communities has resulted in a strong focus on the school as the site of change and transformation. It is acknowledged that critical factors and structures need to be in place to ensure long term sustainable change. School improvement research has focused on exploring the dynamics of change and supporting processes such as school development within a school context. While internationally contemporary school improvement initiatives tend to focus primarily on improving the quality of teaching and learning, it is acknowledged that school improvement in developing countries (and schools facing challenging circumstances) needs to adopt a wider approach. The role of an external support agency is important in assisting schools, especially those with a low level of functionality, to move to an acceptable level of effectiveness. This is particularly important in South Africa where most schools face challenging circumstances and require additional resources (human and physical) to assist them to support learners and teachers in their core function of learning and teaching.

It is acknowledged that decentralisation with its emphasis on self-managed schools is long overdue, however, we need to be realistic concerning the extent to which many South African schools can function as self-managed learning organisations given the nature and complexity of the socio-economic problems that they are expected to deal with and the diminishing resources that are provided. Human agency is a powerful lever, however, agency needs to be active at all levels in order to support school-based initiatives. This includes agency in government (all departments), agency in business and agency in

community. Sustainability needs to take root within a school, however, it also needs to be supported, motivated and enthused by external stakeholders.

In this chapter I have attempted to provide an overview of school reform approaches and initiatives together with other key concepts and components that are relevant to this study. It has been impossible to cover these, especially the key effective school components, within the scope of this study. Whole school development is vast in its scope and this poses challenges to practitioners working within the field, as they need to focus on a multiplicity of dynamics that often operate and develop simultaneously. This will be discussed in more detail as the study develops.

Chapter five describes the research framework applied in this study. It defines the primary research question and discusses the methodology applied in my attempt to unpack and reveal some of the critical mechanisms at work in a school development initiative as implemented with two secondary schools. It is hoped that this research provides some of the context-rich detail (Harris, 2001), through a critical realist lens, needed to further extend the field.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### RESEARCH DESIGN DECISIONS

#### 5.1 Introduction

The positioning of research within a particular paradigm influences all aspects of the research design process (Archer, 1995) from the selection of a research question and focus, to the final data analysis and presentation of findings. In this chapter I briefly discuss the importance of selecting a particular ontological and epistemological philosophy framed in a research paradigm which acts as the underlabourer of the research process (Sharp, as cited in Archer, Sharp, Stones & Woodiwiss, 1999:12). This research is framed within a critical realist paradigm (Archer, 1995; Benton & Craib, 2001; Bhaskar, 1978, 1979, 1989, 1993; Collier, 1994; Sayer, 2000). Since it is impossible to do full justice to discussing this paradigm in detail within the context of this research, I have identified and discussed key aspects of critical realism that are of particular relevance to this study. These include the ontological and epistemological dimensions of critical realism and the application of a realist evaluative research approach (Pawson & Tilley, 1997) to investigate the research question which concerns mechanisms related to the implementation of whole school development as initiated and facilitated by an external agency.

Key to a critical realist approach and to evaluative research is the identification and investigation of generative mechanisms (and causal powers) that contribute to the success (or failure) of an intervention (Sayer, 2000) and the move from the empirical to the transfactual. While critical realist ontology is intransitive it embraces a transitive epistemology which takes into account the factors that shape and influence the formation of knowledge. Critical realism involves dialogue around structure and agency and a brief overview and discussion of these constructs is included in this chapter. This research primarily makes use of qualitative data to identify and explore the generative change mechanisms that support whole school development, however, where applicable quantitative information is incorporated to support the findings. The chapter also outlines the data collection methods used in this research (i.e. interviews, observation, document analysis and fieldnotes/journal) and discusses the data analysis procedures, focusing specifically on data analysis as process and the identification of generative mechanisms. In the final section I discuss the ethical considerations which impact on the research process, not only in relation to protecting the participants, but also in terms of contributing

to the trustworthiness and authenticity of the research data and findings (Gardner 1993). This chapter attempts to document and discuss these processes as comprehensively and transparently as possible within the context of this study and to provide an 'explicit and complete account' of the research (Huberman & Miles, 1998:201). I commence with an examination of my role of researcher and explore the relationship between this and my professional role as the GM South Africa Foundation's Learning School Initiative co-coordinator.

## 5.2 My interest and role in the research

Clarifying one's research interests and role is of primary importance in that as Ely (1991:30) states "...the great majority of topics for study and research questions do not arise out of a vacuum or specious choice but, instead, mesh intimately with researchers' deepest social and professional commitments". My interest in this research has evolved from both of these commitments in that my work as an education, training and development project co-ordinator with the GMSAF has strong social (specifically education) and development aims, and centres on a project which I co-ordinate. My interest in this particular study arose from the GMSAF's decision to launch the *Learning Schools Initiative* which has the objective of developing, piloting, refining and promoting a whole school development model. *The Learning Schools initiative* brought to the fore questions regarding the extent to which the GMSAF's whole school development process and related interventions were successful in achieving the intended programme outcomes. Related to this was the need to identify and unpack the generative mechanisms that activated and contributed towards the implementation and sustainability of school development in specific contexts. As the initiative progressed I also became aware of other mechanisms which would have assisted the process but which, at the time of this study, did not form part of the *Learning Schools Initiative*.

This research focus links to the very nature of my role as project co-ordinator within the GM South Africa Foundation's modus operandi of developing, piloting, refining and promoting development "models". As project co-ordinator my internal dialogue constantly involves asking questions such as, "Is this intervention working?" "What is working or not working?" "What should we doing differently?" "What socio-economic, historical or other contextual factors are impacting on the intervention?" and "Can the model be applied in other contexts – why or why not?" As the GM South Africa Foundation's models progress valuable "learnings", which in essence are tentative theories rooted in context (McEvoy & Richards, 2003), and which either expand on existing theories or propose new theories,

are documented and shared with other interested agencies (see 3.10.2). Researching one's own social and professional commitments and actions carries particular challenges, and these will be discussed later in the chapter.

### 5.3 The research question and focus

#### 5.3.1 Determining the research focus

Ely (1991:56) suggests that the social science researcher should not enter the field with questions that are too "specific, or too tight or too slanted", instead she recommends that a broad interest or question should be narrowed down through what she refers to as a "dance" or "cycle" (*ibid.*:55) as the research progresses. In the case of this research it was the selection of a particular ontological and epistemological framework that assisted with narrowing down and focussing the question, as opposed to the research itself. During the initial stages of this research I had to consider whether this study should take the form of an evaluation or impact assessment, should take the form of a case study of either the initiative or the schools, or should focus in on a particular aspect of the school development process. The positioning of the study within a critical realist paradigm strongly guided the type of question asked, the approach selected and methods applied.

While a descriptive case study approach with a broadly phased question initially seemed appropriate; it lacked the potential of identifying, analysing and discussing some of the richer programme dynamics as they play out within a South African education and training context. An evaluation approach provides a more specifically programme focused lens, however, traditional evaluation approaches tend to focus on the extent to which a programme has achieved its outcomes and lacks the depth of contextual examination (see 5.5). Fourth-generation evaluation, with its constructivist epistemology and consultative stakeholder driven approach to evaluation draws data primarily on how people are experiencing a programme and their perceptions of the extent to which the programme has achieved its outcomes, lacks the method to explore contextual dynamics and additional data sources. Pawson and Tilley (1997:20) criticise fourth-generation evaluation as adopting an "evaluations-as-negotiations perspective" that fails to move beyond constructions of reality and denies any neutral/factual/definitive accounts of the social world (*ibid.*:21). While fourth generation evaluation with its strong focus on consultation, agreement, and what is essentially a democratic approach, was particularly applicable in pre- and early post-1994 for South African donor agency evaluations, its ontological and epistemological stance does not allow for the exploration of a reality and

accountability beyond that constructed by programme stakeholders. It also does not move beyond the empirical experiential level to provide an analysis of relational interplay of identified constructs and potential causal powers which are critical to understanding why certain interventions work or fail in specific contexts, and through this enhance the development and implementation of subsequent initiatives (see 5.5).

A realist evaluative research approach (Pawson & Tilley, 1997; Sayer, 2000), which is discussed in more detail in 5.4 and 5.5 below, supports a strong contextual focus while providing a means through which to investigate generative mechanisms and causal explanation (Carlsson, 2003; McEvoy & Richards, 2003; Morén & Blom, 2003). Therefore, while this study in essence focuses on the case of a particular intervention initiative as implemented with two particular case schools, it does not adopt the approach of a traditional case study with the sole aim of providing an in-depth descriptive account of either the project or of the schools. Instead the study focuses on the nature of the intervention, underpinning theory and analysis of the generative mechanisms and causal relations that bring about or constrain the intended outcomes within a specific context (see 4.4.6). This is investigated within the context of the two initial *Learning Schools Initiative* pilot schools. The study takes the form of evaluative research (as described further in section 5.5) within a critical realist framework and adopts a causal explanatory approach to evaluation with the aim of "getting inside the 'black box'" (McEvoy & Richards, 2003:415) to investigate the interplay between mechanisms in the whole school development process. Such a study, in addition to considering essential factors that contribute towards the success of an initiative, obviously also needs to explore the absence (Bhaskar, 1993) of key factors as identified both inductively and deductively.

The innovativeness of the *Learning Schools Initiative*, together with the recent introduction of the National Whole School Evaluation policy (South Africa. DoE, 2001e) and Integrated Quality Management System (ELRC, 2003) places this study at an exploratory stage of inquiry as to how these systems will be successfully implemented within the South African education and training context. While there have been, and still are, various school development initiatives in South Africa it is only recently, through the legislation of the National Whole School Evaluation Policy (South Africa. DoE, 2001e) and the Integrated Quality Management System (ELRC, 2003), that schools are required to formally submit school development plans and to report on school development progress. Research into this area in South Africa is therefore still fairly broad and non-described with a wide range of interesting questions to research.

### **5.3.2 Determining the scope of the research**

Integral to the process described in 5.3.1 of defining the research question is the question of determining the scope and extent of the study. This was resolved through the decision to focus on the initial two pilot secondary schools as opposed to focusing on the more extensive case of the *Learning Schools Initiative* in its extended version. Focusing on the overall initiative would have involved analysing the project implementation in the four primary schools which were incorporated into the project in January 2005; it would also have leant towards a more extensive (Sayer, 2000:21) (see 5.4.6) study as opposed to the intensive one intended. The processes involved in the selection and integration of the additional pilot schools was very different to the initial two schools (see 6.7.1). Given the shorter time of engagement with the primary schools they are at a very different stage of development to that of the initial schools. The longer period of engagement with the initial two schools also provided an opportunity to gather sufficient data to discuss issues relating to school development within a particular context within the ambit of this study.

## **5.4 The theoretical framework informing the research**

### **5.4.1 Determining a theoretical framework**

Different theorists hold the importance of determining and defining the relevance of a specific paradigmatic perspective at varying levels of regard. Their very stance in this is revealing of their own ontological and epistemological approach. Khun's (1996) original description of a paradigm in relation to scientific research describes it as a set of scientific achievements that meet two characteristics: firstly, the achievement must be "sufficiently unprecedented to attract an enduring group of adherents away from competing modes of scientific activity", and secondly "... it must be sufficiently open-ended to leave all sorts of problems for redefined groups of practitioners to resolve"(p.10). Lather (1991:11) describes research paradigms as "...loose frameworks which guide research". Similarly Blumer (as cited in Schwandt, 1994:221) states that they are "sensitising concepts" which "...merely suggest directions along which to look rather than provide descriptions of what to see". Kemmis and McTaggart (2000:594) argue that competition between social paradigms in social research is a "fruitless" exercise and instead suggest that what is needed is extensive interchange between paradigms to "contribute to greater intersubjective understanding and agreement".

The difficulty of clearly differentiating paradigms seems indicative of what Habermas (1972) referred to as the Kantian posture and which he describes as "... indissoluble links among knowledge, methodology and human interests" (p.309). However, while different paradigms often (although not always) share similar methodologies (Appleton & King, 2002; Archer et al., 1999), their ontological and epistemological philosophies have different implications for the selection of subjects of study as well as the generation and interpretation of data.

Dobson (2002:7) states that philosophy has an important role to play in research. It encourages a coherency in research that impacts on both the outcomes and practice of research. In support of this Archer (1995:16) argues from a realist perspective that "... the nature of what exists cannot be unrelated to how it is studied ... the social ontology endorsed does play a powerful regulatory role *vis-à-vis* the explanatory methodology for the basic reason that it conceptualises social reality in certain terms, thus identifying what there is to be explained and also ruling out explanations in terms of entities or properties which are deemed non-existent". Danermark, Ekström, Jakobsen & Karlsson (2002:4) concur that it is crucial for social science research "...systematically to reflect on these problems and allow for the positions one takes to permeate the research practice" and that meta theory should be central to all the planning of a social science study so as to avoid research being conducted in "...an unsystematic and inconsequent manner". There should be a clear connection between social science research and its ontological and epistemological starting points (*ibid.*).

When initially investigating a philosophical framework for this study I considered positioning it within an interpretative or constructivist paradigm. Both the interpretive and constructivist paradigms address issues related to understanding the subjective being-in-the-world (Heidegger, 1962) experience of the 'subject'. These paradigms are sometimes used synonymously or interchangeably (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998a; Janse Van Rensburg, 2001). However, Schwandt (1994) states that while they share a common intellectual heritage, the constructivist and interpretive persuasions are unique in the manner in which each answers the questions of (i) the purpose and aim of human inquiry, and (ii) how we can know about the world of human action. Schwandt (1994) differentiates between interpretive and constructivist at an ontological level when he states that the interpretivists support the notion of "objectivism, empirical realism, objective truth, and essentialism" (p.236) while the constructivists are deeply committed to the perspective that 'knowledge and truth are created, not discovered by mind' (p.236). While interpretivism touches on an ontology of realism it, however, places emphasis on hermeneutically interpreted reality

as an outcome and fails to probe beyond this as is the intention of this study. While stating this I acknowledge that interpretivism is an essential part of any research, in its most basic sense of interpreting data, however, the degree to which it is applied varies according to ontology, approach and method.

Sayer (2000) argues that postmodernist perspectives tend to neglect the object in their conceptualisation of reality; what is real is a constructed or interpreted reality which evolves through discourse. It was through the exploration of a realist paradigm (Sayer, 1992, 2000) that I encountered critical realism (Archer, Bhaskar, Collier, Lawson & Norrie, 1998; Bhaskar, 1979; Collier, 1994; Sayer, 2000) which acknowledges the effects of structures on both the researcher and subjects as agents, but attempts to move beyond this to probe a stratified reality, generative mechanisms and the complex combination of the different relational aspects of social reality. Critical realism's intransitive ontological and transitive epistemological stance linked to the critical realist interpretation of structure and agency resonates strongly with the objectives of this research (see 5.3.1). It provides a sound philosophical framework for applying multiple methods in an attempt to uncover a deeper layer of reality beyond what is constructed or interpreted. Sharp (as cited in Archer et al., 1999:12) highlights this in her discussion on the link between critical realism and research methodology where she states that critical realism performs a "... critical underlabourer role in that it provides very useful and fertile starting points for orientating the researcher to ways of conceptualising what there is to study and for setting up productive and exciting research designs".

#### **5.4.2 Locating this research within a critical realist framework**

Danermark et al., (2002:1) state that critical realism is not a homogenous movement in the social sciences and that there are many different perspectives and developments. While there appears to be general agreement at an ontological level concerning a differentiated, structured and stratified reality (Bhaskar, 1979; Danermark et al, 2002; Pawson & Tilley, 1997; Sayer, 2000), the exploration and detailed discussion of how this impacts on social science research, especially at a methodological level, has only commenced during the latter decade of the twentieth century. The intensive linking of critical realism to social phenomena, particularly in the case of structure and agency, further exposes it to differences of interpretation and application. It was not possible within the scope of this research to examine the different nuances of critical realism or to present an in-depth analysis of a realist theory on structure and agency (Archer, 1995) (5.4.7). This research is based on a general reading of the field and then an in depth reading of what seem to be

the key works in the field of realist social science (Archer, 1995; 1996; 2003; Bhaskar, 1979) and critical realism (Archer et al, 1998; Benton & Craib, 2001) with a specific focus on critical realist methodology (Danermark et al, 2002; Sayer, 1992; Sayer, 2000) and realist evaluation (Pawson & Tilley, 1997). I also consulted recent publications and articles that discuss the philosophy of critical realism and the application of realist evaluative research in different fields. While the publications of evaluative research projects were interesting and useful they highlight the different means in which evaluative research is interpreted and applied. I therefore tended to draw primarily on the core works mentioned in this section for the development of my research design.

### 5.4.3 The ontological dimension of critical realism

Critical realism presents a research approach that differs significantly at an ontological level to positivist and post-modern approaches to the study of society. Bhaskar (interview with Bhaskar, Norris, 1999:2) identifies three major distinguishing features of critical realism. These are (i) its transcendental and dialectical nature, (ii) the content of its particular theses, and (iii) the fact that it is critical of the nature of reality itself (i.e. social reality including the impact of human beings upon the natural world). Benton & Craib (2001:120) define critical realism in the following way: *realism* "... takes from the *resigned acceptance* the recognition of the existence of an external world independent of, and often defying our desires of it and attempts to understand and change it", while *critical* involves a "...commitment to changing unsatisfactory or repressive realities" and the Enlightenment's "...optimistic view of the role of knowledge in human self-emancipation". Fundamental to critical realism is the belief that there is a real world that exists independently and acts independently of our beliefs or knowledge about it. Bhaskar classifies this real world (or "reality") in three domains. Benton & Craib (2001:125) describe these as follows:

- (a) the *real* world which consists of mechanisms, powers, tendencies and so on which science seeks to discover,
- (b) the *actual* level consists of flows, sequence of events which may be produced under experimental conditions or which occur in more complex conjectures outside the laboratory, and
- (c) the *empirical* level consists of observed events – which are generally only a small subset of (b).

While Bhaskar (1978) uses the term "real" to define (a), all of these levels are seen as real and this sometimes results in confusion regarding his distinction (*Ibid.*). Social phenomena emerge from deep underlying real structures, become actual and then empirical (Kaboub, 2005). According to Bhaskar (1979:27) positivism only functions at an empirical level and while the hermeneutic tradition "...is correct to point out that the social sciences deal with a pre-interpreted reality" it reduces social science to "... the modalities of this relationship" and fails to situate "...through the possibility of reference to aspects of reality at once social and inadequately conceptualised, the possibility of rationally conceptual criticism and change, most fully in the development of the concept of ideology" (*ibid.*:27).

Within a critical realist paradigm reality can be further stratified within different scientific disciplines with each level explicable in terms of the level below it. These disciplines are stratified as follows (Benton & Craib, 2001:126):

Social Sciences

Psychology

Physiology/anatomy

Organic chemistry/biological chemistry

Physical chemistry

Physics

Danermark et al (2002:65) stress that the levels of categorisation of the different strata of reality are not "given" in the sense that there is still much debate concerning the ordering of the levels and that there is also no definite, beforehand-given number of strata. They, together with other critical realist researchers (Collier, 1994; Sayer, 1992) also stress that the above stratification should not result in "reductionalist" interpretations in that sciences of lower level mechanisms (5.4.6) as this can contribute to the understanding of "higher" level sciences, but never fully explain them. Rather this approach demonstrates a commitment to "...an understanding of relationships which constitute society as binding embodied humans to other living and non-living beings: to physical spaces, raw materials, tools and machines, domesticated and wild animals and plants, agricultural and semi natural ecosystems, buildings, highways and so on" (Benton & Craib, 2001:127). This is discussed further in the section on generative mechanisms and causal powers (5.4.6).

#### 5.4.4 The epistemological dimension of critical realism

While critical realism promotes a naturalistic methodological approach to the study of society, and Bhaskar (1979) advocates a methodological unity according to which science is practiced it differs substantially from positivism in terms of levels of reality and epistemologically in terms of knowledge of these levels. Critical realism does not promote a "naïve objectivism" (Danermark et al, 2002:17) but instead acknowledges the double hermeneutic that the social science researcher is part of that which they study and that all knowledge is necessarily socially determined conceptual constructions. Thus, while critical realism can be seen as a product of successive critiques of modernism and particularly of its "...radical underestimation of the complexity, diversity and multiple meanings of the social world" (Sayer, 2000:30) most realists accept the postmodernist emphasis on diversity of the world and the plurality of perspectives (Stones, 1996:2). With its inherent focus on structure and agency, realism is particularly mindful of the role of communication (both verbal and non-verbal) as structure in the research process and the many other structures and relational configurations that impact on both that being studied and those studying it. Sayer (1992:28) stresses that "...understanding social phenomena is no means *just* a question of understanding concepts in society and the meanings of practices", social science research should also include an examination of crucial material dimensions (i.e. natural objects). However, while realism shares the view that social phenomena are concept dependent and need to be understood, in contrast to interpretivism, it does not rule out causal explanation in that (i) material change in society needs to be explained and (ii) reasons can also be causes (Sayer, 2000:18).

While critical realism ascertains that a reality exists (4.4.3) beyond that which is interpreted or constructed, it acknowledges that knowledge of this reality is fallible but that "...not all knowledge is equally fallible" (Danermark et al., 2002 :17). In addition realism argues that while facts are theory-dependent this is not to say that they are theory-determined. Critical realists place particular emphasis on the fallibility of knowledge in terms of social science study with particular reference to its "openness". While natural science experiments can be controlled and studied within a closed system this is not possible with the study of society. The fact that social science research takes place within an open system limits the extent to which it can be generalised as it is very much "time and space" bound (see 5.4.5).

#### **5.4.5 'Time and space' and critical realism**

Critical realism presents science as a "...process in motion attempting to capture ever deeper and more basic strata of a reality at any moment of time unknown to us and perhaps not even empirically manifest" (Interview with Bhaskar, Norris, 1999:1). Thus understanding and explaining historical and other determinations (Interview with Bhaskar, Norris 1999) are high on the agenda of critical realist research. Positioning the research in a historically "time and space" (Benton & Craib, 2001) bound context linked to other contextual determinants provides an account of a temporal reality. Further research expands on and deepens this reality or explains it differently in another historical, social and cultural context. We therefore are presented with a temporary reality that captures a picture of what we know in a particular given historical and social moment. The fact that this reality is temporary does not, however, detract from its realness given a philosophy that perceives different levels of reality and limitations in terms of the extent to which a researcher can empirically observe or "know" reality. This temporality also provides for an understanding that theories are not infallible but are open to dispute and/or further development (Bhaskar, 1998; Danermark et al., 2002) consistent with scientific research conducted in open systems (Sayer, 1992).

#### **5.4.6 Generative mechanisms, powers and structures**

Bhaskar (1978) argues that social science research should focus on identifying generative mechanisms across different strata of reality that result in the existence (or absence) of identified objects of study and to develop causal explanations about how these influence the presence or absence of an identified object. In natural science research these objects are natural entities, while in social science research these objects are social science constructs linked to structure and agency. Although this approach to realist research can be traced back to the reasoning of earlier philosophers it is particularly influenced by the work of Rom Harré who discussed concepts such as generative mechanisms, causal powers and stratification in *The Principles of Scientific Thinking* (1970).

The identification, exploration and discussion of generative mechanisms relates directly to the critical realist intention of recognising that "...we will only be able to understand- and so change – the social world if we identify the structures at work that generate those events and discourses...these structures are not spontaneously apparent in the observable pattern of events; they can only be identified through the practical and theoretical work of the social sciences" (Bhaskar, as cited in Carlsson, 2003:12).

Danermark et al. (2002:58) state that it is the aim of social science to reach beyond the empirical and to provide a description of what was “in” a particular object that made it possible. Pawson & Tilley (1997) strongly promote a critical realist approach to evaluation research in that it moves beyond the mere assessment of whether or not a programme has met its intended outcomes to a deeper investigation of the underlying generative mechanisms and causal powers that provide valuable information on why change did or did not happen in a specific project context.

Danermark et al. (2002:21) explain that generative mechanisms result from the premise that “reality is not transparent” and “...it [reality] has powers and mechanisms which we cannot observe but can experience *indirectly* by their ability to make things happen in the real world” (*ibid.*). They further state that scientific work should investigate and identify relationships and non-relationships respectively between what is experienced and what actually happens and the underlying generative mechanisms that create these events in the world (*ibid.*: 21). Ekström (1992:116) proposes that causal powers related to generative mechanisms (causality) be analysed in terms of tendencies that are manifested in open systems in a complex interaction with other tendencies. According to Ekström (1992:116) causal powers are never to be “... found expressed in their purity but are always reinforced, modified or neutralized by other powers, and it is the context in which they operate that determines their specific effects”.

Within the realm of evaluative research (5.5) this entails moving beyond the knowledge that certain interventions bring about certain results - to identifying and explaining how and why this happens (Morén & Blom, 2003) within a specific context. McEvoy & Richards (2003:412) describe generative mechanisms as the “structures, powers and relations that work beneath a surface (observable) appearance”. Although these generative mechanisms may not be directly observable and are unobserved analytical constructs (Hedström & Swedberg, 1998), they are perceived to be “real” and are able to be identified through their causal effects (the outcomes). A mechanism, according to Hedström & Swedberg (1998) is a systematic set of statements that provides a plausible account of how interventions and their results are related to one another. Within a critical realist paradigm the traditional Newtonian concept of mechanisms (i.e. the action of external forces on material objects) is extended into the realm of the social sciences. While (as discussed in 5.4.2) at a fundamental level these generative mechanisms are biological, they are perceived to be real at all levels including psychological and social.

Danermark et al. (2002:60) and Sayer (1992:120) highlight that it is not, however, necessary for researchers in a particular field of study to analyse mechanisms throughout the various levels of strata. Social science research will tend to focus primarily on mechanisms linked to structure and agency within the social and psychological strata. The same authors state that in many cases "...the underlying strata can be taken for granted and our main concern is those mechanisms which constitute the stratum where our own research problem belongs" (*ibid.*:63) but that the researcher should at the same time be conscious of the influence of the other strata. The question of which mechanisms are most significant for the object being studied can only be determined through empirical study and in relation to the problem that the researcher seeks to investigate (*ibid.*:62). Researchers also caution against breaking mechanisms down into smaller and smaller components that in themselves cannot explain their combined efforts and relationships, for it is this exploration of causal relations that is key to critical realism (Danermark et al., 2002; Sayer, 1992). Danermark et al. (2002:62) stress that it is important to remember that it is the generative mechanisms that are stratified – not the phenomena (events, creatures or things).

Also key to the analysis of generative mechanisms is the concept of emergence (Archer, 1995; Sayer, 1992)(see 5.4.7) in that each stratum represents something completely new that cannot be reduced to the underlying strata. Each new stratum which has its own unique forces, mechanisms and powers is formed by the powers and mechanisms at work in the underlying strata (*ibid.*:60).

Benton & Craib (2001) state that there is a strong relationship between generative mechanisms and context (see 5.4.6.) and that according to critical realists generative mechanisms can also be latent until they are activated in particular contexts. Pawson & Tilley (1997) have extended this further and depict this relationship in the following formula:

Context + Mechanism = Outcome (C+M=O)

While it can be argued that the ideal environment in which to test such a formula is a scientific laboratory, social science research takes place within an open system (Bhaskar, 1979) (see 5.4.4), which has implications for social science research. Collier (cited in McEvoy & Richards, 2003:413) emphasises that it is therefore necessary to proceed in a pragmatic manner, seeking to identify potential causal mechanisms "...where they occur in their most significant form and are least affected by disturbing influences". In addition

Sharp (as cited in Archer et al., 1999:13) highlights that it is important to consider, when investigating generative mechanisms, that there may well be some causal processes in the social world which "...are much more causally efficacious than others, producing, whilst not empirical invariances, some very strong correlations".

Adopting an evaluative research approach for this study (see 5.5) involves identifying and investigating the generative mechanisms that directly impact on the school development process within the context of a specific intervention and applying structural and relational analysis to produce causal explanations of relationship and context.

#### **5.4.7 Structure and agency and critical realism**

Danermark (2002:175) state that "...if social science is to contribute to social planning and actual practice then it is necessary to understand what shapes social life". An integral part of this understanding is an exploration and the formation of a viewpoint on the two key social phenomena structure and agency.

Structures are composed of a set of internally related objects which have emerged from human agency and developed unique properties of their own (Danermark, 2002). Some structures form part of greater structures. Analysis of structures takes place through a process of "mapping through abstraction" the relationships of which it is compiled (*ibid.*:175). There are different theoretical viewpoints on structure and agency. Danermark (2002:179-182) classify these into five models which are described briefly below. Since this research makes use of a realist approach, the last paradigm outlined below, is examined in more detail in this section.

- (i) The *social fact* (collectivism) paradigm which involves a "downwards" conflation of structure and agency. In this paradigm people merge with structure and cannot be distinguished as operating independently with separate powers.
- (ii) The *agency* paradigm (individualism) which involves an "upward" conflation of agency and structure where it is maintained that structures only develop as a result of the actions of agents and cannot be distinguished as separate phenomena with their own powers.
- (iii) *Structuration* (Giddeons, 1984) which works on the premise that structure and agency constitute each other in such a way that they cannot be separated and

- can only be conceptualised in relation to each other. This approach negates the possibility of emergence (iv).
- (iv) *Transformational model* (Bhaskar, 1993). This model maintains that while social structures cannot be reduced to individuals, the former are a prerequisite for human action and that they both enable and limit human action.
  - (v) *Emergence* (Archer, 1989,1995). This theory is consistent with Bhaskar's (1993) model and maintains that structures are always the context in which human and social action takes place and that social interaction is the environment in which structures are reproduced or transformed. Archer (1995), suggests "analytical dualism" in that structure and agency should be viewed as separate strata which possess different powers, and that the interplay between the two strata over time should be studied (not one or the other through bracketing as suggested by Giddens, 1984).

It is not within the scope of this study to examine the work of Bhaskar, Archer and other relevant realist social theory in detail. What I have attempted to do is to highlight the key areas of realist social theory that I think have particular relevance for this study in keeping with Archer's statement that "social theory has to be useful and useable: it is not an end in itself" (Archer, 1995: 135). It is therefore important to discuss issues of structure and agency so as to lay a foundation for the analysis and discussion of data.

Archer (1995) adopts a morphogenetic approach to the conceptualisation of structure and agency. This is based on the theory that society has no set form or preferred state (morpho) and that society takes its shape from the intended and unintended consequences of agent's activities (genetic). Within this context there is no insulated "lebenswelt" that is isolated from a socio-cultural system. According to Archer structure pre-exists agency but is transformed (morphogenesis) through a process of emergence to form new structure. Alternatively existing structure is reproduced (Bhaskar,1978) resulting in morphostatis (Archer, 1995). Archer's work demonstrates a superimposing of Bhaskar's (1989) Transformational Model of Social Science and the Morphogenetic/Static Cycle (Archer 1995:158). Archer (1995:159) provides the following comprehensive description of realism:

"Realism is committed to an explanatory framework which acknowledges and incorporates (a) pre-existent *structures* as generative mechanisms (b) their *interplay* with other objects possessing causal powers and liabilities proper to them in what is a stratified social world, and (c) non-predictable but none the less explicable

*outcomes* arising from interactions with the above, which take place in the open system that is society”.

Within this framework each new generation of agents reproduces or transforms its “structural inheritance” but this inheritance itself directly impacts on the way in which they do so through influencing their vested interests, aspirations for stasis or change, resources they can use and strategies they can apply (Archer, 2000:308). Thus both human agency and structure (and culture) possess causal powers.

Archer’s more recent works explore the conceptualisation of agency in detail together with the relationship between agency and structure (including culture) as related to morphostasis and morphogenesis (Archer, 2000; Archer, 2003). She also further develops Bhaskar’s (1979) theory of the intentionality of agency and focus on exploring reflexivity as a causal power in the interplay between the two irreducible properties and powers of structure and agency (Archer 2003).

Archer argues against the under-or over-privileging of human agency in social analysis and argues for a theoretical approach that simultaneously acknowledges the causal powers of both agency and structure (social and cultural). While she does not privilege agency, Archer emphasises the active role of agent in the interplay between structure and agency. Archer focuses on the properties of people which are intertwined with their sociability but irreducible to it and which influence the emergence of internal constructs (i.e. personal identity) and the morphogenesis of structure. Integral to this process is the acknowledgement of emotions as an integral part of agency. Archer (2000:195) defines emotions as “commentaries upon our concerns” which emerge from relational interaction with reality as opposed to cognitive interpretations imposed upon reality. This relational positioning of emotions to concerns indicates non-indifference on the part of agency. Archer’s (2000) in depth exploration of human agency, and particularly agency and emotion, relates directly to this study’s focus on the active (and non-active) role of human agents in relation to structure.

According to Archer (2000:212) agency relates with clusters of emotions to three different orders of reality: natural, practical and social. The concept of emergence (and hence also change) is rooted in agency’s response to these three orders. The latter two orders, practical and social, are most relevant for this study. Archer (2000:212) describes the practical order as the relationship between the practical task and the human undertaker. This relationship rests primarily on practical mastery and has implications within an

education context for both learners, educators and other school community members, for as Archer (*ibid.*) states "if we constantly fall short on a particular task, meaning that we cannot match up to the objective standards of performance achievement then frustration, boredom and depression ensure as emotional commentaries". If, however, we perform well we experience feelings of satisfaction, joy and even euphoria (*ibid.*). Archer emphasises that if in working life a task yields no intrinsic satisfaction then boredom and stultification are the outcomes of such work (if it is inescapable).

The social order is concerned with emotions related to social norms and extends into the realm of morals and ethics. These "normative conversations and agreements" (Archer, 2000:215) are culturally emergent properties linked to a chain of past interactions that exert powers over specific "generations" of subjects. According to Archer (2000:219) these social concerns are integrally linked to our sense of self worth and are invested in certain projects (e.g. career, family, community, club or church) whose success or failure vindicate or damage this self worth. Agents interact with these concerns and related projects through a process of internal dialogue or internal conversation (Archer, 2003) which Archer (2000) separates into three moments of conversation: discernment, deliberation and dedication. These internal conversations are linked to the process of human reflexivity.

Archer (2003:9) promotes human reflexivity as the "most important of human emerging properties" which performs the crucial role of mediating between structure and agency. In this context agents diagnose their own situations, identify their own interests and design projects that they think are appropriate to attain their interests (*ibid.*). Structures are credited with not only having different types of properties, but also exerting different types of causal powers that can enable or constrain the process of mediation. Archer (2003:131) states that:

"indeed, it is what agents seek to do, the precise projects that they pursue, which are responsible for the activation of the causal powers of constraint and enablement; otherwise, structural and cultural properties which are constitutive of situations remain real, but their causal powers are unexercised".

Agency also has intrinsic causal powers that result from "reflexive deliberations" (Archer 2003:46) and that enable agency to modify and monitor itself. In addition agency has extrinsic causal powers that enable agency to mediate and modify society. According to Archer (2003:51) this "reflexive deliberation" forms part of agency's "internal conversation"

which can be known *directly* to the individual in realist terms, but which can only be known *indirectly* to others through fallible interpretation.

In relation to the interplay between structure and agency Archer (2003:135) identifies three stages and describes these as follows:

- (i) Structural (be they distributional, positional, organisational or institutional) and cultural (be they prepositional, theoretical or doctrinal) properties *objectively* shape the situations which agents confront involuntarily, and possess generative powers of constraint and enablement in relation to
- (ii) Agent's own configurations of concerns, as *subjectively* defined in relation to the three orders of natural reality – nature, practice and society.
- (iii) Courses of action are produced through the reflexive deliberations of agents who *subjectively* determine their practical projects in relation to their *objective* circumstances.

This interaction does not, however, result in a theory of conflated structure and agency. (Giddens, 1984) which Archer criticises for its defect in withholding causal powers from either structure or agency (Archer 2000:307). Bhaskar suggests that social structures (at the level of real) are dependent on agent's activities and agent's concepts. Structures are only relatively enduring and neither structures or agents can be reduced to the other (Nelhaus, 1998). Thus, while structure pre-exists, agency has the power to reproduce or transform it (Bhaskar, 1979). Within this perspective society is both the "ever-present condition (material cause) and the continually reproduced outcome of human agency" (Bhaskar, 1979:43). Therefore by virtue of causal powers human beings are active shapers of the social world rather than passive recipients of it (Archer, 2000:308).

While realists do not maintain that structure and agency are fully distinct objects, they argue that they possess distinctive powers (Hollis & Smith, 1994). Archer perceives the differentiation between structure and agency as a useful analytical concept (Archer, 1982). This 'analytical dualism' (Archer, 1995: 12) provides a conceptual method for researchers to investigate their different powers and the way in which they interact. While this approach has its own challenges in terms of integrating structures and agency into a "single story" (Archer, 2000:309) which results in an "explanatory story" (*ibid.*) of how the related causal powers of structure and agency weave together to bring about change.

#### 5.4.8 Critical realism and research methods

Outhwaite (1987:34) states that critical realism is "...ontologically bold but methodologically cautious". It is permeated with reality having ontological depth but "...shows a humble spirit in the face of the task of arriving at knowledge about a specific phenomenon" (Danermark et al., 2002:204).

Critical realism endorses a range of research methods, both quantitative and qualitative; however, the choice of research method depends on the nature of the research and what the researcher wants to learn from the research (Sayer, 2000: 19). Sharp (as cited in Archer et al., 1999:12) states that while qualitative methods are useful for collecting data on some aspects of a problem, especially at the level of experience, a full explanation will frequently have to include broader triangulated methods. Triangulated methods, according to Sharp (*ibid.*), involve applying "... a variety of different methods in order to tease out the different levels of analysis and the real, deep causal processes at work". Sayer (1992:3) perceives qualitative research methods to be more suitable than quantitative methods within a realist paradigm in that realism questions the validity of the "regularity model" that attempts to produce regularities across studies and instead favours methods of establishing the qualitative nature of social objects and relations on which the causal mechanisms depend. Related to this is an emphasis on the researcher having a scholarly knowledge of the research object (or objects) so as to create a dialogue between theoretical work and empirical work (Woodiwiss, as cited in Archer et al., 1999:16).

Pawson & Tilley (1997) support a theory-driven approach where the researcher investigates current theory related to the object of study and uses this for the basis for programme construction and realist evaluation. Since the *Learning Schools Initiative* was already in existence prior to the commencement of this research, it was not possible to work completely within a theory-driven approach. The *Learning Schools Initiative* is also "breaking new ground" in South African school development research which lends itself to the development of new theories in this context. This research therefore examines the theory underpinning the *Learning Schools Initiative*, investigates additional theory in the realm of whole school development with specific focus on emerging mechanisms, and develops "new" theory based on the programme implementation. The methods used in this study to collect data are discussed in detail in (5.6).

Sayer (2000:19) highlights the need for the social researcher (since social science research takes place in an open system) to apply careful abstraction and

conceptualisation when analysing research objects and influences. He states, "...only when we have done this and considered how they combine and interact can we expect to return to the concrete, many-sided object and make sense of it" (Sayer, 2000:19). Critical to this process is to take care that what is indivisible is not divided and what is different and separate is not conflated. Thus, as with Bhaskar's theory of structure and agency (1979) and supporting work by Archer (1995) these remain ontologically separate (see 5.4.7), but their relational interaction is abstracted and discussed where relevant within the context of specific research. Therefore within the context of this study the conceptualisation of the whole school development process as defined by contemporary theory together with the researcher's conceptualisation thereof involved a process of careful abstraction. In addition, the way in which structure and agency were defined and perceived within the context of the two schools, as well as the broader South African education, training and development environment was important in terms of theories related to intention (Bhaskar, 1979), and change. The identification of generative mechanisms and the conceptualisation of these drawing on theory and the experiences of the agents within the two schools were of equal importance.

Sayer (1992, 2000) also differentiates between intensive and extensive research. Extensive research is described as being concerned with discovering general patterns and common patterns of a population as a whole (Sayer, 1992: 242). Intensive research revolves around primary questions concerning causal questions within a particular or limited number of cases (*ibid.*). This study would therefore be categorised as intensive research that focuses on an intervention programme as implemented in a limited number of cases (i.e. two schools). While Sayer (2000) states that intensive and extensive research should not be interpreted respectively as case study and survey he highlights that a primary limitation of intensive research is that "...actual causal patterns and contingent relations are unlikely to be 'representative', 'average' or 'generalizable'" (Sayer, 2000: 21). However, he stresses that generative research is strong on causal explanation and interpreting meanings in context (*ibid.*).

#### **5.4.9 The limitations of critical realism**

As with all paradigms, critical realism has its limitations that have implications for research. However, most of the limitations of critical realism are shared by other research approaches. Bhaskar (referred to in Outhwaite, 1987) identifies three ontological, one relational and one epistemological limitation to critical realism. The ontological limitations are linked to the difference between natural and social structures. These are that:

- (i) social structures, unlike natural structures do not exist independently of the activities they govern;
- (ii) social structures, unlike natural structures, do not exist independently of the agent's conceptions of what they are doing in their activity;
- (iii) social structures, unlike natural structures, may be only relatively enduring (so that the tendencies they ground may not be universal in the sense of time and space (Outhwaite, 1987:53).

Benton & Craib (2001 :133) sum up the above by stating that social structures are "activity-dependent", "concept-dependent" and "space-time" dependent.

The relational limitation, linked to (ii) above, is that social science is itself a social practice of its own subject matter (*ibid.*) – a double hermeneutical process (Danermark et al., 1997). Thus the manner in which knowledge is derived is a social process involving various agents with their own worldviews and influences that operate within different structures. This is, however, also a limitation of all other social science research and needs to be carefully monitored and controlled in all social science research projects. The manner in which this is addressed in this research is discussed in 5.6.2.5.

An additional epistemological limitation is the impossibility of creating a completely closed experimentation research context in the social sciences. Social science research is conducted within an open system. Other research approaches overcome this through focussing on the social nature of knowledge and reality through interpretation or construction or through using a process of controlled experimentation (particularly control groups). The critical realist commitment to a pre-existing reality counterbalances interpretative and constructivist approaches. Realists are also highly critical of the scientific logic and validity of experimentation in social science research (Pawson & Tilley, 1997).

It is critical realism's most criticised aspect that is in fact its strength - its commitment to a pre-existing, differentiated, structured and stratified reality that lends rigour and credibility to critical realist research. Benton and Craib (2001:134) state that it is because of these limitations that conducting research within a critical realist paradigm goes beyond treating the "common-sense ideas" of social actors as the final authority and that "...theoretical argument (including notably the use of transcendental arguments) and empirical evidence

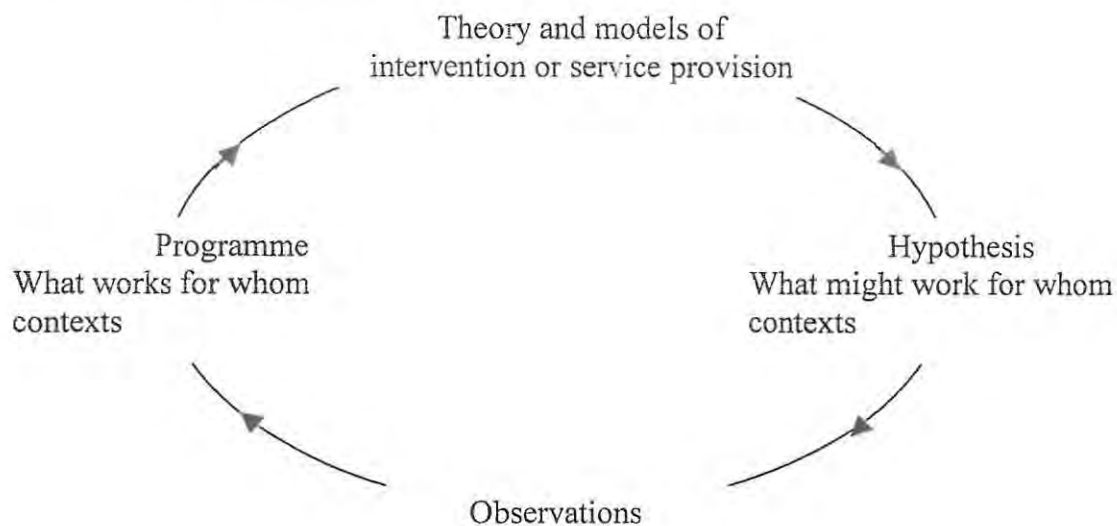
can lead to accounts of the social structure which differ from, or even contradict, those of lay actors”.

### **5.5 Evaluative research within a critical realist paradigm**

Evaluative research differs from other forms of evaluation in that it not only focuses on measuring an intervention's success against specified criteria, or only on process analysis, but instead investigates the generative mechanisms that explain why an intervention did or did not work (Carlsson, 2003). Thus, while the criteria against which a project's success are measured (i.e. what makes it work or not work) remain important, paramount in evaluative research, within a critical realist paradigm, is the attempt to uncover the causal factors which determine this. Sayer (2000:22) says that traditional evaluation approaches assume a fairly “... closed system in which a regular relation is expected between the cause event (the implementation of the programme) and its effects”. In contrast a realist approach assumes an open system and a “...generative model of causation in which the outcomes of the activation of mechanisms always depends on specific contexts” (Sayer, 2000:23). Response to a programme therefore involves examining the actors' perceptions and choices within a specified social context (Sayer 2000). In concurrence with this Carlsson (2003) states that evaluation researchers do not conceive that initiatives work but rather that it is the action of the stakeholders that makes them work. It is the causal potential of an initiative that according to Carlsson (2003:14) takes the form of “...providing reasons and resources to enable different stakeholders and participants to 'make' changes”. Realistic evaluation researchers therefore seek to understand why an intervention works through understanding the action (or generative) mechanisms and the circumstances (contexts) which trigger (or don't trigger) these mechanisms (5.4.6). As Sayer (2000:19) states that the open, complex and “messy” nature of social systems requires that researchers carefully conceptualise abstractions related to objects of study. The investigation of context therefore includes analysing the relational dynamics and interplay of structure and agency (Archer 1995) within the scope of the study (see 5.4.7).

Pawson & Tilley (1997) describe evaluative research as primarily a theory driven approach which involves researching a particular concept or field prior to programme implementation and then applying this theory in an identified context. Tentative theories regarding what works for who is what context (together with an intensive unpacking of the 'why') are then developed (see figure 5.1). While it is not necessarily the aim to develop a

cumulative theory of a programme's success, such theories can be developed (*ibid.*), however Pawson & Tilley (1997) and Sayer (2000) stress the importance of context to realist evaluations and caution against generalisation.



**Figure 5.1 : The realistic evaluation cycle (Pawson & Tilley, 1997:85).**

The method of identifying generative mechanisms (see 5.4.6) is integrally woven into the change process. Most projects are initiated to meet specified needs and this intervention generally involves some sort of change. According to Carlsson (2003:11) a focus on generative mechanisms in this context involves examining the causal factors that “inhibit or promote change” when an intervention implementation occurs. This entails moving beyond the empirical to explain causal factors that impact on observed reality with the aim of producing ever more detailed answers to the question of “why an intervention works for whom and in what circumstances”. Carlsson (2003:15) breaks this broad question into three main focuses within Pawson & Tilley’s (1997) model: (i) what changes or outcomes will be brought about by an intervention, (ii) what contexts impinge on this, and (iii) what mechanisms (social cultural and others) would enable these changes, and which may disable the intervention.

Sayer (2000: 23) describes the intensive research process involved in answering the above questions as “...repeated movement between concrete and abstract, and between particular empirical cases and general theory” in order to provide a full analysis of an intervention. Carlsson (2003:13) describes evaluation research as applied research but stresses that while theory is essential to all aspects of the process the aim of the process is not to develop theory per se but to develop theories for practitioners, stakeholders and

participants. A key focus of evaluative research within a realist paradigm is therefore to develop a comprehensive understanding of what generative mechanisms and related causal influences are involved in enabling an initiative to succeed or fail. In the context of this study the theory of what constitutes successful school development is explored together with an analysis of the generative mechanisms that enable a whole school intervention process within the context of two Port Elizabeth secondary schools. While evaluative research tends to adopt an either or approach to programmes, projects and initiatives, in that they have either completely succeeded or completely failed, this study adopts an approach which considers components of the initiative that have been successful and components that have not been successful and analyses the causes of this within the particular case context. It also focuses in specifically on the dynamics and mechanisms at work within the schools in relation to development and change.

## **5.6 Research Design Framework**

As previously discussed critical realist research requires a specific approach that permeates through all spheres of a study from initial conceptualisation of design through to data analysis. This research draws on both Danermark et al.'s (2002:109-111) and Pawson and Tilley's (1997: 106-114) models of realist research design. I found these models to be complementary in that Pawson and Tilley's (1997) model relates specifically to evaluative research but lacks some of the depth of explanation of Danermark et al.'s (2002) model. It was therefore useful to use Pawson and Tilley's (1997) model as a framework and to include some of the depth of explanation of Danermark et al.'s (2002) model.

Pawson and Tilley (1997:107) suggest that evaluative research is structured according to three phases. Phase one entails an inspection of academic literature and practitioners "folk" theories of why and for whom a specific programme might work. Phase two involves an outcome analysis internal to the programme of the particular contexts and mechanisms associated with the success predicted in phase one, and phase three takes the form of the subject's interpretation of the programme to seek for a sense of self recognition of processes described in two. Different hypothesis of context-mechanisms-outcome (CMO) (5.5) are explored throughout the different phases.

Danermark et al., (2002) describe a six-stage exploratory research critical realist model which, while more detailed than that of Pawson and Tilley's (1997), contains similar features. These six stages are (1) description, (2) analytical resolution, (3) abduction/theoretical redescription, (4) retroduction, (5) comparison between various theories and abstractions, and (6) concretisation and contextualization. What is particularly useful in Danermark et al.'s (2002) model is the concept of retroduction as a form of inference the core of which is transcendental argumentation which "...seeks to clarify the basic prerequisites for conditions for social relationships, people's actions, reasoning and knowledge" (p.96). This form of argumentation moves beyond the empirical and is therefore also referred to as transfactual argumentation (*ibid.*:96). Retroduction considers relational questions such as: "what properties must exist for X to exist and to be what X is?", or simply "what makes X possible?". Counterfactual thinking is essential to retroduction in that when considering what something is, the researcher must also consider what it is not (*ibid.*: 101).

Pawson and Tilley (1997) state that while the research methods employed by realist evaluative researchers can involve a "...kaleidoscopic usage of the social science toolbox in ranging from the usage of official data to street-corner observation and from the gathering of folk wisdom to the crunching of a vast data matrix", what holds these together is the realistic evaluation strategy of refusing to treat programme evaluation as research within a "black box". They identify three guiding themes of the realist research strategy:

1. It increases specificity of our understanding of the mechanisms through which a program accomplishes change.
2. It increases specificity of our understanding of the contextual conditions necessary for triggering program mechanisms.
3. It increases specificity of outcome pattern predictions according to context and mechanism triggered.

Chapter four of this study sets the foundation for this approach through providing an overview of the theory and relevant studies on school reform and a exploration of potential mechanisms and context configurations. A description of the *Learning Schools Initiative* is provided in Chapter six. This provides background and depth to the study and discusses theoretical integration into the programme's initial design and subsequent development process. Empirical information specific to this study is presented in Chapter seven and recommendations based on this in Chapter eight.

### 5.6.1 Data collection methods and processes

Central to the purpose of this study is the exploration of mechanisms that influence the successful implementation of whole school development and related change processes. As is discussed in 5.4.6, 5.4.7 and 5.6 data collection methods associated with realism and evaluative research must support the identification of generative mechanisms and causal explanations as well the process of abstraction. As Archer (2000:310) states "...realism is concerned with actions which are practical, not just symbolic: with *making* (poesis), not just *doing* (praxis), or rather with doing which is not, or not only *saying*". There must therefore be a concerted attempt on the part of the realist researcher to move beyond the subjective towards the objective (Hollis & Smith 1994) through the application of a variety of data collection methods and a thorough analysis thereof. Pawson and Tilley (1997:164) state that realist evaluative research has the task of "...getting a fix on the action and beliefs of each stakeholder within a wider model of their causes and consequences." A primary source of this information is the "realist(ic) interview" (*ibid.*:164).

This study commenced with a close examination of the theory and consultations (with other implementation agencies) during project start up and development as well as additional whole school development literature (5.5). Following this empirical project data was sifted (data that existed prior to the commencement of the study) and collected. A primary source of data was the project participants (e.g. the educators and the school principals) whom I engaged with both in formal interviews and also through informal discussions at workshops and camps. These informal discussions together with my observations and other information that I thought of as relevant (e.g. press clippings) were captured in my "research journal". Documents generated by the GM South Africa Foundation team and by the schools were also collated and examined. In the context of this research triangulation of methods is used (as referred to in 5.6.2) not to counteract problems of validity and bias (Arksey & Knight, 1999), but rather to provide a full explanation and in-depth causal analysis (Sharp, as cited in Archer et al., 1999). Used in this manner triangulation functions less as a tactic and more as a means of inquiry (Huberman and Miles, 1998). Rather than attempting to ensure validity through traditional means of isolating variables and triangulation of methods this study draws on the principles of rigour and the endeavour to produce a comprehensive credible and realistic explanation of the mechanisms based on data analysis and theoretical reference. Danermark et al. (2002:37) state that validity is created through an intersubjective confirmation of the validity of scientific concepts which involves a process of double

negotiation firstly with the scientific community and secondly with the “real” world that the conceptualisation attempts to explain.

The table below provides a summary of the data collection techniques used, related data sources and outcomes that are linked to the research.

<b>Data Collection Techniques</b>	<b>Data Sources</b>	<b>Outcomes</b>
Theoretical Investigation	Learning School Initiative start up documents Minutes/notes from meetings with other WSD implementation agencies. Initial literature reviewed by the initiative (e.g. Research from <i>President's Education Initiative</i> , Taylor et al., 1999, Davidoff 2002, etc.).	Explanation of initial theory linked to description of <i>Learning Schools Initiative</i> in Chapter six.
Formal Interviews (2004) (Individual)	Principal of each school	2 Transcripts Exploration of identified areas and identification of issues for discussion with focus area groups. Information contributing to status report
Formal Interviews (2004) (Group)	8 Focus area groups of each school	16 Transcripts Record of activities (projects) Exploration of identified areas, issues from principal interviews and other arising issues. Status report
Feedback session (2004)	Principal, whole school development coordinator, educators, SGB members of each school	Researcher journal notes Record of activities Plans for 2005
Formal interviews (2005) (Group)	8 Focus area groups of each school	16 Transcripts Exploration of revised identified areas and other arising issues. Record of activities (projects)
Formal interviews (2005) (Individual)	Principal of each school Whole school development co-coordinator of each school	4 Transcripts Exploration of revised identified areas as well areas arising from group interviews and other data sources.

Feedback session (2005)	Principals and whole school development co-ordinators	Researcher journal notes Record of activities Plans for 2006
Informal interviews & discussions (2003-2006)	Workshops & camps	Research journal notes
Observation (2003-2006)	Workshops, camps, visits to school and working sessions with LSI participants.	Research journal notes
Document analysis	Project Plans of focus areas. Whole School Development Plans. Progress reports from schools. Personal Growth Plans of schools 2005. Investigatory report on leadership in schools (2006) Report on the Leadership Training Programme (2006). Report on the Restorative Practice Workshop (2006)	Identification of key issues for discussion with participants and observations that support or negate other findings.
Investigation additional theory linked to WSD especially the emerging mechanisms and their structural relations.	WSD development, with specific focus on identified mechanisms and structural analysis.	Chapter eight

### 5.6.2 Individual and group interviews

Denscombe (1998) states that interviews are particularly useful in gathering information about a particular problem that requires in-depth information and in depth analysis. Kvale (1996:4) differentiates between two different types of interviews which he describes metaphorically as the "miner" and the "traveller". In this study the purpose of the interviews conducted was, in one sense to gain a description of the experiences of the educators (traveller), but more so to explore existing theory and to probe deeper levels of understanding in order to explore generative mechanisms and causal processes related to the *Learning Schools Initiative* and whole school development (miner).

A semi-structured interview framework with open-ended questions allowed for me to probe specific areas of enquiry (Pawson & Tilley, 1997) while simultaneously allowing for the participants to raise additional issues and for these to be jointly explored (Denscombe, 1998). The first round of interviews was more open-ended than the second where I focussed in on particular issues.

In this study I made use of both individual and group interviews to obtain information. Individual interviews with "key players" (Denscombe, 1998) provided a means of obtaining information from those who were closely involved with the overall management of the school development process. These interviews also provided a valuable initial source of information and raised issues that could then be unpacked and explored further in the Group Interviews. The group interviews proved to be useful in that they helped to reveal consensus views, to generate richer responses by allowing participants to challenge one another's views, and in verifying research ideas of data gained through other methods that ultimately contributed towards the enhancement of the reliability of responses (Lewis, 1992:141). As the initiative progressed, I became aware of the dominant personalities within the different school contexts (particularly the older more experienced teachers in Bonthoogte<sup>1</sup>), and had to make sure that the "lesser" voices were also expressed (Fontana & Frey, 1998) while ensuring that they did not feel threatened in the process. Some of the focus groups were more vocal and expressive than others and I spent additional time with these groups exploring issues that other groups were reluctant to talk about.

I conducted two rounds of group interviews with all of the focus area groups in each school (eight groups per school). There was a one-year interval between the two rounds of interviews. In 2004 I interviewed the principals of each school and the eight focus areas (in group interviews) at each school. In 2005 I interviewed the school principals and eight focus areas again and then also interviewed the whole school development co-coordinator of each school. While I had frequent contact and informal interaction with the whole school evaluation co-ordinators over the duration of the project in the second round of data collection (and analysis see 5.8), I felt that they, being closest to the "coalface" could add valuable insight into issues that had arisen and which I needed to explore further. The whole school evaluators were therefore interviewed last in the final round of interviews.

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<sup>1</sup> The names of the two schools that participated in this research have been changed

Gardner & Lehmann (2002:20) highlight the importance of trust when conducting interviews in an evaluation context. This sense of trust should lead to a sense of reciprocity so that the interview becomes a "form of dialogue". I found it important within the context of this study to draw on the concept of interview as a dialogue which was of reciprocal value so that the participants were aware of the value of their contribution, not only in so far as this study but also in terms of adding greater value to the initiative and more specifically to the way in which the initiative functioned in their school. There was therefore the need for a delicate balance between my agenda as researcher which involved gathering in-depth information, and their contribution as project participants.

All of the interviews were tape recorded with permission from the participants and later transcribed. I also made notes during the interviews so as to capture body movements and the subtleties of the group interactions (Kvale, 1996; Mouton, 1996). This was except for one interview where the participants switched off the tape recorder, removed the pen from my hand and then proceeded to share with me "the real situation". This valuable information I spoke into the dictaphone immediately after leaving the interview so as not to "loose" it.

For both the interviews (except for when requested not to) and observations I followed Lofland's (1971, as cited in Fontana & Frey, 1998) suggestions for collecting of empirical materials:

- (i) take notes regularly and promptly
- (ii) write everything down, no matter how unimportant it may seem,
- (iii) try to be as inconspicuous as possible in note taking, and
- (iv) analyse notes frequently (see data analysis 5. 8).

In addition to the formal interviews I also engaged in informal conversations with the project participants throughout the initiative. These took place during meetings with the principal, whole school development co-ordinator and different focus groups as well as at workshops and camps. The various workshops together with the two school camps (see 6.8.4) provided rich opportunities both for observation, verifying of information and the gathering of what Ely (1991:57) refers to as "on the hoof" information from various participants in relaxed and informal contexts.

### 5.6.3 Observation

In this study participant observation was used as a means to gather additional in-depth information concerning the participation of the school community in the whole school development process as well as to identify other issues and causal factors. According to Denscombe (1998:149), when participant observation is used in this manner it provides a holistic understanding in that individuals are studied "...in terms of their relationships with other parts, and with the whole event or culture". Participant observation also allows the researcher to place greater emphasis on the depth of data and reflects the "... detail, the subtleties, the complexity and the interconnectedness of the social world it investigates" (*ibid.*:149). In this study I assumed the role of "participant observer" (Adler & Adler, 1998: 79; Merriam, 1998:95). Observation opportunities presented themselves on each visit to the schools, at invitations to special events (e.g. induction of the school SGB or the end of the year valedictory celebration), during workshops, discussion sessions with the focus area groups, during meetings with the whole school evaluation co-ordinators or principals and during formal workshops and camps. I recorded information based on the observations in my research journal, either during observation or immediately thereafter, and adopted an approach of trying to document what was happening rather than what was being "put on" for my benefit (Guba & Lincoln, 1989).

Throughout the process of observation it was important to reflect on the "lens" (Lather, 1991:11) through which I was viewing what was happening as well as the means by which I determined what was noteworthy and equally important what was not (Fontana & Frey, 1998). Balancing my roles as project co-ordinator and researcher was challenging, in that as project co-ordinator I tended to be more judgemental, where as researcher I constantly challenged my perceptions and understanding (see 5.2.). Wolcott (1988) describes this role (where the researcher has a job to do in the setting in addition to the research) as that of active participant and suggests that when assuming this role the researcher must constantly ask themselves questions that assist with avoiding familiarity and bias. Spradley (1980:58) also highlights the need to guard against bias as participant observer and suggests that initially the participant observer should take "...mental pictures with a wide angled lens" and look beyond the immediate focus of activity so as to simultaneously experience being an insider and outsider. In addition they should observe both themselves and others and to engage in introspection to understand their own perspective and experience as well as those who they are observing. It was therefore important, so as to avoid a judgemental or evaluative approach, that I initially recorded the full picture of what was happening often relying on colleagues or others who were present to

complement this. In addition self-questioning formed a key part of introspection and reflection processes involved in my journaling of events.

#### **5.6.4 Whole School Feedback sessions**

Feedback and discussion sessions were held with each school after each cycle of interviews. In total two feedback sessions were held with each school. The first feedback sessions were integrated into the schools breakaway camp towards the end of 2004. The second feedback sessions took place in one-day workshops toward the end of 2005. These sessions were designed to meet a number of purposes at both a research and project level. Firstly they provided a means of presenting the data that was collected during the interviews, in synthesised and condensed form to the research/project participants for them to comment on and discuss (Guba & Lincoln, 1989; Weiss, 1998). Secondly it provided feedback to the participants on how I as researcher and project co-ordinator perceived the initiative to be progressing, and for them to comment on this (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). Thirdly for the participants together with researcher to probe reasons why or why not aspects of the whole school development process were happening (linked to generative mechanisms and causal analysis). This provided a larger voice (in the form of the school community as a whole) for the exploration of issues that had arisen during the focus area and individual interviews and provided an opportunity for verification and "confirmability" (Isaac & Michael, 1997) of the findings that had arisen from the interviews and other data. Finally the feedback sessions provided the impetus for the school communities to decide on a way forward within a whole school development and whole school evaluation as well as an action learning (Revens, 1982) context. This supports a critical realist philosophy of emancipation (Bhaskar, 1986) and development perspectives that value empowerment of project participants (Barrow, 2000; Fawcett et al., 1996; Fetterman, Kaftarian & Wandersman, 1996)

#### **5.6.5 Document analysis**

Documents generated by the GMSAF Team and project participants were used as additional data and were used for triangulation both in the sense of extending the hermeneutic circle (providing for a more holistic interpretation) and for verification of other findings (Weiss, 1998). Documents analysed in this research include project reports written by the GM South Africa Foundation's co-ordinators, minutes of GMSAF co-ordinators general meetings and *Learning School Initiative* reflection sessions, school

surveys on attendance of teachers and learners, workshop attendance records, reports from the focus area groups and schools, school paperwork to meet project objectives (e.g. policies), the annual needs analysis of each school, whole school development plans, minutes from planning sessions and reports by external consultants (Davidoff, 2006b; Dovey, 2006). In some cases the non-existence or absence (Bhaskar, 1993) of documents (e.g. Bonthoogte did not produce focus area reports in 2005) also raised questions which were then explored in greater detail with the participants.

### **5.6.6 Reflexivity within the research process**

Interpretive and post modernist approaches have brought about a shift in social science research away from the positivist need to objectify the stance of the researcher towards the need for the researcher to acknowledge and engage with their subjectivity within the research process. The acknowledgement of subjectivity as a part of all qualitative research due to the fact that the researcher is part of that which they are studying (Danemark et al., 2002:21), the double hermeneutic, has resulted in researchers exploring ways in which to minimise the effects of subjectivity that could contribute towards biased, invalid and unreliable research. A primary method of engaging with the effect that the researcher's social, cultural and other influencing factors can have on the research process is that of reflexivity. Davis (1999:8) describes reflexivity as a process that "...moves the researcher beyond naïve attempts to objectify the research encounter" and towards an acceptance that data is a cooperative product and that "...the specificity and individuality of the observer are ever present and must therefore be acknowledged, explored and put to creative use" (Okely, 1996, as cited in Davis, 1999:8). Bhaskar (1979) accepts the hermeneutical position that knowledge about society is a part of the process of social production and is part of its own subject matter that may in the process transform its subject matter. He refers to this process as causal interdependency which he distinguishes from existential intransitivity (the existence of society as a genuine practical object of research). This distinction contrasts the critical realist approach to both reflection and knowledge to that of the positivist tendency to ignore (or down play) interdependency and the hermeneutic tendency to dissolve intransitivity (Davis, 1999:20). According to Bhaskar causal interdependency allows us to "know" and research something as long as we are aware of own effects on the research process and outcome. These effects are embodied in the double hermeneutic where there is a need for interpenetration of the frames of reference of both the observer and the observed (Sayer 1992:49). This double hermeneutic and the related factor that social sciences are "...part of their own field of

enquiry" (Bhaskar, 1989:47) makes reflexivity an integral component in any social science research process.

The concept of intentionality (as discussed in 5.4.4) enables humans (agents) "...like other higher order animals to initiate changes in a purposeful way, to monitor and control performances, but to monitor the monitoring of these performances and to be capable of a commentary on them" (Bhaskar, 1979:44). Bhaskar (1979:44) describes the later as "second-order monitoring" which acknowledges agents ability to undertake a retrospective commentary upon their actions and gives an agents account of their own behaviour a special status. Davis (1999:21) stresses that while critical realism requires a continuing reflexive awareness "...this should not blind us to the existence of a reality beyond ourselves which provides a legitimate basis for the production and critique of theoretical abstractions. This is highlighted in Sayer's (1992:49) statement that although "...social phenomena cannot exist independently of actors or subjects [but] they usually do exist independently of the particular individual who studies them".

Action learning (Revens, 1982) and reflection (both as an individual and team) is integral to the GM South Africa Foundation's model development, piloting and refinement process. My multiple roles of project co-ordinator, facilitator, mentor, researcher and evaluator within the context of this study demanded that the adoption of a stringent approach to reflecting on the effects that my multiple roles, my own perceptions, as well as my own training and socio cultural background could have on the study. Stones (in Archer et al., 1999:15) states that it is important to look at who is the mediator and who is doing the questioning within a research project. This has obvious implications for the researcher in that they constantly need to guard against adopting a biased view or in leaning too much on one source of data (i.e. observation and feedback from individual project stakeholders). Throughout the research process I kept a journal which recorded: (i) the project happenings, (ii) my observations and perceptions, (iii) other peoples observations and perceptions, (iv) newspaper reports (e.g. the disciplinary hearing of the one principal) and other written sources of information (reports, etc.). When recording my own observations and perceptions I questioned the accuracy of these together with alternatives while simultaneously attempting to acknowledge any bias on my part. I constantly tried to maintain an open disposition towards project events while continuously trying to probe deeper meanings and explanations for events (e.g. why so few people attended some workshops) while also attempting to analyse my own position as agent originating from and working within a multiplicity of structures. In my journal I tried to record as many voices as possible so it was not only my voice providing a commentary on the project

events and also questioned why some voices were so positive and other so negative and in juxtaposition to this why all the voices (including my own) moved through phases of being positive and phases of being negative. In the ultimate stages of data analysis the in-depth interviews together with the records of what was actually happening (e.g. how many people attended workshops, what had the school community actually done in relation to their school development plan) proved valuable checks when balanced against personal perceptions and emotions.

## **5.7 Analysis of data**

### **5.7.1 Analysis of theory and existing project data**

Since this research follows a theory driven (Pawson & Tilley, 1997:165) the starting point for data analysis is existing theories on whole school. This theory includes that of “folk theories” (*ibid.*:107) developed by practitioners in the field. Having being involved in the project prior to the commencement of the formal research process I already had a “feel” for some of the influencing mechanisms and process which resulted from previous reading, consultation and observation. This was formalised through the scholarship review (Chapter four) and reconceptualisation of existing project data and collection of more specifically focussed additional data (5.6).

This process is consistent with a grounded theory approach (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) of obtaining initial data based on the project start up theory and documentation, observation and the first set of interviews, analysing this information, identifying emerging generative mechanisms and possible causal factors, engaging with relevant literature, refining and exploring causal factors and generative mechanisms in greater depth (see 5.6). Huberman & Miles (1998) who “advertise” (p. 182) themselves as “transcendental realists” (*ibid.*) perceive the analysis of causality to be compatible with a grounded theory approach which involves identifying themes, hypotheses, or patterns inductively and then verifying these through a series of inductive research cycles. Critical to this process is that the researcher should have some local acquaintance with the setting and should gradually move from describing to explaining and concurrently from a concrete to a more abstract level (Huberman & Miles, 1998). Causal analysis also takes account of and integrates into the research prior events that are assumed to have a connection with events that follow later (*ibid.*). Temporality (Faulconer & Williams 1985) and local context (Huberman & Miles, 1998) are also important factors (see 5.4.5) which need to be described and

explained in the research report and which locate the identified causal mechanisms within a particular setting in a particular time (*ibid.*:192). In keeping with this Chapters two and three of this study provide a contextual basis for the research. Chapter six extends this further by describing the *Learning Schools Initiative* and its interaction with the initial two pilot schools.

### **5.7.2 Data analysis as process**

In this research I followed the approach of data analysis as being a process of ongoing discovery (Ely, 1991; Huberman & Miles, 1998; Kvale 1996; Taylor & Bogdan, 1998) as opposed to being a final event. For as Ekström (1992:116) states the methodology of causal analysis of social action should be permeated by a “continuous interplay of conceptualisation/theory construction and contextualisation” which through deep knowledge of context presents a methodologically sound “explanatory story” (Archer, 2000:309).

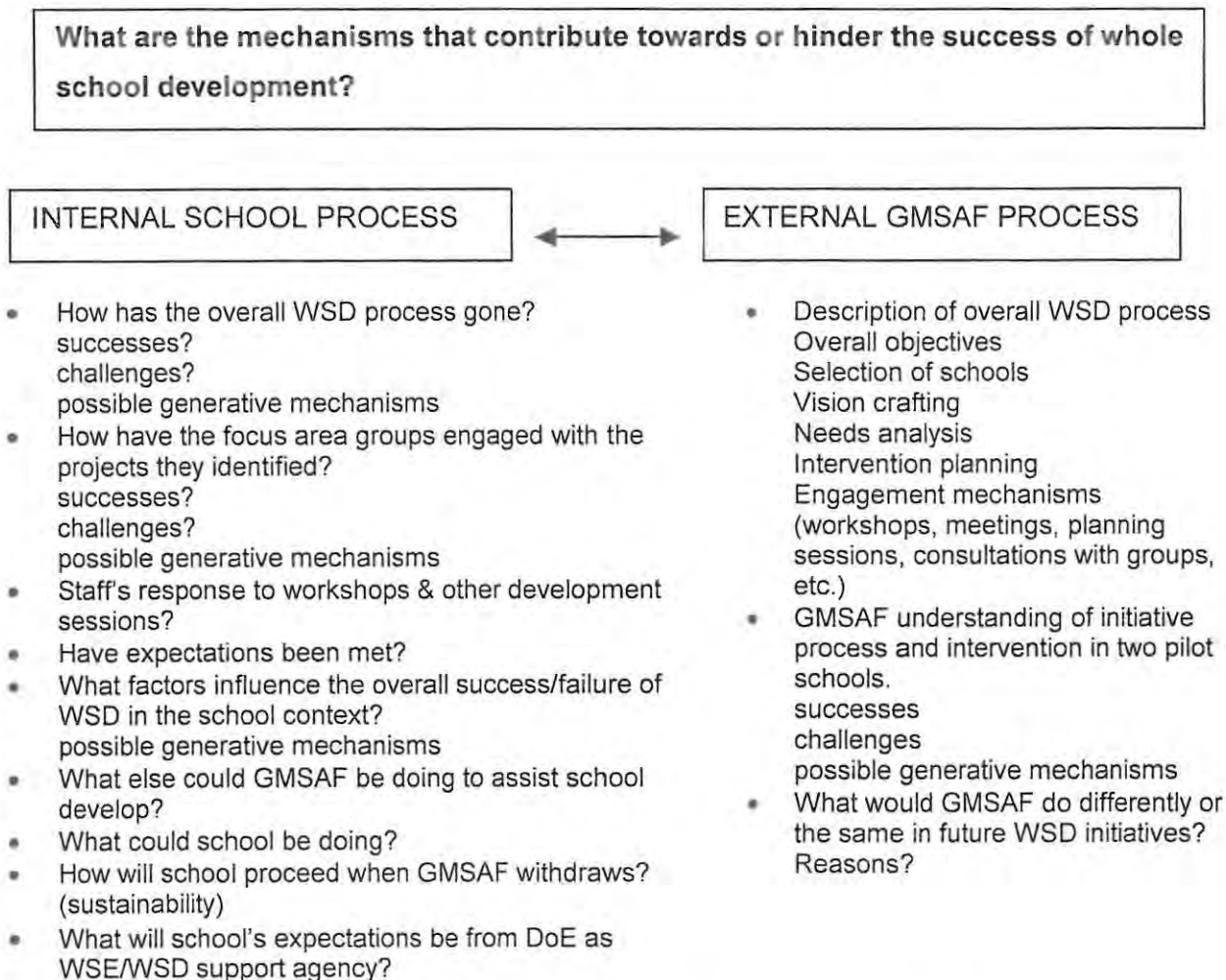
While some quantitative data was integrated into the research findings the majority of the data collected and compiled was qualitative. This qualitative information was written either in the form of reports, or fieldnotes (my research journal) and interview transcripts. So as to avoid the 1000 page scenario (Kvale, 1996), reduction and different levels of data analysis formed an integral part of each observation or interview encounter as well as the overall research process. Ely (1991:140) uses the metaphor of the researcher as photographer where a process of continual data analysis allows the researcher to “focus and refocus observational and/or interview lenses”. This process allows for the researcher to explore hunches and trends and was particularly useful in this study in “zooming in” on generative mechanisms and causal possibilities related to the primary research question.

### **5.7.3. The identification of generative mechanisms and causal powers**

The initial identification of potential influencing mechanisms resulted from the examination of relevant literature and existing project data. The second identification took place after the first set of interviews with the stakeholder participants were compiled through a process of preliminary coding (Rice & Ezzy, 1999, as cited in Marshall, 2002). Additional project information which existed at this time was also examined. These issues were then explored further in the initial feedback/planning session with each school which in turn led to additional refinement of concepts and a tighter focus for the collection of further data.

This was essential as there was a wealth of data that could be collated on the educators, schools and whole school development. The identified analytical categories provided a framework in which to focus the collection of further data. This did not mean that I, as researcher, only observed and collected data that related to the initial categories, but rather that I was especially aware of data related to these categories (Kvale, 1996). As the research progressed potential mechanisms and outcomes emerged and some of these became “louder” than others in that they were regularly echoed by the participants and other stakeholders (i.e. the project team), and also regularly observed in the participants’ actions (i.e. non-completion of projects by some focus-area groups).

The second phase of more intensive data analysis and reflection took place prior to the final set of interviews. This involved reading and re-reading all data collected to date, an examination of additional theory (where necessary) and the development of a framework for the final set of interviews and data analysis that would allow for maximum exploration of the generative mechanisms and causal factors related to the themes that had been identified to date. This framework is depicted in figure 5.2.



**Figure 5.2: The framework for second phase of data collection and analysis**

The final stage involved the clarification of the generative mechanisms which had emerged during the research process and the move to a causal analysis and explanatory mode (Kaplan 1964). This took place after the second round of formal interviews and formed part of the last cycle of refining generative mechanisms, linking causal factors to mechanisms, conclusion drawing and verification (4.6.2). It also involved final feedback sessions and data clarification with a number of stakeholders. These sessions also involved a final checking for bias and validity through "...checking for representativeness, checking for researcher effects (reactivity), and triangulating and weighting the evidence" (Huberman & Miles, 1998:200) as well as a final checking for the "authenticity" (O'Dea, 1994) and "integrity" (Janse van Rensburg, 2001) of the research process, data presentation and final analysis. This included the consideration of rival explanations and the consideration of any negative evidence (Huberman & Miles, 1998:200). Finally "peer review" (Schwandt & Halpern, 1988) also referred to as "peer checking" (Ely 1991) was used to receive feedback on the research findings as well as for purposes of confirmability and transparency (Huberman & Miles, 1998). This involved discussing the findings of the research with the members of the GMSAF team and inviting comment on the findings. A final refinement of the study took place following this process.

#### **5.7.4 Conclusion drawing**

Stones (as cited in Archer et al., 1999:15) states that "...for realist philosophy to really have methodological consequences, the link between the posited abstract ontology and the shape and texture of the research findings must be systematic and explicit". Key to this within a critical realist perspective is for the findings to be sufficient and valid explanations of causal factors related to the successful (or unsuccessful) implementation of a whole school development process. The data presentation and discussion chapter of this research (Chapter seven) attempts to capture this through a process of retroduction (Danermark, 2002), which through transfractal argumentation provides a causal explanation of the mechanisms at work in the project with particular focus on context-mechanism and outcome explanations. It also, as recommended by Danermark et al. (2002:113) in keeping with good scientific practice works to "...detect meanings, relations and coherence, to be able to gain knowledge of social structures and transfractal conditions" and in addition to applying formal logic also involves creativity. I took the decision not to present the findings of the research in the format of  $C + M = O$  (Pawson & Tilley, 1997) as this tended to provide a simple depiction of the mechanisms involved. Instead a detailed discussion of each key mechanism is presented.

## 5.8 Ethical issues in the research process

Social science research involves engaging with people within a particular context (Weiss, 1998). The fact that the researcher is part of the social system that they investigate (5.4.4.) inadvertently means that all social science research is value-laden (Danermark et al., 2002). Researchers need to be aware of this and to ensure that this does not impose on the ethical soundness of the study. In addition, the researcher is not necessarily a constant in the context whereas most of the participants are. In this research the participants were part of a broader system, i.e. the school and the Department of Education. Their relationships with each other pre-existed this research and continued beyond it. Guba & Lincoln (1989) caution that as people who are members of stable setting begin to understand each other's positions on various issues conflict may arise. While this can be avoided in the writing up of the report by maintaining confidentiality, it cannot be avoided in group interviews or workshops. As both *Learning Schools Initiative* co-ordinator and researcher I had to be aware of these nuances and to try and ensure that the research itself did not become a dividing tool (e.g. teachers who "scapegoated" others for not having participated, criticism of authority, etc.) but rather provided a way for the school community to explore how to address issues of concern.

Posavac & Carey (1997) identify five major ethical issues that should be considered when undertaking a programme evaluation. These are (i) the protection of the people studied, (ii) the danger of role conflicts (on the part of the evaluator/researcher), (iii) meeting the varying needs of different stakeholder groups, (iv) avoiding threats to the validity of the evaluation, and (v) staying alert to negative side effects (that could especially affect the participants) (*ibid.*:101). I found these five issues to be of relevance within an evaluative research context. Issues (i) and (ii) were of particular concern in this research, especially when balancing these against (iv) which involves both data collection and presentation of findings which were not always of a positive nature. Issue (v) also relates to the findings of Morris & Cohn (1993) where evaluators reported that the greatest ethical challenge that they faced was that of presenting findings clearly, competently and fairly. While this was not a programme evaluation as such, it was also important to present the findings such a way that they were of value to the GMSAF and other agencies. Two areas, which Posavac & Carey (1997) classify under (i), but which I found to be inherent in all five areas which they have identified are those concerning access and informed consent (5.8.1.) and confidentiality (5.8.2.). These are therefore discussed in greater detail in 5.8.1 and 5.8.2.

### **5.8.1 Access and informed consent**

Access to this research was initially provided through the engagement of the GM South Africa Foundation with the two schools. This process is described in 6.7.1. The way in which the initial interaction with the schools took place to secure access for the GM South Africa Foundation was thorough, although not unproblematic. The participants' reaction to the *Learning School's Initiative* obviously impacted on their reaction to myself as researcher. I, therefore, had to ensure that access to the research and gathering information for a specific purpose was understood to be (as much as possible) a separate process. As honesty in the use of information is considered of high priority (Posavac & Carey, 1997; Weiss, 1998) it was important that from the outset to make apparent that information from the initiative would be used for the dual purpose of the initiative documentation and evaluation and also for my own research. Permission to use information for my research purposes and to conduct specific interviews for this purpose was first obtained from the GM South Africa Manager, thereafter from the two school principals and ultimately from the school staff and other stakeholders (i.e. school governing bodies). This informed consent involved informing these individuals about the intentions of the research and, where relevant their roles and contributions (Posavac & Carey, 1997; Weiss, 1998). Methods of data collection were also discussed so that participants were aware that information based on observation would also form part of the study. Ely (1991:25) states that obtaining access is an ongoing process in that trust and cooperation need to be constantly maintained and established. Permission to interview was therefore asked for prior to each group interview. Permission was also obtained from each individual and group to tape interviews.

### **5.8.2 Confidentiality**

As is highlighted in 5.8, the protection of the research participants from any negative consequences relating to what the researcher observes, hears and writes is key to the research process. Kvale (1996:116) refers to this as the ethical principle of "beneficence" which means that the risk of harm to the individual should be the least possible. This was key in this research where the individuals interacted together on a daily basis within a particular organisational structure. Weiss (1998) states that all information from individuals should be treated as anonymous and that researchers should take care in what information they reveal to people who may know the individuals or institution so as

ensure that anonymity is maintained. Maintaining confidentiality was particularly challenging in the feedback sessions where I had to ensure that no direct examples from the focus area groups were used so as to protect the identity of those in the groups. I therefore “pooled” information for these purposes. In the actual progress reports I considered the focus area groups’ progress on their projects to be public knowledge and these were therefore shared openly in a report. Causal information as to why the general whole school development and individual group process was or was not happening as planned had to be treated carefully and sensitively, especially where participants referred to leadership and management styles. References to the ‘laziness’ and lack of cooperation of colleagues also had to be treated with care. While these references were important to the research for purposes of validity it was essential that such references should not be traced back to individuals. Kvale (1996: 115) describes this dilemma as the conflict which exists between “... the ethical demand for confidentiality and the basic principles of scientific research, such as the intersubjective control and the possibility of reproducing the findings by other researchers”.

## **5.9 Concluding summary**

This chapter outlines the research design utilised in this research to explore the identified research question. It discusses how critical realism, with its associated methodology of identifying generative mechanisms and causal explanations within a broader social science context, provides an ideal framework for investigating the many issues that contribute to or detract from the successful implementation of whole school development initiatives in South African schools. This study focuses on the generative mechanisms that arose in this study, specifically focuses on the implementation of a whole school development initiative in two Port Elizabeth schools, and explores possible causal explanations within the context of the study.

These mechanisms are primarily identified through a process of theoretical engagement, qualitative data collection and analysis where issues of interpretation of data together with ethical concerns of data collection are paramount. Issues such as ‘integrity’ and ‘authenticity’ of the data and findings are also woven through the research process in an attempt to ensure credibility of both the research process and the findings. The findings of this research are, in keeping with a critical realist perspective, time and space bound and deeply rooted in the context of the study. Chapter six provides a description of the structure and process of the *Learning Schools Initiative* that provides essential information and data for Chapter seven.

## CHAPTER SIX

### THE LEARNING SCHOOLS INITIATIVE

#### 6.1 Introduction

Documenting and capturing the process by which the *Learning Schools Initiative* team developed, implemented, reflected on and then refined and adapted the Learning Schools model is no simple task. The GMSAF *modus operandi* of action learning based on contextual experience resulted in the continuous adaptation of the model as the piloting process unfolded. These reflections or 'learnings' are considered key to the model in that they reveal many of the intricacies of why certain interventions work or take root while others fail, and are particularly relevant when unpacking generative mechanisms. While the initiative has been well documented, and I have drawn on project proposals, reports, minutes of meetings and project working documents for this chapter, so much of what transpired is not captured in tangible form but in informal discussions with various project stakeholders, discussions with others working in education and development and experts in the field or through reviewing related literature. It is therefore impossible to capture each decision made in the initiative and the rationale for a change in direction or the timing of such a change. I have, however, attempted to document the process as accurately as possible to give an indication of the flow of the development of the model and to provide a foundation for Chapter seven.

This chapter documents the development and implementation of the *Learning Schools Initiative* over a four-year period. As the GMSAF team worked with the school communities, the team's own understanding of the complexities of schools as institutions, school development and transformation and required interventions deepened. Thus, the model that emerged towards the end of 2006 was different to that proposed at the outset of the initiative. While many of the key principles and drivers underpinning the *Learning Schools Initiative* remained the same, a deeper understanding of what was required to bring about sustained change in the schools, as derived from a variety of sources, continued to transform and shape the model as the initiative progressed. In 2005 the pilot project was extended and a modified version of the Learning Schools model was implemented in four primary schools. Since this study only focuses on the two initial pilot project schools, the primary school pilot component of the initiative is not discussed

except where relevant to what transpired in the secondary schools or to provide more insight into the mechanisms at work in this study.

This chapter could have been structured in many different ways. I have, however, decided to follow a structure that attempts to capture the developmental flow of the initiative while simultaneously providing opportunity for the discussion of key experiences and 'learnings'. These are discussed in greater detail in Chapter seven. Within this structure the *Learning Schools Initiative* is discussed under five phases. While these phases tended to flow out of one another as the initiative evolved I found it impossible to discuss each phase within a time limited boundary. These phases therefore indicate different 'moments' in the *Learning Schools Initiative* rather than distinct chronological phases.

I have also attempted to stay with a process of documenting as opposed to reflecting, analysing and recommending in this chapter, so as to focus more on these processes in the following two chapters. This has, however, due to the reflective nature of the model development process and the very nature of this chapter, not been easy and reflection has inevitably become part of this chapter. This chapter, while documenting the development of a Learning Schools model through an intensive piloting process, illuminates some of the key generative mechanisms that are expanded on and discussed in detail in Chapter seven.

## **6.2 Historical origins of the *Learning Schools Initiative***

As mentioned in 3.10.6 the *Learning Schools Initiative* originated from an attempt to draw the GM South Africa Foundation's (hereafter referred to as the GMSAF) existing (pre-2003) projects into a holistic framework. At a strategic planning session attended by the project co-ordinators and General Manager in September 2002 two primary issues were discussed that led to the development of the *Learning Schools Initiative*. These were (i) that the GMSAF individual education and training projects could all add value to an overarching project aimed at improving the quality of teaching and learning in South African schools, and (ii) that a whole school development initiative would assist in creating a school environment conducive to supporting and sustaining subsequent individual projects. The GMSAF project co-ordinators (hereafter referred to as the GMSAF team) and General Manager made the decision to pilot a whole school development initiative that would attempt to incorporate as many components of current and previous GMSAF education and training projects as possible.

The initiative was named the GMSAF *Learning Schools Initiative*. The background research for this whole school development initiative commenced in October 2002 and a proposal describing the initiative and its primary objectives was presented to the GMSAF trustees and approved in November 2002. In the initiative whole school development was interpreted both as targeting all areas of a school and as targeting and involving all members of the school community in this process. Initial investigative research included meetings with the Joint Education Trust (JET), Business Trust and the National Business Initiative to discuss the experiences of these agencies in whole school development with particular reference to the *Education Quality Improvement Project* (EQUIP) and the *Quality Learning Project* (QLP) (see 3. 8). A meeting was held with the Port Elizabeth Department of Education's District Office District Manager prior to commencement of work in the identified schools. The District Manager pledged support to the process and asked for regular updates regarding the progress of the initiative. The canvassing of the initial two pilot secondary schools began in January 2003.

The GMSAF also hosted a forum in May 2003, where key individuals working in whole school development and education in South Africa were invited to make presentations and discuss methods of whole school development, related challenges and success strategies. A follow up forum was held once the initiative was underway in September 2003. The papers presented at these two forums together with summaries of key issues arising were published by the GMSAF (then still the Delta Foundation) in the form of forum proceedings (Delta Foundation, 2004). In October 2004 another forum was hosted by the GMSAF which focused on sustaining education development projects (see 3.6). This forum was attended by non-government organisations working in school development and education and representatives from the Eastern Cape Provincial and District Departments of Education.

### **6.3 Learning School Initiative's initial objectives (2002)**

The start-up primary objectives for the *Learning Schools Initiative* as written in the proposal submitted to the GMSAF Trustees (Delta Foundation, 2002c) were as follows:

- To determine school improvements in identified areas against a baseline study.
- To conduct a thorough assessment of the schools' needs using the school functionality instrument and educator needs analysis instrument.

- To design suitable intervention strategies and programmes to assist the schools to meet their identified needs.
- To form partnerships with other agencies in the endeavour to meet the schools' needs.
- To document and promote project information to relevant agencies and to encourage agencies to visit the schools.

These outcomes were continuously referred to as the initiative progressed. They were also monitored throughout the duration of the initiative. As the initiative took shape, more specific objectives related to the micro components (or sub models) of the initiative were also developed, however the overarching framework remained that of needs assessment and strategic intervention.

#### **6.4 Initial principles underpinning the *Learning Schools Initiative***

A key motivation for the GMSAF to pilot a *Learning Schools Initiative* was the rationale that South Africa needs a framework for transforming under performing schools in historically disadvantaged communities into fully functioning effective schools. Previous GMSAF school-based programmes and projects had indicated that a functional school environment is required for programmes to successfully take root and be sustained. In keeping with the *modus operandi* of the GMSAF it is important that a potential model is extensively piloted "on the ground" and that the logjams and challenges of this process are acknowledged and are explored together with the dynamics that contribute to successes. It was agreed by the GMSAF project team that the nature and process of an intervention to develop schools into effective learning communities needs to be intensely piloted, coherently documented and made available to other schools and support agencies.

When conceptualising the model, the GMSAF also discussed the possibility of focusing on a cluster school model, however it was decided to focus on individual whole school development for the following reasons:

- The initial model should not be reliant on the participation of Department of Education District Office staff.
- There could be accusations of the GMSAF favouring some schools above others within the cluster structure.

- The objective of the project is to pilot school development rather than a cluster structure aligned to the District Office Model.

While it was decided that the initiative would concentrate most of its efforts on the two schools identified to participate in the initiative, it was planned that at a later stage workshops would be extended to other schools, such as those who participated in the GMSAF Excellence in Education Forum in 2002 and the schools that indicated interest in receiving training to implement the GMSAF's Ready for Business Programme as part of the FET Business Economics curriculum. It was also planned that the model would, through a ripple effect, be expanded to reach more schools as the initiative progressed.

The GMSAF team identified the following principles to underpin the project:

- Whole school intervention.
- Negotiated shared vision and understanding with schools.
- Individualised approach based on the needs of schools.
- To work in partnership with others.
- Long-term intervention over a four-year period to build a critical mass.
- Quality learning by learners will be a priority.
- Constant interfacing with the learning communities.
- Work within the context of and engage constructively and innovatively within South African education and training policy.
- Success not to be dependent on government actions.
- Interventions should be as economical as possible without compromising the vision.
- Engagement should be sufficiently substantive to effect successful change.
- Prepared to be innovatively creative in pursuit of excellent education.

It was initially decided that the implementation of the model would be not be dependent on the participation of the Port Elizabeth District Office Department of Education as, during the time when the *Learning Schools Initiative* was conceptualised, the District Office seemed to be facing its own challenges (see 2.5.3) such as lack of capacity, resources and expertise together with regular staff reshuffling. While the process was not to be dependent on the participation of the District Office Department of Education, it was anticipated that the District Office would be a partner in the model development process as would other relevant non-governmental, non-profit organisations and community based organisations. It became evident as the piloting progressed that the schools involved in

the initiative needed the support of an external agency to both initiate, resource and sustain the intervention until such time that sufficient change had taken place and capacity developed within the school (see 7.2.7 and 8.2.5). Even then, the schools still require resources (e.g. social workers and textbooks). In terms of wide scale national replication the only agency with the required authority and funding for such initiative is the Department of Education. As the initiative evolved the focus extended from the schools to include an investigation of how the Department of Education could replicate the model so as to have large-scale impact.

## **6.5 Developing a preliminary intervention framework and approach**

### **6.5.1 Initial conceptualisation: a situational analysis approach to whole school evaluation and whole school development**

During the initial conceptualisation phase of the *Learning Schools Initiative* the GMSAF team adopted an individualised approach to meet the pilot schools' needs (6.4). This was in keeping with research based on other initiatives that followed a similar approach (4.8.2). It was initially envisioned that the needs of each school would be determined at two levels through the use of two separate assessment instruments that the GMSAF had developed and used in other initiatives. These two levels involved:

1. The identification of systemic issues through the application of the *School Functionality Instrument* (Delta Foundation, 2002b).
2. The identification of educators needs through the *Educator Needs Analysis Instrument and Process*. This involves the completion of a questionnaire followed by a workshop to clarify and specify needs and possible intervention strategies (Delta Foundation, 2003).

It was anticipated that following the administration of the above, a stratified intervention strategy based on the baseline situational needs analysis would be designed and would target the following areas:

1. Leadership, governance, management and administration training and support to transform the school system and environment into a fully functioning learning organisational structure.

2. Educator development programmes, support methods and resources that would assist educators to deliver high quality learning programmes with the end result of increased learner competence and preparedness for learning, living and work in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. New educator development programmes and support methods would be developed to meet teacher needs as required.

However, further investigations into government initiatives and policy in school development resulted in the identification of the National Whole School Evaluation Policy (South Africa. DoE, 2001e) and the subsequent Integrated Quality Management System (ELRC, 2003) (see 6.5). The GMSAF's *modus operandi* (see 3.10.2 and 6.5.2.) of linking initiatives to government policy and government initiatives meant that *Learning Schools Initiative's* framework should dovetail with and complement these two documents. The initiative scope was therefore broadened to focus on the nine areas of the whole school evaluation policy as opposed to the areas already targeted by the GMSAF. The evaluation and assessment indicators specified in the whole school evaluation policy provided the initial criteria by which to assess the pilot school's needs. As the initiative progressed the GMSAF team explored ways of integrating the IQMS criteria (which primarily focus on teaching and learning, but also touch on leadership and the development of support staff) into this whole school evaluation framework.

### **6.5.2 Aligning the Initiative to National Policy Initiatives**

It is an operational principle of the GMSAF that all initiatives of the foundation complement and where necessary supplement national, provincial and/or local policy (3.10.2). The objective of this is, firstly, to investigate ways of implementing policy in a workable and effective way that has real impact. Secondly, to ensure that organisations, which are already overwhelmed with new policy initiatives (2.2.3), are not further burdened with additional initiatives that are not linked to core government expectations. Thirdly, it is anticipated that initiatives based on or linked to government policy are more likely to receive support from the government, in this case the Department of Education, both during the pilot phase and for replication in the long term. Capacity and other issues that inhibit the Department's role as a replication agency are noted and are a major concern to the GMSAF. In addition to working with policy, the GMSAF also attempts to align its initiatives with both National and Provincial Department of Education plans and initiatives so as further encourage replication.

During the initial stages of conceptualisation of the *Learning Schools Initiative* the GMSAF team identified the following as key Department of Education policies, plans and initiatives that needed to be considered and where possible integrated into the *Learning Schools Initiative*:

1. The South African Schools Act (South Africa. Government, 1996c)
2. The Implementation Plan for Tirisano, January 2000 – December 2004 (South Africa. DoE, 2000a)
3. The Manifesto on Values, Education and Democracy (South Africa. DoE, 2001c).
4. The National Whole School Evaluation Policy (South Africa. DoE, 2001e).

As the initiative progressed various national policy implementation plans were revised. Revisions, amendments and additions were taken into consideration and integrated where relevant and possible (e.g. the integration of the Whole School Evaluation system into the Integrated Quality Management System). This approach to development means that the GMSAF coordinators have to constantly be aware of new policy developments and influences as well as the development of new Department of Education initiatives and plans. This entails working as closely as possible with Department of Education officials and other experts in the field.

#### **6.5.2.1 The South African Schools Act**

The South African Schools Act (South Africa. Government, 1996c) "...sets the uniform norms and standards for the education of learners at schools and the organisation, governance and funding of schools throughout the Republic of South Africa" (*ibid.*:4). While the GMSAF acknowledged that there are many other South African Acts that are relevant to Education, including acts that originate from other sectors (e.g. the Occupational Health and Safety Act, South Africa, Government, 1993), the South African Schools Act is important legislation in that it repeals the many education laws that existed under apartheid education and training and lays the foundation for a new non-discriminatory education system (Oosthuizen, 2003). It was important for the *Learning Schools Initiative* to consider this Act as whole school evaluation and development require schools to reflect on and develop areas legislated in the South African Schools Act. In evaluating their performance South African schools need to ensure that their governance and management structures, as well as their policies and procedures are aligned to required legislation.

### 6.5.2.2 The Implementation Plan for Tirisano

The Tirisano five-year plan (South Africa. DoE, 2000a) was initiated by Minister Kadar Asmal to address what were identified as the most urgent problem areas in education:

- the dysfunctional state of many institutions;
- the continuing inequalities in terms of basic facilities and learning resources;
- the unacceptably high levels of illiteracy among the youth and adults;
- sexual harassment and violence, including crime and drugs; and
- the scourge of HIV/AIDS (South Africa. DoE, 1999:6).

The Tirisano implementation plan outlines five programmes to address the above. These five programmes are: (i) HIV/AIDS, (ii) school effectiveness and educator professionalism, (iii) status and quality of teaching, (iv) literacy, and (v) further and higher education. The school effectiveness and educator professionalism programme states as an activity the development of an evaluation instrument for measuring school performance and as an output specifically related to this – the development of a whole school evaluation instrument. The projects listed in this programme form the basis of the nine focus areas of whole school evaluation (see 6.5.4).

### 6.5.2.3 The Manifesto on Values, Education and Democracy

The *Manifesto on Values, Education and Democracy* (South Africa. DoE, 2001c) evolved out of the issues raised by the working group on values in education and the subsequent national *Saamtrek* conference that focused on values in education (South Africa. DoE, 2001d). The manifesto is founded on the South African Constitution (South Africa, Government, 1996b) and offers ways to promote the core values of the constitution through the South African education system. These core values are identified as democracy, social justice and equity, equality, non-racism and non-sexism, ubuntu (human dignity), an open society, accountability (responsibility), rule of law, respect and reconciliation (South Africa. DoE, 2001c: 4–5). The first two strategies promoted by the manifesto relate to “making schools work better” (*ibid.*:12). The first strategy emphasises the need to build consensus and understanding through “nurturing a culture of communication and participation in schools” (*ibid.*:5). The second strategy calls for teachers and administrators to recognise their responsibility and to do this through role-modelling and promoting commitment, as well as ,competence among educators (*ibid.*:5). The second set of strategies focus on the curriculum and how this should be developed to

embody and promote the values outlined in the manifesto. The manifesto is an important reference document for all agencies working with school transformation and change, especially those that aim to rekindle professionalism, commitment and motivation in educators (4.9.4.).

#### **6.5.2.4 The National Whole School Evaluation Policy**

The National Whole School Evaluation Policy (South Africa. DoE, 2001e) was introduced as a component of the National Department of Education's initiative to improve the quality of education in South African schools through introducing self and external evaluation of schools together with accountability indicators and measures. The broad aims of the policy are summarised as follows: "the National Policy on Whole-school Evaluation has been designed to ensure that school evaluation is carried out according to an agreed national model. It sets out the legal basis for school evaluation, its purposes, what is to be evaluated and who can carry out evaluations" (South Africa. DoE, 2001e:7).

The National Whole School Evaluation Policy's principal aims are to:

- (a) Moderate externally, on a sampling basis, the results of self-evaluation carried out by the schools;
- (b) Evaluate the effectiveness of a school in terms of the national goals, using national criteria;
- (c) Increase the level of accountability within the education system;
- (d) Strengthen the support given to schools by district professional support services;
- (e) Provide feedback to all stakeholders as a means of achieving continuous school improvement;
- (f) Identify all aspects of excellence within the system which will serve as models of good practice and;
- (g) Identify the aspects of effective schools and improve the general understanding of what factors create effective schools. (South Africa. DoE, 2001e: 10)

The self-evaluation is conducted by the school community and forms the basis of the School Improvement Plan. It is anticipated that a provincial team of whole school evaluation supervisors will carry out external evaluations in a three-year cycle with secondary schools and a five-year cycle with primary schools. At least fifty percent of the

time that the supervisors spend at the schools must be spent on lesson observation. After visiting a school the supervisors should supply the school with an oral and written report that highlights the strong points of the school's performance and which makes recommendations for improvement. Provincial Improvement Plans and District Improvement Plans will be developed to assist schools meet their School Improvement Plans.

The following are the focus areas of whole school evaluation:

1. Basic functionality of the school;
2. Leadership, management and communication;
3. Governance and relationships;
4. Quality of teaching and learning, and educator development;
5. Curriculum provision and resources;
6. Learner achievement;
7. School safety, security and discipline;
8. School infrastructure;
9. Parents and community. (South Africa. DoE, 2001e:13).

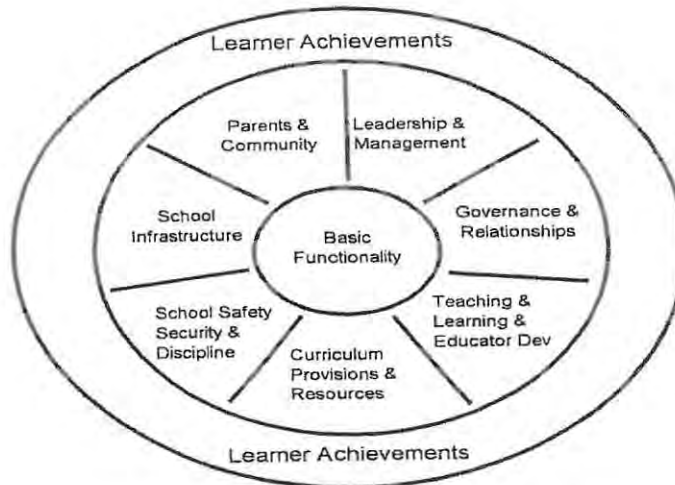
These focus areas reflect the areas identified in the Tirisano implementation plan which are considered key to the future development of education in South Africa (South Africa. DoE, 2000a) (6.5.2). The Department of Education has developed criteria and descriptors (South Africa. DoE, 2001b) linked to the focus areas cover inputs, processes and outputs (South Africa. DoE, 2001b: 13–16) that are graded according to a five-point scale. These initial criteria and guidelines for evaluation (South Africa. DoE, 2001b) were revised in June 2004 (South Africa. DoE, 2004b). The process of whole school evaluation is managed nationally by the National Quality Assurance Directorate and locally by Provincial and District Quality Assurance units.

As the *Learning Schools Initiative* research and model development progressed the *Learning Schools Initiative* presented the nine focus areas in the form of a wheel (Figure 6.1). The rationale for this was:

1. To present this information in an easily accessible and understandable format to school communities.
2. To demonstrate that a school has to be functional at an elementary (basic) level in order to commence with other development initiatives (Hopkins, 2001b; see 4.4.2.). This basic functionality includes: having a school principal in place who is

equipped with basic leadership and management skills (Ansell 2004), having a sound management team, basic administrative procedures and a certain level of governance in place (Delta Foundation, 2002b).

3. For the core business of the school to be quality teaching and learning with the ultimate goal of learner achievement. All school development should therefore contribute towards improved or sustained learner achievement (see 6.6.2).



**Figure 6.1: The GMSAF depiction of the nine focus areas of whole school evaluation**

#### 6.5.2.5 The Integrated Quality Management System

The Education Labour Relations Council (ELRC) introduced the Integrated Quality Management System (IQMS) for school-based educators in collective agreement 8 of 2003. The introduction of this system was based on an agreement reached in the ELRC (Resolution 8 of 2003) to integrate the existing programmes on quality management in education. The then existing programmes were the Developmental Appraisal System (DAS) (introduced by Resolution 4 of 1998), the Performance Measurement System (introduced by Resolution 1 of 2003) and the National Whole School Evaluation Policy (South Africa. DoE, 2001e). The introduction of an Integrated Quality Management System was an attempt to solve some of the logjams that arose in response to the Development Appraisal and Performance Measurement systems. It also provides a way of integrating the key focus on teaching and learning of all three systems (including WSE as mentioned where 50% of the time of the WSE supervisors conducting a school

evaluation must be spent observing lessons) and attempts to eliminate unnecessary duplication of assessment in this area.

The IQMS document (ELRC, 2003:1) sums up the aims of these three systems as follows:

*The purpose of Developmental Appraisal* is to appraise individual educators in a transparent manner with a view to determining areas of strength and weakness, and to draw up programmes for individual development.

*The purpose of Performance Measurement* is to evaluate individual educators for salary progression, grade progression, affirmation of appointments and rewards and incentives.

*The purpose of Whole School Evaluation* is to evaluate the overall effectiveness of a school as well as the quality of teaching and learning.

The document (*ibid.*) states that these three programmes should be implemented in an integrated way so as "...ensure optimal effectiveness and co-ordination of the various programmes".

The dual purposes of IQMS are (i) to identify the needs of educators, schools and districts for support and development, and (ii) to promote accountability and institutional effectiveness through the evaluation of both individual educators and the whole school.

The IQMS document identifies two structures that need to be established within a school to facilitate and oversee the various processes (ELRC, 2003:3). These are the Staff Development Team (SDT) and the Developmental Support Group (DSG). The SDT should consist of the principal; the whole school evaluation (WSE) co-ordinator; democratically elected members of the school management structure and democratically elected post level one educators. The SDT should work closely with the School Management Team (SMT) to achieve all areas of IQMS. These areas include IQMS advocacy, staff development, the management and monitoring of IQMS, the establishment and overseeing of the DSGs, the linking of educator development (the IQMS document refers to this as linking Developmental Appraisal, ELRC 2003:3) to the School Improvement Plan (SIP), the development of the School Improvement Plan, liaising with the Department of Education to meet their school's needs, co-ordinating the internal whole school evaluation process, and liaison with the external whole school evaluation team to coordinate and manage the cyclical external whole school evaluation

process. According to the National Whole School Evaluation Policy (South Africa. DoE, 2001e: 12) each school should have an evaluation co-ordinator who liaises with the evaluation team.

A DSG is established for each educator to assist with his or her individual evaluation and appraisal. For each educator the DSG should consist of the educator's immediate senior and one other educator (peer) (ELRC, 2003:4).

The whole school evaluation and the educator appraisal and development (Developmental Appraisal) systems are based on evaluation cycles. For the appraisal of individual educators the cycle involves a baseline evaluation in the first term (of the first year) and a summative evaluation in the last term with two developmental and reflection cycles in between. Included in both the baseline and summative is a self-evaluation process where educators are encouraged to critically reflect on their own performance, to set their own targets and timeframes for improvement to monitor their progress. The baseline is only conducted for the first evaluation cycle, thereafter each summative assessment becomes the baseline for the following year.

The whole school evaluation works on both an internal and external cycle. Schools are expected to develop school improvement plans and to annually reflect on and update these. This evidence is taken into account in the external evaluation. The revised Whole School Evaluation Guidelines and Criteria (South Africa. DoE, 2004b) should be used as the assessment instrument for both the internal and external evaluation processes.

#### **6.5.2.6 Working with National Policy in the *Learning Schools Initiative***

Working with National Policy in the various GMSAF initiatives post-1994 has proved to be a challenging task primarily as the dramatic transition to democracy resulted in the introduction of a vast number of new policies (see 2.4.7). The initial rush to get policies in place also resulted in the revision of some of these policies and/or related guidelines post initial implementation (e.g. Curriculum 2005). There are also many continuous amendments to existing policies (e.g. The South African Schools Act), which require vigilance on the part of policy implementers to ensure that they are up to date regarding legislative requirements. The introduction of the IQMS has been particularly confusing for educators, officials and external agents (4.8.4). This confusion has largely resulted from (i) the lack of clarity of certain terms regarding exactly what is expected and how this is to be achieved (i.e. School Improvement Plan), (ii) the use of different criteria to assess the

same performance area (i.e. the overlap between the whole school evaluation criteria to assess the *Quality of Teaching and Learning and Educator Development* (South Africa. DoE, 2004b), and (iii) the nature of the educator assessment instrument in the IQMS document (ELRC, 2003). A further challenge is that inadequate time spent on piloting some policies and guidelines means that many of the evaluation instruments introduced are difficult to work with and need substantial refinement based on feedback from actual implementation (2.2.3). As mentioned, there is particularly a need for further streamlining of the different areas of IQMS to ensure accessibility, usability, validity and effectiveness of the system.

### **6.5.3 Identification of additional development areas**

In addition to the above, research into other school development initiatives (4.8.2) indicated two other key focuses to be included in whole school development initiatives: (i) creating a vision with and for the whole school community (Imbewu, TSEM) and (ii) the measurement of learner achievement in literacy, numeracy, lifeskills and related programmes to improve learner achievement in these areas (QLP/EQUIP/ Taylor et al., 2003). While other areas were identified as key as the initiative progressed (i.e. organisational culture, leadership of the principal and management team, collaborative work culture, self-development, etc.), the areas mentioned in this section were identified as important at the outset of the initiative. The subsequent alignment of the intervention model to the National Whole School Evaluation Policy did not exclude the three areas identified above, but rather provided a more holistic and needs driven framework and approach to whole school evaluation and development.

#### **6.5.3.1 Integrating vision crafting**

It was agreed by the GMSAF team that an intense vision-crafting workshop should be a key component of the introductory phase of the intervention process. This decision was based on whole school development literature (Davidoff & Lazarus, 2002; Harris et al., 2003; Moloï, 2002; Senge et al., 2000; Sterling & Davidoff, 2000) and interventions by other development agencies (Eastern Cape Department of Education, 2002, Kwazulu-Natal Department of Education, 2002; Peters, 2003; Roberts, 2001; Sharpley, 2004) (4.8.2). It was anticipated that a vision-crafting workshop would contribute towards school ownership of the process and commitment to developing their own schools. While vision crafting is identified as important in its essential function of clarifying or developing a vision for the school, the process of vision crafting also provides an opportunity for

relationship building amongst school community stakeholders and for revisiting the purpose of schooling and teaching and the values of both the staff and the school. As the *Learning Schools Initiative* expanded this session was continuously modified and extended to include an opportunity for clarifying roles and responsibilities within the schools as well as within the initiative.

### **6.5.3.2 Focussing on learner achievement**

Taylor et al., (2003:9) state that based on their examination of school development in South Africa "...the impact of programmes of this nature [systemic programmes] would be immeasurably increased if they were linked to defined targets of improved learner performance". The GMSAF team identified improved learner performance as a key indicator of the success of any whole school development initiative. Their rationale was that the purpose of schooling is to provide quality teaching and learning experiences for learners that will enable them to effectively perform a variety of life roles. School reform literature supports the focus on high expectations for learners and quality teaching and learning (4.4.1 and 4.4.2). While it was acknowledged by the GMSAF team that other factors such as dropout and completion rates are also important factors when focusing on learner achievement, especially as regards matric results (Taylor et al., 2003; Taylor, 2007 (forthcoming)), in keeping with the introduction of systemic evaluation in South Africa which measures literacy, numeracy and lifeskills, the GMSAF team made the decision to identify these as key indicators of learner achievement and ultimately school development. It was acknowledged that improved matric results could also provide an indication of improved teaching and learning, however, concern was raised over both the quality of these results and the complications associated with the introduction of outcomes-based education at the further education and training level.

The *Quality Learning Project (QLP)*, the *District Development and Support Project (DDSP)*, the *Cadbury Schools Development Initiative (CSDI)*, the *1000 Schools READ project*, the *Mahlahle Project* and the *SAILI Primary School Project* are some of the projects involved in school development that have introduced learning assessment at various stages of their implementation as an accountability measure. These assessments entail assessing the performance of identified groups of learners against South African curriculum guidelines (Taylor et al., 2003). There are, however, no clear targets set for achieving these standards or incentives for reaching them (Roberts, 2001) which results in problems in accountability in terms of the schools applying what they have learnt through organised interventions to improving learner performance.

Discussions with representatives from the *Quality Learning Project* revealed that one of the major issues facing the schools in which this project operated was the literacy level of most of the learners. English or Afrikaans is currently the official language of instruction for all learners in South African schools from Grade 4 onwards. Exam papers are also completed in the medium of instruction of the school. This is particularly challenging for many South African learners whose home language is not English or Afrikaans and has been found to have a significant impact on learners' performance generally and especially on the quality of matric results (HRC, 2006; Taylor et al., 2003; Taylor, 2007 (forthcoming)).

The QLP arranged with Higher Education providers in the provinces in which the schools were operating to conduct benchmark literacy and numeracy assessments of learners in the project schools and to offer an Advanced Certificate in Education (ACE) in Language Across the Curriculum (LAC). A Port Elizabeth based NGO, Language in Education Development Association (LEDA), worked in partnership with the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University to offer this qualification in the Eastern Cape. One teacher per QLP school was identified to attend this course. The second year of the course involves a mentorship component where the teachers attending the course mentor a peer at their school in the principles of working with language across the curriculum. Based on the acclaimed success of this intervention the GMSAF contracted LEDA to offer the Language Across the Curriculum Advanced Certificate in Education to educators at the two pilot schools. Taylor (2007 (forthcoming)) highlights the most notable achievement of the QLP as the effect of the language across the curriculum intervention on the overall matric pass rate and identifies the improvement of reading and writing as a critical component of all school development projects.

The GMSAF made the decision to address learner achievement through (i) assessing the current Grade 8 learners literacy, numeracy and lifeskills levels (2004), and (ii) organising relevant interventions to address identified problem areas. The assessments were to act both as an accountability and a measuring indicator for the GMSAF in terms of the improvement of teaching and learning, as well as a means for the school to identify problem areas in which the Grade 8 learners required intensive input. It was envisioned that the GMSAF would work with the schools to address the problem areas and then assess the same groups of learners again in Grade 10 (2006) and 12 (2008) so as to monitor their progress.

## **6.6 Partnerships**

Since the GMSAF is a small organisation with limited capacity and funding (see 3.3.10.) it was realised from the outset of the initiative that the GMSAF was not in a human resource or financial position to meet the schools needs in its own capacity. It was envisioned that the GMSAF would act as a facilitating agency in the whole school development process and would, once the schools' whole school development plans were developed, work with identified partners to meet the schools' needs. It was proposed that different forms of partnerships be formed with various agencies and a number of different types of partnerships would be developed. These different types of partnerships would be:

- **Strategic Partners:** these are partners who will not necessarily participate directly in the project but are closely aligned to it. This type of partnership could involve exchange of information and expertise at a project management level (i.e. other CSI and development initiatives).
- **Contributing Partners:** these are partners that contribute directly to the project in the form of training and resources. Contributing partners are partners who cover their own costs. The project team hope to encourage organizations such as READ and Business Ventures to be involved at this level. Business will also be targeted as a contributing partner to strengthen the aim of preparing learners for this environment.
- **Service Providers:** are providers who provide training, resources or support to a school. These providers will be paid by the GMSAF.

## **6.7 Piloting a tentative model for whole school evaluation and development**

### **6.7.1 Phase one: selection of initial pilot schools**

In the Learning School Initiative proposal it was stressed that "...careful selection of schools will be vital to the success of the initiative" (Delta Foundation 2002c: 3). The proposal further stated that schools needed to have a certain level of functionality, organisation and commitment towards self-development in order to be considered for selection. In order to provide opportunity for refinement and comparison it was decided that two secondary schools (Grade 8 to Grade 12) from historically disadvantaged communities would be selected from a short-list of schools for the initial pilot phase of the

project. The proposal also stressed that any school that did not abide by the project contract would be replaced by one of the schools on the short list.

The essential identifying criteria for the selection of the schools were (i) be functioning, but struggling historically disadvantaged schools, (ii) be secondary schools, and (iii) be accessible to the GMSAF team.

In addition the GMSAF team, through their research (Christie, 2001; Davidoff & Lazarus, 2002) , also identified the following as important criteria for selection. The schools should have:

- a sense of urgency and responsibility
- have flexible and purposive leadership
- focus on learning and teaching as the central activities of the school
- have a safe and organisationally functioning institutional environment
- have consistent disciplinary practices.
- have a culture of concern in the school

(Christie, as cited in Taylor & Vinjevold, 1999: 72).

As the initiative progressed, it became evident that the many of the above criteria were more likely to develop as the development process unfolded. It was also difficult to assess these criteria, as the façade presented by schools is not always the same as what happens in reality.

The GMSAF team short-listed six schools for possible inclusion in the first piloting phase of the *Learning Schools Initiative*. Two secondary schools were selected according to the criteria listed above. These were Bonthoogte in the Port Elizabeth northern areas, a historically "coloured" area in terms of apartheid residential segregation, and Masihambe which is situated in a historically "black" area. The schools were selected in different demographic areas so as to explore the initial piloting of the model in two different contexts. Under the apartheid education system Bonthoogte fell under the House of Representatives, while Masihambe fell under the Department of Education and Training.

Bonthoogte accommodates approximately 1300 learners annually and currently (2006) has a staff component of 39 educators and two support staff. The majority of learners attending the school's first language is Afrikaans and the primary medium of instruction is Afrikaans, however, provision is made for a stream of English speaking learners. The

school accommodates learners from the immediate surrounding area as well as Xhosa speaking learners from areas further away. When the *Learning Schools Initiative* started working with the school many of the educators were near retirement age and at least seven educators retired during the course of the initiative. The principal resigned from the school and departed in June 2006. The deputy principal retired shortly prior to this. An existing member of staff was appointed acting principal. Despite the fact that the school is primarily surrounded by brick houses and a fence, the school environment is not secure and instances of attacks on pupils in the school ground by outsiders have occurred. Vandalism and the impact of gangsterism on both learners and the school are also problems. The majority of the learners come from poor homes where unemployment and dysfunctional behaviour are high.

Masihambe accommodates approximately 1250 learners annually and currently has a staff component of 38 educators and three support staff. Masihambe is an amalgamation of two schools which merged to become one school in 2003. Following amalgamation the school was situated in one building that resulted in a shortage of classrooms until such time that the prefab classrooms from the other schools were moved to its premises in 2004. The principal of the "smaller" school was appointed head of the new amalgamated school. He brought with him a group of primarily young dynamic staff. He inherited an additional staff component (those of the other school) that had previously ousted a principal and were used to a very relaxed work environment. All of the learners are Xhosa speaking. The school's medium of instruction is English. Masihambe is situated in a very poor community where a high number of learners do not stay with their parents and many parents are illiterate. The community also has very high HIV/AIDS and crime rates. Although surrounded by a fence the school is without a caretaker and constantly faces vandalism, especially over school holidays. The school has a large shortage of desks and chairs. When the GMSAF started working with the school one of the major challenges it faced was a shortage of staff and heads of departments (HODs). Six HOD posts were created by the Department and appointments were made in August 2006.

The GMSAF team made presentations concerning the proposed *Learning Schools Initiative* to both schools in February 2003. This presentation consisted of a general overview of the GMSAF activities by the General Manager of the Foundation and a separate presentation on the projects that fall under each of the GMSAF initiatives by the GMSAF initiative coordinators. Schools were asked to indicate whether or not they would like to participate in the initiative in a written response to the GMSAF General Manager.

Masihambe responded positively within a week of the presentation. Bonthoogte requested further information, which took the form of a meeting between the School Management Team and the GMSAF General Manager, to clarify the school and the GMSAF's roles and responsibilities, as well as anticipated time commitments from educators. A similar presentation was made to Masihambe to ensure that similar information was presented to both schools. The principal of Bonthoogte indicated that his school would not participate in the initiative without one hundred percent buy-in from all staff members. Following a meeting with the GMSAF General Manager and the School Management Team of Masihambe, as requested by the school, a workshop designed to give the school community "a taste" of what the different projects involved was held at the school. Shortly after this workshop the principal of Bonthoogte indicated that 100% buy-in had been achieved and that the school would participate in the *Learning Schools Initiative*.

On reviewing this process it was later felt that this "selection" approach was too confusing and cluttered. The GMSAF also discerned certain problem areas that manifested in the initiative linked to the process of approaching schools and inviting them to participate as opposed to selecting schools on an application basis. With the selection of the pilot primary schools towards the end of 2005 interested schools were invited to attend a public meeting where the Manager of the GMSAF and the *Learning Schools Initiative* Coordinator made presentations. Application forms were then handed to interested schools. An external selection team was contracted to review the applications and following discussions with the Teacher Unions and Department of Education District Office to compile a report recommending the schools that should participate in the second round of piloting. The process of public presentation and selection, as opposed, to directly approaching specific schools was found by the initiative team to present a different type of working dynamic and commitment on the part of the schools. The latter route was found to be more effective than the former. However, while this impacted on the overall initiative, it did not impact negatively on this study but rather became a factor to take into consideration when discussing issues related to ownership and the role of external agency. As the GMSAF became more aware of what the different components of the *Learning Schools Initiative* were and were able to have a clearer idea of the different roles and responsibilities of stakeholders, they were in a better position to draw up a memorandum of understanding with the schools. Towards the end of 2006 it was decided that future memorandums would include performance objectives linked to rewards for both individual educators and the broader school community.

## **6.7.2 Phase two: vision crafting, whole school evaluation baseline analysis and planning**

### **6.7.2.1. Creating a vision and mission**

An external education and training education consultant was commissioned to conduct a vision crafting session separately with each school. Each school's staff (both educators and non-educators) together with representatives from each school's Representative Council of Learners (RCL) and School Governing Bodies (SGBs) was invited to attend vision crafting workshops. The vision crafting sessions were held at venues outside of town where the school communities were given the opportunity to reflect and plan in a setting external to the school environment. These sessions consisted of a day and a half non-residential sessions commencing on the Friday afternoon and ending on the Saturday afternoon. A creative approach that made use of drama, song and art was used in these sessions. The implicit aim of the vision crafting workshops was to inspire and motivate the school community and to develop (or refine) a school vision and mission that was also inspirational and motivating. The school communities were set tasks that involved the identification of learner exit outcomes as well as school outcomes and values. These outcomes were demonstrated through song, drama and art. The schools developed school songs and logos; they listed key words and phrases to form the basis for writing new school vision statements (Masihambe) or revising a current vision statement (Bonthoogte). The GMSAF team, consisting of four initiative co-coordinators, two consultants and the General Manager attended and participated in both sessions. The objective of this was to build a relationship of trust between the GMSAF team and the schools.

### **6.7.2.2 Preparing for whole school evaluation and development**

The latter part of the session on the Saturday afternoon was spent introducing the National Whole School Evaluation Policy (South Africa. DoE, 2001e) and the concept of whole school development. These sessions took place in May 2003 prior to the introduction of IQMS. The GMSAF team was at this stage of the initiative working with the National Whole School Evaluation Policy and process in isolation rather than in the broader context of IQMS. The vision crafting report of the external consultant states that the participants were not familiar with the National Whole School Evaluation Policy, and so could not contribute much, but seemed open to guidance from the GMSAF team. The school community were initially asked to divide into the nine focus areas as identified in the National Whole School Evaluation Policy. They were to choose the focus area in

which they would work based on their interest in making a difference and contributing towards the development of a particular area. During this process it was noted that the first whole school evaluation area of *Basic Functionality* tended to be an overarching area whose criteria essentially related to non-functional schools. The schools therefore divided into eight teams related to the eight more specific focus areas of the National Whole School Evaluation policy. Each focus area was commissioned to make use of the whole school evaluation criteria (South Africa. DoE, 2001b) to assess where their school was in relation to these criteria and to identify areas for improvement which could be incorporated into a school improvement plan.

Each school was also asked to elect a whole school development co-ordinator (as opposed to whole school evaluation co-ordinator) who would liaise with the GMSAF. In addition each of the eight focus areas was asked to select a team leader and secretary for their focus area. Masihambe referred to the team leaders as the focus area co-ordinators while Bonthoogte referred to them as the focus area convenors. Each school was also asked to establish a School Dream Team (SDT), an adaptation of the School Development Team (SDT). It was suggested that the School Dream Team comprise the co-ordinator/convenor of each focus area team, the whole school development co-ordinator if this was someone other than a focus area co-ordinator/convenor, the school principal, SGB representative, RCL representative and the school's Education Development Officer (EDO). Given the limited time of the vision crafting and planning sessions the focus areas had very little time during the sessions to work with the whole school evaluation criteria and to plan accordingly. This was amended in the second round of piloting with the additional pilot schools. However, for the initial pilot cycle with Bonthoogte and Masihambe this was addressed in the subsequent support and follow-up sessions hosted at each school.

### **6.7.2.3 The whole school development co-ordinators**

The whole school development co-ordinators became the primary point of contact between the school and the GMSAF team. This contact primarily took the form of meetings between the members of the GMSAF team and whole school development co-ordinators (the team generally met the co-ordinators separately so as to accommodate them in terms of time and venue). This later changed to meeting both co-ordinators jointly at a neutral venue so that they could share experiences. The hope was that these co-ordinators would also develop a relationship beyond the meetings initiated by GMSAF, but this did not transpire. An initial assessment of support for the whole school development

co-ordinators revealed that both of these educators were post level one educators and lacked authority in the school. They therefore needed the support of senior management and particularly the principal to fulfil their role. A decision was made to expand some of the discussion and planning meetings to include the principal and deputy principal of each school in an attempt to elicit more support for the whole school development co-ordinators and to ensure support from the principals for the school development process.

Both whole school evaluation co-ordinators were co-ordinators/convenors of the *Quality of Teaching and Learning and Educator Development* focus area teams. Although this had happened by default rather than planning, it assisted the whole school development process later when whole school evaluation was integrated into the IQMS and the staff development co-ordinator was also responsible for whole school evaluation. Thus, the whole school development co-ordinator became the staff development co-ordinator. The GMSAF team also interacted with the School Dream Teams and the individual focus area teams as it became evident that they were struggling to conduct the initial baseline studies and to plan interventions.

#### **6.7.2.4 Initial self-evaluation and planning process**

At an early stage in the initiative the GMSAF team became concerned about a number of factors that were critical to the self-evaluation and planning process. These were:

- (1) Rigour especially with regards to conducting an in depth analysis of the focus areas with regard to needs and interventions.
- (2) Documentation – the schools did not seem to have a culture of writing down and keeping information.
- (3) Planning – educators lacked planning skills linked to project planning and monitoring.
- (4) Reporting – there was no culture of reporting amongst educators in terms of their various activities. This becomes particularly difficult in a process where educators are working on whole school development.

In July 2003 the GMSAF team introduced the wow-now-how-pow sheet (see Vol. 2, appendix 1) in an attempt to address areas (1) to (3) above. This was a loosely modelled action plan that consisted of an A3 sheet on which the teams indicated their mini-vision (or dream) for their particular focus area. This was the “wow”. Using the whole school evaluation criteria (plus their own criteria) they then conducted a baseline evaluation of

the current state of their focus area – the “now”. They then planned what they would do to address the critical problems in their focus area – the “how”. The “pow” provided an indication of what had actually happened. It became evident that the whole school evaluation criteria (South Africa. DoE, 2001b) used by the focus area teams tended to “...confuse rather than aid the process” (Westraad, 2005: 4). While the educators seemed to enjoy working with the wow-now-how process they were sometimes unsure (despite the national whole school evaluation criteria) of what exactly should be in place in a particular focus area. For the *Governance and Relationships* focus area, for example, they were unsure as to what exactly the composition, function and responsibilities of the School Governing Body should be. Individual in-depth planning by the focus areas also tended to result in a long list of items that each focus area needed to address, which apart from being overwhelming, also tended to result in micro planning and detracted from a consolidated effort by the school community on whole school development. The “wow, now, how, pow” tables were adapted by the GMSAF team into a more advanced version of this concept which provided indicators of what should be assessed and what should be in place (see Vol. 2, appendix 2). By August 2003 it was evident that what was required was (i) a slightly more detailed user friendly document linked to the national whole school evaluation criteria that schools could use to conduct a baseline self evaluation, (ii) a series of planning templates and guidelines which supported rigour and in depth analysis. It was also hoped that the planning templates would assist the school with sustaining the momentum of the whole school evaluation process in amongst the other critical demands (i.e. teaching, learning and school administration).

### **6.7.3 Phase three: refining the whole school evaluation instruments and planning process**

#### **6.7.3.1 The development of a whole school evaluation instrument**

During the remainder of 2003 the GMSAF developed a whole school evaluation instrument. This instrument was based on the criteria outlined in the Evaluation Guidelines and Criteria for the Whole School Evaluation Policy (South Africa. DoE, 2001b). It also included criteria from other documents consulted by the GMSAF LSI team. These documents included: *Looking in a Mirror: Guidelines for Internal Evaluation of Schools* (CIE/ISASA 2005) *How Good is Our School* (HMIE 2002) and the *ACSI Instrument for Whole School Improvement* (ACSI 2003). The whole school evaluation instrument assumed the dual purpose of (i) providing schools with an indication of what should be in

place in the nine focus areas (South Africa. DoE, 2001e), and (ii) assessing the performance and related needs of a school in the nine nationally determined focus areas (South Africa. DoE, 2001e). Comment from the schools on the most recent version that was available during the period of this study (July 2006) revealed that the schools found the first purpose of the instrument particularly useful as the schools were not sure of what was expected of them in particular areas and it provided an opportunity for them to assess their school against both national expectations and national standards. This instrument was refined and adapted during 2003 to 2006 based on feedback from the *Learning Schools Initiative* pilot schools, the Department of Education and other organisations. The instrument is very thorough and provides both the school and the GMSAF with a vast amount of information that needed to be integrated into a School Improvement Plan as well as recorded for future planning and monitoring. Towards the end of 2005 the GMSAF commenced with the process of linking the whole school evaluation instrument to a database that would assist school development agencies and the Department of Education (specifically Education Development Officers or officials in similar positions) with collating and analysing the assessment and related needs of a number of schools. The 2006 version of the whole school evaluation instrument clearly shows the dual aim of the instrument, i.e. assessment and guidance (see Vol. 2, appendix 3). One of the challenges of the whole school evaluation instrument is that the schools tended to identify a vast number of required interventions that ranged from amending timetables to feeding schemes (see 6.8.4.1). The planning templates were developed in such a way as to determine priority problems and to plot these over a three-year period. In addition maintenance versus once-off projects also needed to be integrated into the operational culture of the school (Hargreaves & Hopkins, 1991; see 4.7.).

#### **6.7.3.2 The development of a whole school planning process and templates**

Towards the end of 2003, in response to the need for a more rigorous and accountable planning process, a series of planning templates were developed to assist the school with problem analysis and project identification process. These templates included:

- (1). A key issue summary statement table (see Vol. 2, appendix 4)
- (2). A priority problem selection sheet (see Vol. 2, appendix 5). This became the School Improvement Plan/School Development Plan.
- (3). A problem analysis template (see Vol. 2, appendix 6)
- (4). A project planning template (see Vol. 2, appendix 7)

Please note that the cross reference numbers in these project planning documents correlate with an earlier version of the whole school evaluation tables and not the most recent February 2006 tables as presented in appendix 3. As the piloting process progressed the GMSAF team realised that, while the planning process associated with the templates presented in appendices 4 & 5 was thorough, it was still too complex and particularly difficult to manage by an external agency (e.g. the GMSAF or Department of Education) who was dealing with a number of schools. In the case of the Department of Education this number, if worked on a circuit basis, could include as many as 30 schools. The process of needs identification and prioritisation was therefore simplified with the introduction of the revised February 2006 whole school evaluation instrument. The key issue summary statement was integrated into the February 2006 version of the tables and the priority problem identification became part of the summative evaluation sheet (see Vol. 2, appendix 8).

In addition to the introduction of the above it became evident that the schools required continuous support from the GMSAF team in the areas of (i) conducting their focus area assessments, (ii) prioritising the schools needs for the current school year, (iii) facilitating workshops where the school community presented information and organised this into a school improvement plan, (iv) analysing the possible causes and solutions of problems, (v) project planning, and (vi) accessing resources and other forms of assistance. The GMSAF team adopted the approach of meeting with the individual focus area teams on request to assist them with their analysis, project planning and implementation, and with the whole school community to assist with overall planning.

As the piloting of the process progressed the LSI team became aware that the whole school evaluation and school development planning process needed to be simplified and condensed into an annual whole school analysis and planning workshop (ideally over one and a half to two days) and a quarterly (or at least two sessions annually) report back and support meetings. The GMSAF team's role would still be that of support and mentoring and involve meetings with the principal, whole school development co-ordinator or focus area teams on request for consultation regarding specific issues.

### **6.7.3.3 Working with conflicting terminology**

While working with the schools the GMSAF team also became aware of the confusion regarding the use of the term "School Improvement" versus "School Development" plan. Initially the *Learning Schools Initiative* worked on the understanding that the School

Development Plan was a long term plan that spanned three to five years, while the School Improvement Plan involved planning for the current year only. The IQMS and whole school evaluation documents only refer to a School Improvement Plan. It was therefore decided in 2006 that the *Learning Schools Initiative* would only use the term School Improvement Plan and would work on the basis that this plan would cover the current year, but could indicate needs and possibly project for subsequent years. The need to indicate what would fall into subsequent years was important to the *Learning Schools Initiative* schools (and the other schools that later became part of the extended pilot) since the needs identified through the use of the whole school evaluation instrument were vast and schools could not possibly address all of these in the period of one year. It therefore became important for the schools to identify priority needs that could be addressed in year one, and to acknowledge that there were other needs, but to spread these out over subsequent years.

#### **6.7.4 Phase Four: meeting the pilot schools' needs**

##### **6.7.4.1 Working with needs and interventions**

In the initial planning process the number of interventions required overwhelmed both the schools and the GMSAF. Through the key priority issue identification process, these interventions were limited to ten priority projects per year. These projects could, however, address a number of issues. For example a social welfare project aimed at contributing towards the overall welfare of learners at risk could address issues such as feeding of learners as well as counselling. Where possible educators were encouraged to keep projects focused as each issue generally involved the commitment of a substantial amount of time and energy on the part of the educators. The focus area teams developed project plans to address identified needs and worked with the GMSAF as needed. Requests to the GMSAF generally tended to be more for resources as opposed to input and expertise. This was especially the case of Bonthoogte.

While the schools worked on a project basis to meet the key needs identified, it became necessary to differentiate between once off projects and projects that involved the establishment of systems and procedures in the school that needed to be maintained on an ongoing basis (e.g. building and equipment maintenance registers) and integrated into the school system and culture. As the initiative progressed the latter were referred to and

listed under "on-going activities" for the focus areas. The interrelatedness of the focus areas meant that there were often grey areas regarding which projects fell under which focus areas. For example the baseline learner assessments and interventions spanned both *Learner Achievement* and the *Quality of Teaching and Learning and Professional Development* focus areas. While the focus area groups were encouraged to work together on such projects, it seemed that teamwork within the group was difficult enough and that work across areas often complicated the process.

Since the initial two pilot schools were demographically different and had different educational experiences historically, a mixture of common and dissimilar needs arose through the whole school evaluation process. Bonthoogte appeared to have a stronger culture of teaching and learning than Masihambe and teachers seemed to be more confident in and prepared for teaching their learning areas and/or subjects. During the selection process Bonthoogte had indicated that the whole school evaluation and development process should "fit in with the rhythm of the school" which primarily focused on teaching and learning. While there was much room for improvement in this area in Bonthoogte a culture of teaching and learning was more strongly entrenched than in Masihambe. The challenge to the GMSAF team was to work within a limited budget to meet some of the needs of the schools jointly while still catering for the other more individualised needs of the school.

Thus, while the schools identified their needs and prioritised these, the lack of interaction between the focus area groups and the GMSAF required the GMSAF to find a way to list the needs of each school and to separate out responsibilities and areas of potential assistance. This process provided a means for the GMSAF (i) to have a birdseye view of the process across schools and identify common areas for joint interventions, and (ii) to make connections and suggestions that the school/focus area groups may not have thought of. Appendix 9 (see Vol. 2, appendix 9) provides an example of an analysis needs of the two schools as assessed with the initial (pre February, 2006) whole school evaluation instrument and as allocated to different stakeholders. This process still remained complex, however, the complexity was accepted as part of the nature of the thoroughness of the analysis. This detailed intervention information together with the focus area reports from the schools was incorporated with achievements to form an overview document for each school (see Vol. 2, appendix 10). Appendix 11 (see Vol. 2, appendix 11) provides an example of a similar document that was compiled at a report back and planning document produced by Masihambe at a workshop of this nature that they requested at the end of 2005. In 2006, following the introduction of the revised whole

school evaluation February 2006 instrument, and the summative evaluation associated with this instrument, an adapted approach was used to analyse the schools' needs and to plan overall interventions for the year (and where relevant to consider subsequent years). Appendix 12 (see Vol. 2, appendix 12) provides an example of the synthesised needs from the six learning schools based on the analysis of each school's summative evaluation document. The GMSAF team found that it was necessary to read the summative evaluation for each school in association with the whole school evaluation instrument, as the schools tended not to expand on the issues identified. The GMSAF has commissioned an agency to develop a database linked to the whole school evaluation instrument to provide a more manageable means for (i) schools to track their own progress, and (ii) for an external agency to work with a variety of data from a number of schools.

The follow-up and integration of projects into the school's activities became an important aspect of whole school development. For example if some educators attended a course to be trained as counsellors, the school together with these educators needed to ensure that these skills were integrated into the school activities and utilised in a way that would have impact on and ultimately meet the initial need that had been identified. The integration of maintenance and sustainability activities (e.g. infrastructure inventories and repairs, meetings of project groups, etc.) into the schools' operational plans and culture also proved vital to the long-term sustainability of the school development process and ethos. The GMSAF placed emphasis on the schools driving the process within the school and where possible meeting their own needs, or sourcing other organisations or funding to meet their needs. It was realised that this is a slow and long-term process that requires continuous external motivation and prodding. Encouraging focus area accountability through report back sessions was one lever in this process; the GMSAF was still, however, reliant on the schools to set the dates for and to organise these meetings.

#### **6.7.4.2 Identifying the schools' needs**

Initially the GMSAF relied on the whole school evaluation instrument through a form of situational analysis to highlight the key needs in the schools. As the initiative unfolded and took shape and the GMSAF team developed a firmer relationship with the school they became aware of dynamics and needs that were not revealed through the application and analysis of the whole school evaluation instrument. As I, the initiative co-ordinator, progressed with this study in the midst of the piloting and interacted with additional literature, research in the field and other development practitioners, I also became aware

that there were vitally important areas that were not presenting themselves through the needs analysis process and that required special attention. For example, as the pilot progressed the whole school development co-ordinators and other staff members constantly expressed concern about the lack of motivation of staff.

As we explored this process through a number of staff motivation workshops it became evident that this lack of motivation needed to be explored at the level of individual self-development. While meetings with whole school development co-ordinators and focus area committees and later interviews indicated that leadership at a variety of levels was a problem at both schools this was for understandable reasons never revealed through the whole school development instrument. Identifying specific teaching and learning interventions (despite both the whole school evaluation and IQMS analysis) remained unstructured and problematic. As the needs identification and analysis process unfolded it became evident that a dual process was needed complementary to the whole school evaluation instrument to identify leadership, teaching and learning and other interventions. This had major implications for a whole school development 'model' and particularly the process by which a school's needs were identified and addressed. It became evident that what was required was a model that straddled both a needs analysis and stratified intervention approach. This approach is presented in figure 6.2.

#### **6.7.4.3 Funding and partnerships**

Once the schools had prioritised their needs in the form of a school improvement plan it became evident that there were different types of needs that could be met through three different structures (i) the school community, (ii) the GMSAF, and (iii) other organisations (both government and non-government) and institutions. In some instances the GMSAF acted as the facilitator between the school and other agencies. In other instances schools were able to directly access support from other agencies (e.g. the South African Police Service). In many cases the funding of proposed projects and interventions was problematic. While the GMSAF worked with the schools to develop their fundraising and marketing capacity it remained difficult to secure donations from business and other organisations. The schools undertook their own fundraising initiatives e.g. bingo evenings, supper dances, etc. However, both whole school development co-ordinators and other members of staff were cynical about the amount of effort versus the amount of profit that these events generated.

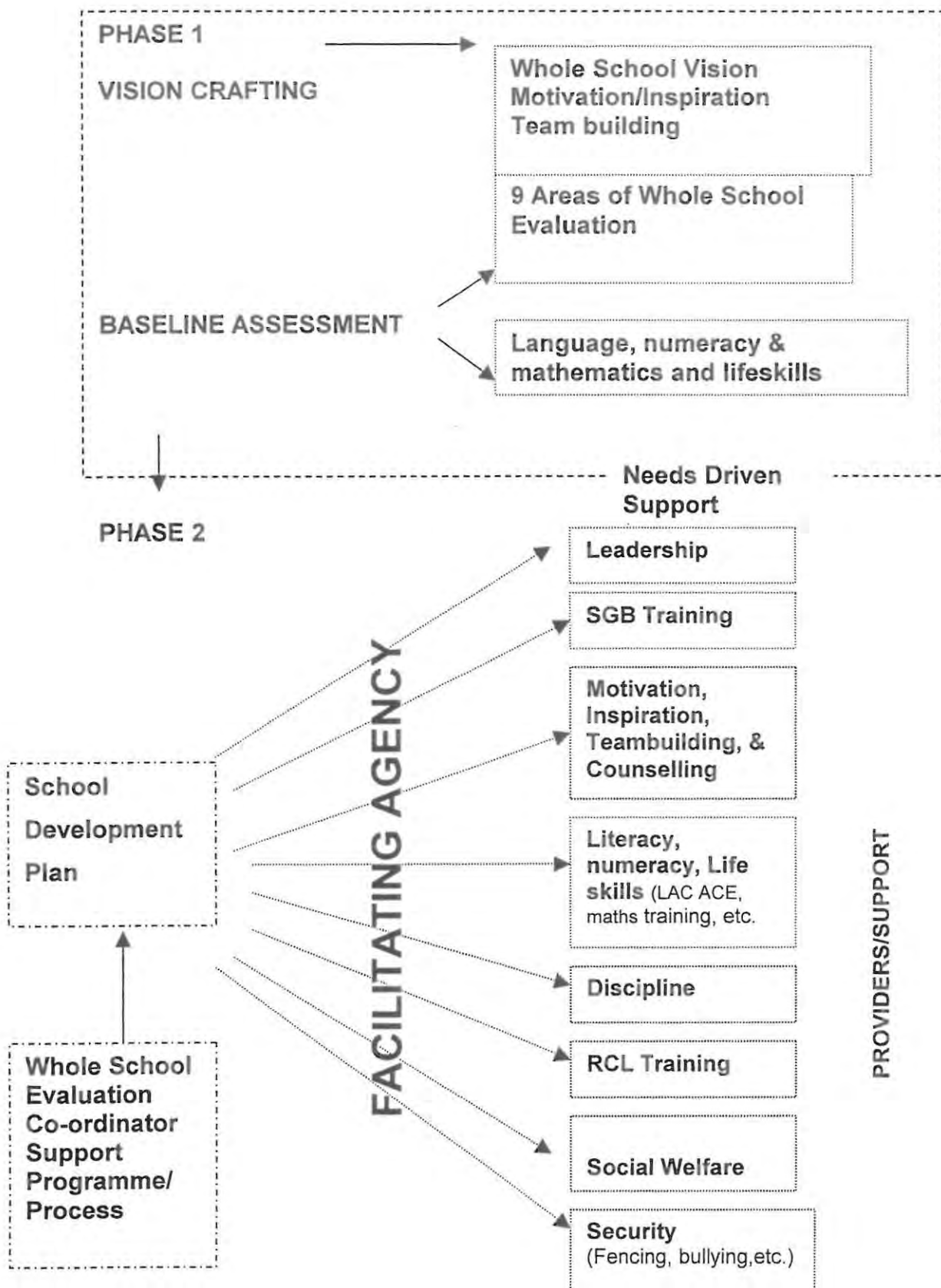


Figure 6. 2: GMSAF Learning School Initiative's model framework in 2005

The GMSAF funded identified interventions by other organisations and institutions (e.g. the Language Across the Curriculum Advanced Certificate in Education and Maths Literacy workshops) and individual consultants (e.g. motivation workshops) that fell within its budget. The Language Across the Curriculum ACE involved bursaries to the value of R3000 per annum for the participants. One of the challenges of the project was that other organisations/institutions perceived the GMSAF to be a wealthy organisation and therefore were reluctant to meet their services from their own budgets. This perception filtered into government organisations and a proposal to the Department of Social Development to work in partnership with the GMSAF to meet the social welfare needs of the schools was rejected on the basis that the GMSAF was too wealthy an organisation. Thus, while a partnership with the GMSAF had its advantages for the schools, it also had its drawbacks. However, local community based organisations such as Ubuntu, entered into the spirit of the partnership and funded their own work in the schools. The Shuttleworth Foundation's Tuxlab initiative also included the GMSAF in its initiative where Tuxlabs were installed at the schools and educators were trained to use these labs as part of the curriculum and for administration purposes. As the initiative progressed and a deeper understanding of the schools needs developed, it also became apparent that there was a need to work with the whole school (in the sense of all the staff members and in some instances other stakeholders) (Hopkins, 2004) to ensure joint understanding and collaboration as well as to address relational (restorative practice) and leadership issues. Ideally these interventions should take place outside of the school environment, however, the cost implications of both venue and expertise had to be taken into consideration in these cases. The cost of facilitating school change in way that was replicable and sustainable became a critical question for the initiative towards the end of 2006.

#### **6.7.4.4 Interventions to address shared needs**

The GMSAF team worked with the school principals, whole school development coordinators and focus areas to address specific school needs (e.g. support letters for funding, analysis of IQMS results, brainstorming of ideas on how to address logjams, laminating and framing of the school vision, RCL training session, etc.). This generally took place through meetings with individuals or through consultations with the focus area committees. In addition to the individual mentoring and support of each school, areas of commonality were identified and addressed through similar approaches or through joint workshops and/or processes. A major challenge to planning secondary school interventions was the consideration of not overloading the teachers and to work around

external assessments (e.g. CASS and exams) and the numerous other educator commitments (e.g. personal studies, Department of Education workshops, coaching, meetings, funerals, etc.). Another challenge was securing maximum staff attendance especially when workshops or meetings were held after school hours (and sometimes even when they were organised during school hours). Both of these challenges are discussed in greater detail in Chapter seven.

#### **6.7.4.4.1 Language, numeracy & basic mathematics and lifeskills assessments and interventions**

In keeping with the focus on the improvement of the quality of teaching and learning (and learner achievement see 6.5.2.4.) embodied in the *Learning Schools Initiative's* principle of the priority of "quality learning by learners" (6.4) and as discussed in 6.5.3.2., the *Learning Schools Initiative* commenced with language, numeracy & basic mathematics and lifeskills benchmark assessments at strategic points in the initiative. The GMSAF team made the decision to assess the current Grade 8 learners in the initial two pilot schools in 2004 and then to assess this same group of learners again in Grades 10 and 12. This decision was supported by the request from the educators working in the *Learner Achievement* focus area groups to devise a diagnostic assessment that would assist them to ascertain the literacy and numeracy levels of all the Grade 8 learners on entry to the school and to develop interventions to assist in identified problem areas. This was linked to the fact that the Grade 8 learners were drawn from a variety of primary schools in the area and these schools had different standards of educational delivery. Educators were further concerned with the effect of the recent introduction of an outcomes-based education and training approach at a General Education and Training level (see 2. 2.3).

The GMSAF initially approached the Joint Education Trust (JET), who had developed the Grade 3 systemic evaluation assessments for the Department of Education. The Joint Education Trust indicated that this testing was contracted to an external agency. The costs of contracting this agency to conduct baseline assessments in the *Learning Schools Initiative* were beyond the budget of the GMSAF. The GMSAF was also concerned that the high cost of administering the assessments would influence replicability should other schools wish to conduct further assessments of their learners. JET referred the GMSAF to the Language Education and Development Unit (LEDA) affiliated to the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University which was offering an Advanced Certificate in Education (ACE) in Language Across the Curriculum to educators of the schools involved in the QLP project (Taylor 2007 (forthcoming)). The Language Across the Curriculum ACE aims at

addressing the concern that learners lack sufficient literacy ability to cope with learning area/subject content and that if literacy levels are improved learners will do better at school. The Language Across the Curriculum ACE adopts an approach of improving literacy through focusing on literacy development through all learning area/subjects.

LEDA worked with the Academic Placement and Admissions Programme (APAP) unit of the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University in the QLP schools to assess and improve literacy levels in the QLP schools. Discussions were held with the APAP unit, which was then commissioned by the GMSAF to conduct an initial baseline assessment of the Grade 8 language, numeracy & basic mathematics and lifeskills competencies in 2004 with the understanding that this would be benchmarked with the same learners at a Grade 10 (2006) and 12 (2008) level. The APAP approach involves the training of educators to administer and mark the assessments thus empowering them to continue with this process independently. Educators from each school were trained to both administer and to mark the tests. Since the marking involved a lot of additional time, the GMSAF contracted APAP to undertake the marking of both the Grade 8 and Grade 10 assessments. In 2005 the educators undertook the administration and marking of the new intake of Grade 8s. This resulted in only Masihambe actually implementing the assessment. The tests were only marked towards the end of 2005 and there were some concerns by APAP about maintaining the confidentiality of the test material.

The full synopsis of the results of the 2004 Grade 8 assessment and 2006 Grade 10 assessment of the same group of learners is included in Appendix 13 (see Vol. 2, appendix 13). Learners were assessed according to four categories: proficient, functional, expanding and developing. A brief synopsis of the results is presented below.

*Lifeskills:* There was an improvement at both schools of learners in the second assessment, however, many learners still fall within the category of “need development”.

*Writing :* For both schools there was a significant increase (25+ percentage points) in the mean scores obtained from the first<sup>1</sup> to the second assessment. The majority of learners fall within the top two assessment categories (functional and proficient). It is noted that a small percentage of Masihambe learners fall within the category of Developing.

*Language Use:* There were also statistically significant increases in the mean scores from the first to the second assessment, although not as large as for Writing Skills. In Bonthoogte, the majority of learners in the second assessment fell in the top two

categories of skills development. However, for Masihambe, just over half of the learners fell in the lower two categories, with over 20% in the bottom skill category, indicating that these learners can only sometimes recognise basic grammatical structures.

*Sentence Meaning:* There was a statistically significant 10-point increase for both schools, from the first to the second assessment. However, as only a small percentage of learners at Masihambe fall in the two upper categories of the progress map, and just under 50% of Bonthoogte learners fall in the top two categories, there is a need for further development.

*Reading skills:* There was a statistically significant increase in the mean scores for both schools. However, the spread of scores over the four progress map categories indicates a need for further development in this skill area. Of particular concern is that in the second assessment, close to 80% of the Masihambe learners were still in the bottom two categories.

*Numeracy and basic mathematical skills :* For Bonthoogte, there was a statistically significant 10-point increase in the mean scores for the *Numeracy* subtest. However, for Masihambe, on the same subtest, there was a significant decrease in the mean score from the first to the second assessment. For the *Basic Mathematics* subtest, there was a significant improvement in the mean scores for both schools, although the means were still sitting below 20%. The progress map categories are based on the *Average Combined Score* and the results are of concern. After a period of two years, the majority of the learners in both schools are still only exhibiting the skills found in the lowest category, indicating they have minimal arithmetic competencies. Intensive development is thus recommended.

Therefore while the results show improvements, many learners, particularly at Masihambe, are still in the lowest two categories (expanding and developing) for language, numeracy and basic mathematical skills. Numeracy and basic mathematical skills are highlighted as an area of concern for both schools.

Following discussions with the *Learner Achievement* and *Quality of Teaching and Learning* focus areas in the two schools, twenty places were made available to educators at these schools (ten per school) to complete the Language Across the Curriculum ACE. In 2004 five educators from Bonthoogte and thirteen educators from Masihambe enrolled for the Language Across the Curriculum ACE with NMMU. The educators were required

to pay their initial registration fees while the GMSAF covered their tuition for the two years of the qualification. Of those that enrolled, four educators from Bonthoogte completed the ACE. One educator withdrew due to health problems. Of the thirteen educators from Masihambe eleven completed the ACE. The reasons for two educators leaving were that the post of one of these educators, who was only temporary at the school, was terminated. The other educator dropped out of the course.

In addition to the Language Across the Curriculum ACE, a reading programme was initiated at each school. This programme followed the READ<sup>2</sup> model of improving learners reading in groups with age and culturally appropriate texts. This initiative involved the language educators who worked with targeted classes of learners.

In 2004 the GMSAF contracted the *Rhodes University Maths Education Programme* (RUMEP) to provide a series of workshop to prepare future Maths Literacy educators at both schools for the new Further Education and Training (FET) of Maths Literacy that was due to be introduced at a Grade 10 level in South African secondary schools in 2005. These workshops were arranged to meet the request for the preparation of educators for the new FET curriculum identified by the *Curriculum and Resources* focus area, as well as the obvious need to improve learners foundational mathematical skills as indicated in the APAP baseline assessment. It was acknowledged that one educator from each school had been funded to attend an Advanced Certificate in Education in Maths Literacy in preparation for the introduction of this subject. It was also envisioned that these workshops would provide a forum where the educators could share their concerns and could work on specific areas which they identified. After the first series of workshops the educators of Masihambe, who were previously trained as Mathematics educators, stated that they felt confident to deliver the new curriculum and had no need to attend further workshops. Workshops were then offered solely for five educators at Bonthoogte to meet the needs that they identified. A set of Maths Literacy Grade 10 textbooks was also purchased by the GMSAF to further assist Bonthoogte with this intervention.

A similar process was followed for Life Orientation educators. At the initial session educators were asked to identify their needs for effective delivery of the new Life Orientation curriculum. A primary need identified was that of resources. The GMSAF compiled a series of workshops for these educators, however poor attendance resulted in the termination of this process after the first two workshops.

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<sup>2</sup> READ is a South African NGO which works primarily to improve literacy in Primary Schools.

It was agreed by the GMSAF team that alternative ways of addressing numeracy and lifeskills development within the schools had to be developed and piloted. It was also evident that while the Language Across the Curriculum ACE was viewed as highly successful (Euvrard, 2003), the locus of this rested largely with individual educators and that this expertise needed to be spread to other educators so that it could reach a wider spectrum of learners. In April 2006 discussions were undertaken with LEDA and the WSD co-ordinators on how best to proceed with this process. It was agreed that the educators who had been trained in the LAC ACE should drive this process in the two schools and link it to the poor performance of learners in the literacy assessments and to improvement of literacy for enhanced Grade 12 performance.

#### **6.7.4.4.2 Educator motivation sessions**

Early in the initiative, conversations with the WSD co-ordinators and other educators at the schools revealed that educator lack of motivation would be a challenge to any school development process. This lack of motivation was perceived to be a response to the general teaching and learning environment and directly impacted on professionalism both in terms of what educators were prepared to contribute to teaching and learning as well as to "extra" activities such as school development planning. This is discussed in greater detail in 7.2.3. Bonthoogte's *Quality of Teaching and Learning and Educator Development* focus area team were particularly concerned about the general lack of motivation of educators. An initial motivation session was hosted for the educators of Bonthoogte. This session was run by a counselling psychologist and focused on attempting to rekindle and reawaken the educator's love for life and education. Following this a series of motivation sessions were organised for both schools and the Director of Heartlight Learning Community, Pam Spady, was appointed to organise and facilitate these workshops. This series of workshops was entitled '*Wellness Within the Midst of Chaos*' and continued the theme of the first workshop while also focusing on dealing with change. The GMSAF team planned to host at least one motivation session per term. Initially, only female educators attended these sessions and the numbers were very few. However, as educators realised the benefit of these sessions the attendance numbers grew. Most of the sessions focused on creating space for the educators to relax and focus on themselves and their attitudes to life, change, people and teaching. The facilitator also made reference to how similar activities could be used to the benefit of the learners.

Attendance of the motivation sessions was voluntary and it was acknowledged that many of the educators who needed to attend the sessions were absent. Much of what the motivation sessions aimed to achieve was further developed through the Peace Education Programme and Restorative Practice intervention. As is discussed in 7.2.3 it was realised that self-development and other associated knowledge and skills needed to be essential components of the *Learning Schools Initiative*. The challenge to the GMSAF team was how best to integrate this into the programme model in a way that had maximum impact and which was also affordable, sustainable and replicable. It was interesting to note that one of the projects identified by the *Learner Achievement* focus area teams of both schools was that of learner motivation linked to poor socio-economic conditions and the influence of negative role-models (e.g. gangsters and drug lords). Both of these groups commenced with projects that involved guest speakers (e.g. community leaders, past learners, etc.) to address learners at assemblies and other occasions.

#### **6.7.4.4.3 Umlambo team building and planning camps**

Another concern expressed by the *Quality of Teaching and Learning and Educator Development* focus area was the need to develop teamwork skills both within focus areas and generally within the staff community. The GMSAF team and the whole school development co-ordinators decided that the best way to kick start this process was through a break away camp. A proposal was put to the principals and staff regarding a weekend camp for all educators and SGB representatives. Both school communities supported the concept of a camp. The GMSAF stressed that for maximum impact all staff members should attend the camp. This was to prevent a situation where problematic cliques boycotted the team building initiative and derailed the process. Bonthoogte wanted the GMSAF to insist on full attendance. The GMSAF team, however, felt that this was the responsibility of the school principal and management team, and that the Foundation as an external non-governmental agency had no real authority in this situation. Six staff members from Bonthoogte failed to attend the camp. The whole school development co-ordinator stated that these staff members were those who were generally not participating in the whole school development process and other school-based programmes and initiatives. Masihambe had a higher attendance rate with only three staff members who were not able to attend.

The camp was structured to accommodate both whole school development planning and team building together with a leadership/self-analysis component. The focus-area co-ordinators/convenors, focus area secretaries and principals were to attend a Friday

afternoon and evening session. The aim of this was to develop a team working relationship across the focus area groups, to strengthen their relationship with the principal and to discuss how they were experiencing the whole school evaluation and development process with a particular focus on identifying and exploring any challenges that they were encountering. Unfortunately the principal of Bonthoogte did not make the Friday evening session as he had a school crisis to deal with. The focus area co-ordinators and secretaries expressed their dissatisfaction at this. The other staff members and SGB representatives joined the camp early on the Saturday morning. The camp ended on Sunday just after lunch.

The whole school development co-ordinators and focus area co-ordinators led the Saturday morning planning session. Both representatives from APAP and the Language Across the Curriculum ACE NMMU co-ordinator were invited to attend this planning session in order to give input to relevant groups and the school.

The rest of the camp was structured around mental and physical team building activities (e.g. chariot races, crossing water with a log, building structures, crossing the spider web, thinking skills tasks, ready steady cook, etc.). The personal development/relational component included a temperament analysis and leadership analysis together with a brief examination of conflict resolution. Further discussion of issues relating to the camp is included in section 7.2.4.

As the initiative progressed, it was realised that what was needed was more than just developing team work skills and encouraging a culture of team work (see 6.8.5.) and that an ongoing intervention that developed staff (and school community) collegiality and which included a strong self development component was required (see 7.2.3 and 7.2.4).

#### **6.7.4.4.4 Social welfare interventions**

Working with the *Safety, Security and Discipline* focus area and the principals to meet the social welfare needs of the schools presented enormous challenges. The problems identified by the schools in this area were complex and many required specialised expertise and extensive funding. Primary social welfare needs identified by educators were malnutrition, absence of parents (due to death, work in other towns, etc.), dysfunctional family life (abuse, addiction, immorality, etc.), learners affected by and infected with HIV/AIDS, and lack of counsellors, social workers and psychologists to assist learners, educators and parents/guardians. These problems manifested in learner

concentration problems, lack of conducive homework environment, emotional problems, lack of learner discipline, substance abuse by learners, lack of learner motivation, etc.

In 2005 representatives from the District Department of Social Development approached the GMSAF to consider a joint project to address social welfare needs in education. The District Department of Social Development representatives and GMSAF team earmarked the social welfare component of the *Learning Schools Initiative* as a possible project. Both organisations commenced with a thorough analysis of the learner needs related to feeding, social workers and HIV/AIDS and a proposal was submitted to the Department of Social Development suggesting a joint project which primarily focussed on developing food gardens and a feeding scheme at the two secondary schools together with making social workers available to assist with identified cases. The Provincial Department of Social Development rejected the proposal on the basis that the GMSAF was considered to be a wealthy organisation and was therefore not eligible for funding. Additional murmurs were reported of the Department of Social Development not wanting to make its social workers available to the Department of Education and that the Department of Education should source its own social workers. Feeding of undernourished learners together with addressing learners' problems through counselling and social work services remain priorities on the school development of both schools.

#### **6.7.4.4.5 Fundraising Capacity building**

The acquisition and sourcing of resources was identified as a priority for both schools. These resources ranged from facilities (e.g. a school hall) to equipment (e.g. overhead projectors) and textbooks.

The GMSAF attempted to assist the schools to identify possible donors and partners in the areas identified by the schools. Two representatives from each school were sponsored to attend a fundraising workshop offered by a national expert in the field in 2004. Feedback, however, indicated that this information was not shared with the schools and the desired results were not obtained. Reports from the whole school development coordinators and other staff members indicated that the standard fundraising events organised by the schools were not very successful (see 6.8.4.3).

In 2006, due to continued requests from the schools for further assistance with fundraising, a working session was arranged where schools were invited to send three representatives to a session facilitated by a marketing agent. This session was structured

around addressing the specific needs of the schools and to assist the schools to compile suitable letters and proposals to donors. It was anticipated that this would be a process whereby the marketing agent would act as consultant to the schools and assist them with the layout and content of their proposals where needed. The workshop was hosted for all six learning schools. Four of the six schools sent representatives to this session, no representatives from Masihambe attended.

#### **6.7.4.4.6 IQMS workshops and support**

The identification of educator development needs remained a critical area of attention for the *Learning Schools Initiative*. Initially the GMSAF had commenced with the use of the Educator Needs Analysis Instrument developed by the Foundation to assess the educators' needs. However, the introduction of IQMS necessitated the introduction of a different approach. Initially an attempt was made to align the Educator Needs Analysis Instrument to the IQMS educator assessment criteria. This was abandoned when it was realised that the IQMS criteria needed serious reworking. Since the educators were compelled to use the IQMS criteria the GMSAF team decided to try and work with these until such time that an alternative document was developed. In an attempt to streamline the GMSAF team aligned the IQMS criteria and the whole school evaluation instrument criteria in the whole school evaluation instrument.

The schools requested further assistance with the implementation of IQMS and the Staff Development Co-ordinator of a school that was fairly advanced in the implementation of IQMS was approached to offer a workshop for representatives from the six schools that are part of the *Learning Schools Initiative*. Representatives from both Bonthoogte and Masihambe attended this workshop. Both schools also tried to source information from the SADTU (The South African Democratic Teachers' Union) and the Department of Education District Office to further assist them in the implementation of IQMS. The whole school development co-ordinators presented their school's IQMS analysis as a component of the *Quality of Teaching and Learning and Educator Development* focus area. The GMSAF team, however, found that these provided very little information on what actual development and support educators required especially in relation to content and methodology. Most of the analysis focused on the resources that educators required in order to teach better. It was felt by the GMSAF team that the IQMS evaluation process and criteria did not provide a realistic indication of educators' development needs. The schools also raised concern that the process was not taken seriously as most staff

members felt that the Department of Education would take no action in terms of meeting their needs.

One of the key educator development needs identified by both secondary schools was that of time-management. Although a 'time management' workshop was hosted for both schools towards the end of 2005, it was identified again in 2006 as a problem area that required urgent attention.

#### **6.7.4.4.7 Peace Education Programme**

A primary need identified by both schools (and later also by the four primary schools) was that of assistance with learner discipline. The secondary schools felt that they were "losing control" of learners. My interviews with staff members, together with information gathered from informal conversations and workshops revealed that educators felt that the socio-economic background of most of the learners impacted negatively on the way in which they behaved at school (see 2.4.1 and 7.2.3). The GMSAF worked with the schools and other organisations (e.g. the Catholic Schools Institute and the Peace Conflict Resolution Development Centre) to explore ways in which to address discipline in schools. It was realised that discipline could not be addressed as an isolated issue, but that a wide variety of factors contributed towards sustaining discipline in schools. These include: a set of school values that are supported by the whole school community, a practical code of conduct for learners (that includes both rights and responsibilities), an accepted and practical set of positive discipline procedures, role modelling of required responsibilities and positive actions by staff members, a supportive teaching and learning environment, the teaching of identified skills and knowledge (e.g. conflict management) through the formal and informal curriculum, etc.

In 2006 the GMSAF entered into a partnership with the Department of Education District Office to offer a Peace Education Programme to a group of fourteen pilot schools; the six learning schools were included with this group. The objective of this programme was to train up two peace educators from each school who would then work with their school's staff and learners to address issues relating to a peaceful teaching and learning environment. The GMSAF provided mentors to assist the peace educators to introduce and kick start the peace education programme in their schools. Valerie Dovey, a Peace Education and Conflict Transformation Practitioner was contracted to facilitate a three phase series of workshops (3 x 3 day training sessions) to equip the peace educators and mentors with relevant knowledge and skills that they could apply in their schools. The

Port Elizabeth Department of Education District Office and GMSAF also met with the peace educators at scheduled times to discuss strategies and to receive feedback on how the programme was progressing in the schools. While all six of the schools involved in the *Learning Schools Initiative* were invited to identify peace educators and to send them to this session, Masihambe did not send any representatives. All of the other five schools sent representatives. When the whole school development co-ordinator from Masihambe was contacted regarding the non-attendance of 'peace educators' she indicated that she had briefed them about the session and asked them to diarise the workshop but that she had not reminded them and that they must have forgotten to consult their diaries. Due to the strict attendance requirements and emphasis on schools taking responsibility for their own development, Masihambe was therefore excluded from the Peace Education process.

Although only one educator from Bonthoogte volunteered to become a peace educator, the process took off well in the school. A peace education team (as required by the programme) was established at the school and there appeared to be a lot of support for the initiative. This enthusiasm for the process may also have been enhanced by the Restorative Practice workshop that the school staff attended on the Saturday prior to the launch of the programme in this school. Fortunately for the programme, the educator from Bonthoogte who participated in the peace education process was a highly motivated and committed individual intent on making a difference in her school. The mentor for this school, an ex-school principal was someone who was respected by the school community and who assumed a no-nonsense and highly emotive and motivational approach in working with the staff.

#### **6.7.4.4.8 Restorative Practice Workshop and process**

My interviews with the secondary schools together with information from informal conversations with the whole school development co-ordinator and staff members of all six learning schools revealed that relationships between staff members were often strained and that these problematic relations often manifested in various ways in the schools. These included: the formation of cliques, non-participation in or non-cooperation with the GMSAF initiative and/or other initiatives by certain staff members, resistance to change, resistance to leadership and/or management, etc. The impact of problematic relationships on teaching and learning together with school development became more obvious during the second round of interviews that I conducted with the secondary schools and as the staff members became more candid in their conversations with me

and other GMSAF staff members. In 2006 the GMSAF decided to pilot a restorative relationship with one of the Learning Schools secondary school and one primary school. Valerie Dovey was contracted to conduct a one-day workshop with each school. Bonthoogte was offered the opportunity to participate in this process, as difficult relational issues appeared to be particularly prevalent in this school.

The workshop objectives were:

- To cultivate a climate of caring, sharing, understanding, healing and community.
- To introduce some key concepts, approaches, skills and strategies underpinning peace education and conflict resolution work.
- To identify conflict and challenge areas currently faced by the school staff.
- To consider specific strategies to address these conflicts and challenges.
- To encourage the staff to take what emerges forward on personal, professional and collective levels.

In the Process Report for Bonthoogte, Valerie Dovey (2006:2) states that "...the workshop was designed to be an empowering process – one that was educational, rekindled enthusiasm about, and motivation for, the work of the Bonthoogte educators, and encouraged the building of a sense of unity and connectedness. It was underpinned by key concepts and values that suggested application in the school community too".

The difference in attendance between the primary school and Bonthoogte was notable. The session was scheduled from 08h40 to 16h30. All except six educators from the primary school arrived early for their session. Five of the six educators came later after attending a funeral of one of the Grade one learners that had passed away due to HIV/AIDS related causes. The other educator was attending another training programme. By 09h00 on the day of the workshop for Bonthoogte only twelve staff members were present. On opening the workshop I asked whether the staff present still wanted to proceed with the workshop, as all staff (except one) had by means of their signatures indicated that they would be present and that lack of attendance of more than half of the staff defeated the purpose of the workshop. Those present were intent on proceeding. During the course of the morning another seventeen staff members joined those present bringing the total to twenty nine of the possible thirty nine staff complement. Despite initial concerns about attendance, the workshop process, feedback evaluations (completed by all present) and the process report compiled by Valerie Dovey indicated that the workshop was successful. These sources also provided valuable information for this study and this information is discussed in greater detail in section 7.2.3, 7.2.4 and 8.3. Particularly

valuable were exercises such as the “iceberg” which provided a snapshot of the issues at play in the staff room, classroom and community together with an analysis of the possible causes related to more problematic issues. ‘Circle time’ where the staff sat together in a circle and candidly discussed problems that they experienced as a staff member also yielded valuable information and provided a therapeutic situation in which staff could sensitively and openly air their views (see 4.9.3). The Restorative Practice workshop provided an ideal opportunity to promote some of the concepts and values introduced in the Peace Education programme to a broader base of staff and through this to elicit greater support for the lone peace educator. A peace education team was also formed at this workshop to assist the peace educator in her work.

A follow up session was scheduled with Valerie Dovey and the school as it was acknowledged that restorative practice is a process as opposed to a once off workshop. Integrating this process into the GMSAF model together with the development of the individual staff members has become a key focus for the GMSAF team.

#### **6.7.4.4.9 Leadership Development**

Research on effective schools indicates (4.4.1) effective leadership, especially that of the head teacher or principal, is a critical factor in a successful school. From the outset of the initiative the GMSAF team were aware of the need to develop and support the principal, school management teams and other non-formal leaders (e.g. whole school development co-ordinator, focus group co-ordinators/convenors of both pilot schools). The adoption of a situational analysis approach made a direct intervention difficult. Although some staff candidly stated that there were leadership problems, especially at a top level, they only hinted of this in the group analysis and feedback sessions. The principal and deputy principal of Masihambe applied to attend another GMSAF initiative aimed at developing school leadership. This initiative involves the acquisition of a formal qualification in the form of an Advanced Certificate of Education (ACE) in Leadership and Management. However, despite the fact that they completed this qualification during the first quarter of 2006 – interviews with the staff and other scenarios discussed in section 7.2.1 indicated that top leadership in Masihambe required additional development and support. It was also realised that a leadership intervention separate to the ACE in Leadership and Management was required for all six learning schools. A three-phase approach was suggested by co-ordinator of the GMSAF school leadership and management initiative. This involved:

- (ii) Interviews with the leadership and staff of each of the learning schools to assess attitudes to leadership amongst leadership and staff.
- (iii) A one-day whole staff intervention facilitated by a change/leadership expert.
- (iv) Continuous mentoring of the school leadership and the possibility of a follow-up session with the whole school community to reinforce and further develop the concepts introduced in (ii).

Interviews were conducted with the leadership and staff of each learning school and a report compiled. These reports were forwarded to Sue Davidoff who had been contracted to develop and facilitate the one-day whole staff intervention. Sue Davidoff's approach to the one-day whole staff intervention was based on the concept of a "courageous conversation". In her proposal she states that this workshop modelled on similar processes would be "...neither bounded by the past, nor by old notions of a leadership programme focusing on skills development, of 'old school' workshop design". Instead it would involve a process which "...could involve experiences for all the participants of themselves, first and foremost, as *people*, striving to make a difference under very difficult circumstances...a journey of discovery, where in gentle and open and also challenging ways, participants could find parts of themselves that they were not entirely familiar with; that they could *experience* their own imagination and how enlivening their imagination is fundamental to the leadership process" (Davidoff, 2006:3). It was interesting for me as co-ordinator of the *Learning Schools Initiative* to note how two completely separate interventions – one aimed at Peace Education and Restorative Practice and the other at Leadership – focused strongly on the development of the individual and relationships with others and had resonance with the initial vision crafting and motivation sessions. Both initiatives involved activities based on the exploration of personal and school values together with a strong personal development component. The leadership sessions adopted a stronger change focus, however, many of the issues discussed in the Peace Education and Restorative Practice workshops were related to change. Masihambe attended the leadership workshop and the outcome of this is discussed in more detail in section 7.2.1. Unfortunately Bonthoogte's workshop was cancelled due to floods experienced during this period. A workshop was scheduled for later in the year outside the scope of this study.

#### **6.7.4.5 Internal school development projects and processes**

A primary objective of the *Learning Schools Initiative* is for the schools to take responsibility for, drive and actualise their own development cycles and to set up

structures within the school to sustain this. In reviewing the process the GMSAF team realised that in introducing and implementing the initiative much more emphasis should have been placed on ownership and internal development structures and processes together with the capacity building of staff to sustain this. Leadership both formal and informal particularly need to buy into this process and be developed to implement and continue it in a reflective and meaningful manner. While ownership was stressed at the commencement of and at key points in the initiative it was acknowledged that this should have been promoted through a formal agreement or document of some sort. However, despite this the schools did make progress within the focus areas, and given the fact that both schools were secondary schools confronted with a new FET curriculum and numerous other changes, the progress made cannot be underestimated. The efforts of the two schools can also not be compared in the sense that Masihambe had different challenges to face than Bonthoogte. While from the outset Bonthoogte declared that the whole school development initiative must fit with the rhythm of the school which centred around teaching, making teaching a priority was something that Masihambe still had to work on. Bonthoogte also had the benefit of having previously been a House of Representative school while Masihambe had received very little support or resources under the Department of Education and Training. While both schools were situated in difficult environments and constantly had to deal with incidences of vandalism, Bonthoogte was at a slight advantage to Masihambe in this regard. It could thus be said that in some regards Masihambe had to put many fundamentals in place (especially with regard to teaching and learning) while Bonthoogte could focus more on issues related to its core business.

One of the most impressive projects initiated by Masihambe was the *Quality of Teaching and Learning and Educator Development* focus area's survey of educators and learners in attendance in the classroom during teaching time (see 7.2.5) (see Vol. 2, appendix 14 and appendix 15) during the third quarter of 2003. A further survey was planned for the fourth quarter of 2006 to assess whether or not attendance rates had improved.

Interviews with the focus area groups in October 2005 indicated that while the groups had made some progress this was not as much as the schools had planned or the GMSAF had anticipated. It was difficult to ascertain the progress made by Bonthoogte as the principal indicated that the school would host its own internal and feedback session and invite the GMSAF to attend. This session never materialised. The fact that some of the focus areas were not available for the October interviews also made it difficult to assess exactly what these groups had achieved. In June 2006 the school principal of Bonthoogte

resigned. While this presented new challenges the acting principal attended all planning sessions with the whole school development facilitator and in addition (not stipulated by the GMSAF) brought along another staff member.

Masihambe enthusiastically embraced the proposal of a planning feedback and planning session to reflect on 2004 and to prepare for 2005. They requested that the GMSAF facilitate such a session. The GMSAF hosted the session at a venue external to the school and the session was well attended. At this session each focus area made a presentation of what they had achieved during 2004 and indicated what they planned to do in 2005. While some of the activities planned were part of what some staff members were required to do generally (i.e. textbook inventories and curriculum planning), it was acknowledged that these currently fell within the ambit of school development but needed to be integrated into the day-to-day activities of the school in the long term. The synopsis of this workshop is attached as appendix 11 (see Vol. 2, appendix 11).

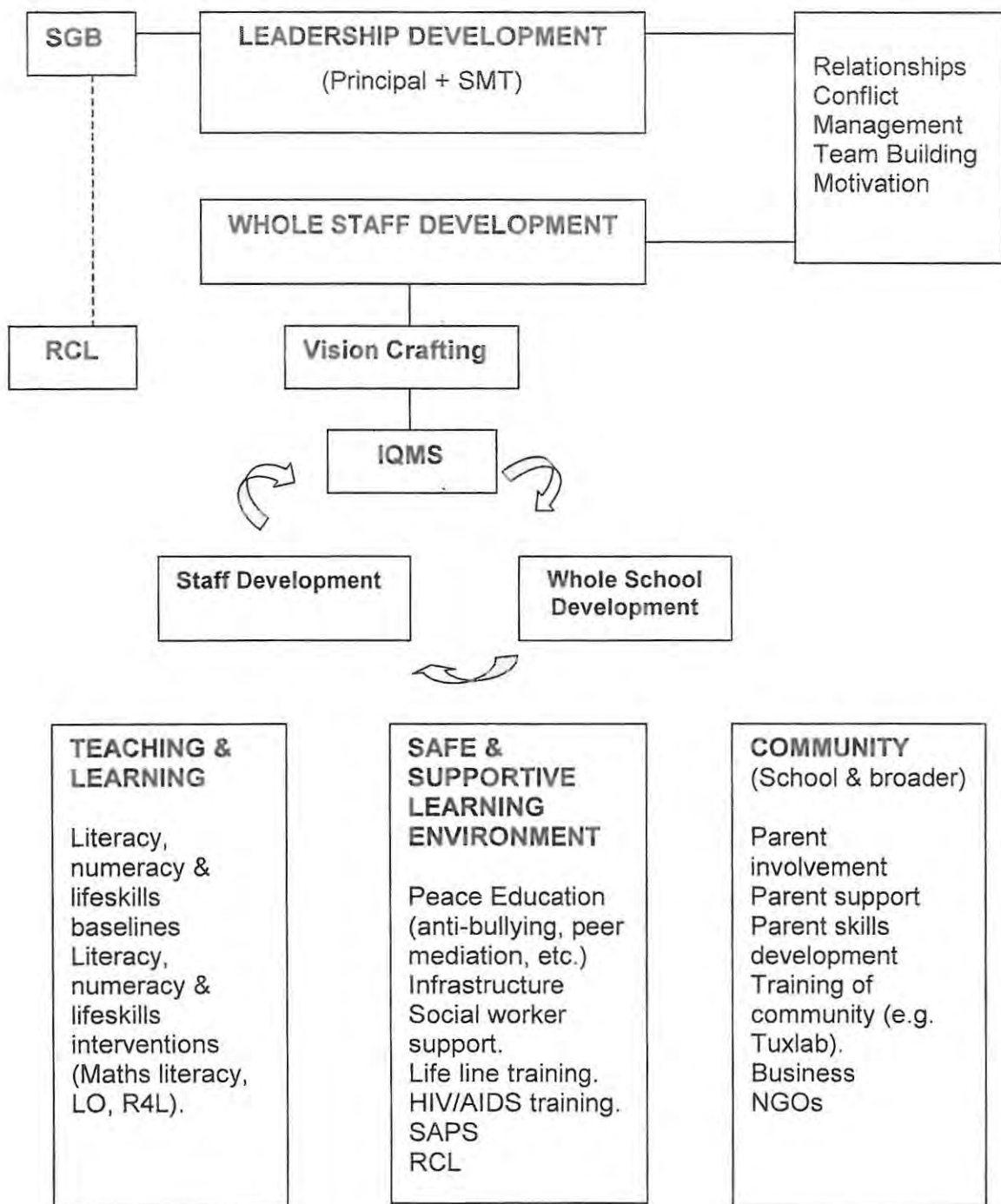
#### **6.7.5 Phase five: refining the learning school model**

True piloting is a continuous process of action research and action learning where gathering of information from a variety of sources, analysis, reflection and medication are all vital process components. Piloting a model for school development inevitably involves working with an initial model that is less than ideal – a model that perhaps has less impact than the more sophisticated revised versions that follow. A model for whole school development is also a model full of other models that evolve as an initiative progresses. These sub models in themselves transform in nature and shape as understanding of dynamics and concepts deepens over time. Snapshots of different timeframes of the *Learning Schools Initiative* reveal different pictures of a still developing model framework and of the sub-models growing within this. Figure 6.2 presents a snapshot of the model as it was understood in 2005. Figure 6.3 presents a modified version of this model that moves towards a more stratified approach that focuses on leadership development and staff dynamics and relationships as initial interventions as opposed to being needs driven interventions. This model also rests on three pillars: quality teaching and learning, safe and supportive learning environment, and the school community.

It is acknowledged that a graphic depiction of a process cannot capture the nuances and complexities involved. Especially with relation to who takes responsibility for the different components, the different structures that need to be established, how these function and

the integration of maintenance tasks together with an ongoing development focus into the culture and day-to-day activities of the school. *Figure 6.3* therefore provides an incomplete picture of the *Learning Schools Initiative* model, as it was understood to have maximum impact in March 2006.

Chapter seven discusses the generative mechanisms that give rise to and drive such a model. *Figure 6.4* perhaps best presents a framework, attempts to capture some of the 'learnings' of the initiative and depicts the move towards a combination between a stratified and needs driven/situational analysis approach. Thus, while acknowledging that schools require different strategies (Hopkins, 1996) this model also acknowledges that schools within different tiers may respond to some generic interventions but that they also have specific needs as identified by the school community. As the Learning Schools model has evolved so key themes have emerged and have become key components. These are values and attitudes (at the level of school, leadership, staff, learners, etc.), relationships and personal (or self) development. These themes and their interplay in the development process are discussed in much greater detail in Chapter seven. Broadening the base of those intimately involved in the school development process to include the School Management Team is an important move together with a shifting of responsibility from the whole school development coordinator to the SMT for the success of school development as situated within a broader change and transformation process.



**Figure 6.3: The GMSAF Learning School Initiative's model framework March 2006**

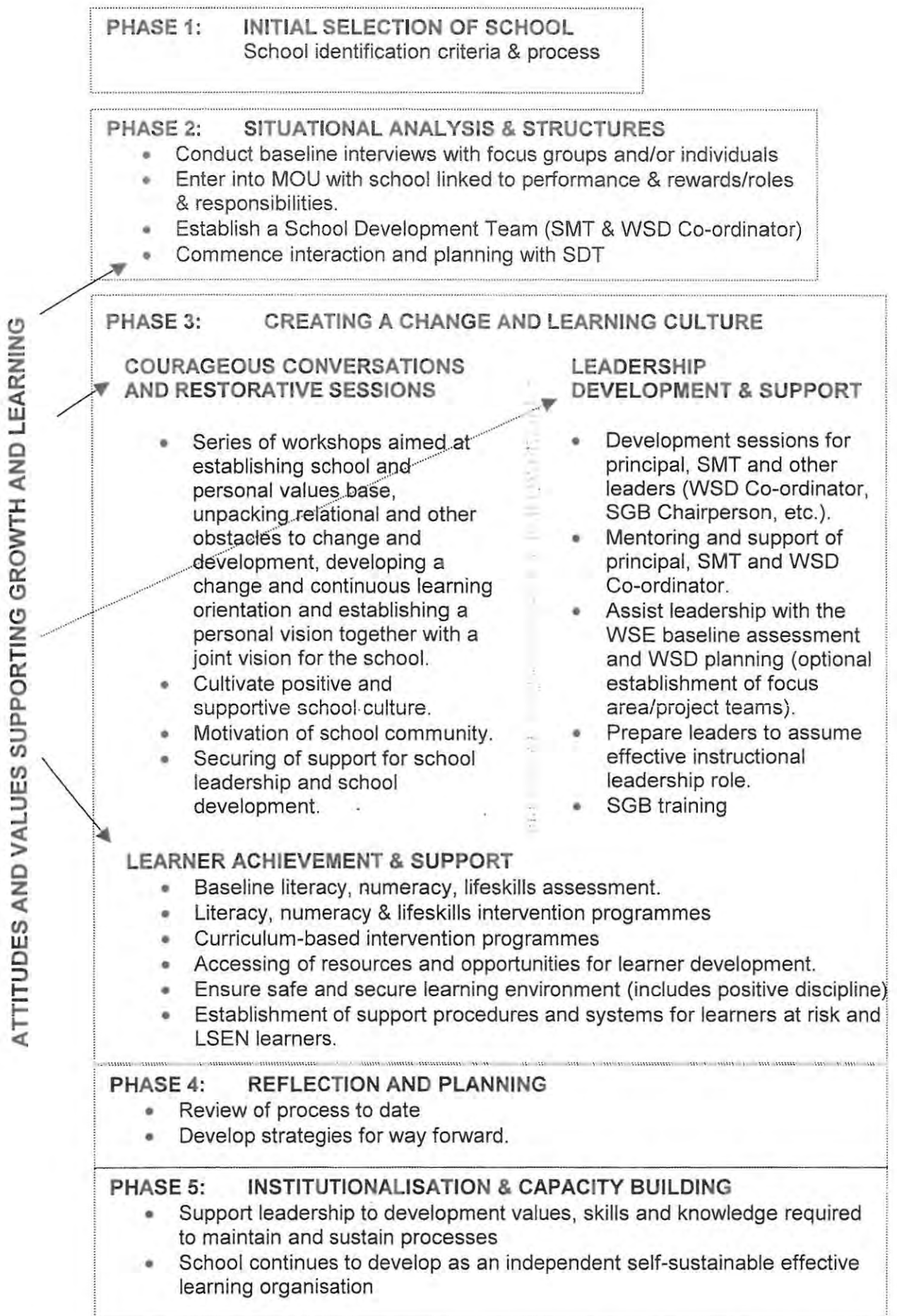


Figure 6.4: The GMSAF Learning School Initiative's model framework October 2006

## 6.8 Concluding summary

At a glance school development can be perceived as a relatively simple process of developing vision, compiling plans in line with this vision and implementing these plans on a step-by-step basis. However, schools like other organisations are comprised of a delicate interaction of structure and agency. Unlike most other organisations schools, especially those in developing countries, are confronted with a variety of challenges that detract from their core business - teaching and learning. In addition lack of will of agency, under preparedness of agency, together with the complexities of the interrelationship of agency often present another set of challenges that undermine the combination of dynamics required for quality teaching and learning.

As the *Learning Schools Initiative* progressed various forms of truth emerged presented by different stakeholders from different perspectives. While concrete evidence such as lack of performance often spoke volumes so did the contexts in which schools were expected to perform with very little support from the Department of Education. As various forms of the truth emerged so the *Learning Schools Initiative* model was adapted and refined in an attempt to find the best fit between intervention, realistic impact and 'real' change and development. Chapter seven examines and discusses the primary mechanisms that emerged through an analysis of different forms of data drawn from a variety of sources and attempts to provide further insight into the dynamics at play in school development and change.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

# THE PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF THE KEY DEVELOPMENT AND CHANGE MECHANISMS IN TWO PILOT SECONDARY SCHOOLS

### 7.1 Introduction

The primary objective of the *Learning Schools Initiative* is to develop a framework (model) that consists of interventions and processes aimed at initiating, supporting and sustaining school development and change. These interventions and processes, which are themselves mechanisms, target and hopefully trigger other mechanisms at both the school and classroom levels that interact within a specific context to generate particular effects or outcomes. Whether the intended outcome of development and change, that ultimately impacts positively on improving teaching and learning is actualised, depends on the extent to which the targeted mechanisms are activated together with enabling and constraining contextual factors. The structure of the interventions and processes as mechanisms also determines the extent to which school and classroom level mechanisms are triggered.

The *Learning Schools Initiative* was not tightly structured around *context + mechanisms = outcome* (CMO) configurations at the outset. Instead these configurations emerged through the piloting and model refinement process. The identification of mechanisms that needed to be triggered for change, together with an exploration of intervention mechanisms to trigger these and an investigation of factors that influence these and how they are operationalised within a school context are a major focus of both the *Learning Schools Initiative* and this study. Through the *Learning Schools Initiative* initial piloting process, mechanisms at different levels were identified that are critical to generating causal powers within a school and that in turn, given the context, produce particular outcomes.

Thus, in essence this study focuses on the investigation, identification, confirmation and explanation of what mechanisms are needed to bring about change in a particular context together with what interventions and processes (project level mechanisms) are necessary to generate these mechanisms within this context (in this case the context of the two schools in the pilot study).

Chapter six provides an analysis and description of the process by which these mechanisms were identified and developed in an attempt to address priority needs in the two pilot secondary schools. It also provides an overview of some of the interventions, processes, and associated mechanisms that evolved and were piloted through the initial phase of the *Learning Schools Initiative*. This chapter focuses on an analysis of the contexts of the two schools and particularly the factors that influence the need for particular mechanisms together with factors within the school that enable or constrain the extent to which generative mechanisms can be actualised within the school in order to realise development and change. The chapter also, in keeping with a theory-driven approach to evaluative research (Pawson & Tilley, 2004) refers to some of the theory that supports the identification and need for specific change mechanisms. The basis for a theory-driven approach is provided in Chapter four.

It must be acknowledged that there are generative mechanisms that impact on development and change that operate at different strata of reality. It was not possible to discuss all of the mechanisms and related causal powers across the different strata of reality within the scope of this study. The primary focus here is therefore on the social and to some extent the psychological realm (see 5.4.3). It was also not possible to discuss all the mechanisms at work in whole school development; instead I have attempted to identify the essential mechanisms at a school level that emerged from the *Learning Schools Initiative* and in the light of this to discuss associated intervention mechanisms. In keeping with the primary aim of this study, this chapter seeks to provide a plausible account of how interventions, mechanisms and results are connected to one another (Morén & Bloem, 2003) together with a discussion of the transformative potential of identified mechanisms at a school level with a particular focus on influencing contextual factors.

As was discussed in Chapter five, the social world is not a closed system and the same generative mechanisms can produce different results depending how the conditions for closure are broken (Sayer, 2000). The results of this study are therefore not stagnant, but are representative of particular dynamics in a particular context over a specified time period. This discussion therefore revolves around "...identifying causal mechanisms and how they work, and discovering if they have been activated and under what conditions" (Sayer, 2000:14). Linked to this is an exploration of social structures that enhance or block the emergence of anticipated outcomes. While it is necessary to isolate generative mechanisms in the form of analytical constructs (Morén & Bloem, 2003) for discussion purposes, it is important to emphasise that no mechanism or set of mechanisms can be taken as a "black box" (Sayer 2000:23) and that evaluative research aims to "...identify and explain various combinations of contexts, mechanisms and outcomes" (*ibid.*). Pawson & Tilley (1997:114)

stress that all evaluative efforts aim to lighten the black box and to discern some quite distinct shades of grey rather than presenting explanations applicable to all similar situations. It is also important to mention that although the key mechanisms are discussed as separate analytical constructs the interaction between these also plays a vital role in determining whether whole school development is actualised. I have made reference to some of the interconnectedness of the mechanisms within each separate discussion and have attempted to highlight any critical connections in the overarching discussion at the end of this section.

Analysing data from a critical realist perspective is challenging in that it involves moving through various strata of reality and examining the numerous dynamics at play in an attempt to provide a tentative explanation of “truth” bound by space and time (see 5.4.5). Capturing the nuances and delicate interplay of the causal powers, structure, and agency with a commitment to explanation that penetrates the “real underlying layers” (Morén & Bloem, 2003:45) without making assumptions or false connections is particularly challenging, especially when the researcher has been an integral part of the initiative. Adhering to the “truth” of the data and consulting with other people involved in the initiative was a critical touchstone throughout this process.

As discussed in Chapter four (4.12.) school development and change is a long-term process (Taylor, 2007) that requires intensive input at the start up phase and continuous attention and support for at least a three to five year period following this. This study only covers the first four years of the *Learning Schools Initiative* with only just over three of these years (May 2003 to September 2006) involving actual contact with the schools. This discussion focuses on the mechanisms underpinning the whole school development process and related intervention mechanism and is not an attempt to measure the extent to which the school moved forward. The primary source of data referred to in this chapter is drawn from formal interviews with the principals and staff and informal discussions together with notes from GMSAF team reflection sessions, reports by consultants, and reflection sessions with experts in the field and the researcher’s journal.

## **7.2 The process of identification and positioning of the generative mechanisms that facilitate school development and change in two pilot schools**

The identification of generative mechanisms in this study follows the process outlined in Chapter five (5.6.3), where mechanisms were tentatively identified and then either confirmed or disregarded as the study progressed. The second cycle of interviews with the

participants, together with an observation of the impact of interventions that were structured around the activation (or some instances creation) of these mechanisms, were particularly instrumental in assisting to identify mechanisms that needed development and support at the school level to structure the *Learning Schools Initiative* framework and mechanism accordingly. During the second cycle of interviews I also focused more intently on exploring the nature of identified change mechanisms together with the contextual factors that supported the development and sustainability of these in a school context.

Identifying the nature of what mechanisms were required to bring about and support school change and development as initiated by an external agency was particularly challenging, especially with regards to the conceptualisation of “mechanisms” and where these were located and which mechanisms I should focus on from a realist evaluative research perspective. Critical realism transfers the concept of mechanisms from the natural sciences to the social sciences where, as highlighted by Morén & Bloem (2003:55), they “...are real, but seldom directly observable”. Pawson & Tilley (2004:68) describe social mechanisms as different from variables in that they “...are an *account* of the makeup, behaviour and interrelationships of those processes which are responsible for the regularity. A mechanism is thus a theory – a theory which spells out the potential of human resources and reasoning”. According to Pawson & Tilley (2004:85) these theories are framed “... in terms of propositions about how mechanisms are fired in contexts to produce outcomes”. Thus, while in the natural science realm a spark can comfortably be identified as a generative mechanism that has causal powers to ignite dynamite and does this in a context that favours this (i.e. dry conditions, etc.), transposing this concept to the social sciences requires a careful conceptualisation of mechanism, in-depth exploration of context and related propositioning of theory.

Different studies that I consulted classify different types of constructs as mechanisms. Morén & Bloem (2003: pp. 55 to 60) in their evaluation of a social work intervention identify mechanisms at the level of intervention, individual and context, such as *challenge mechanism*, *risk-taking mechanisms*, *response mechanism*, *role transcendence mechanism* and *context mechanisms*. In their evaluation, analysis and discussion of a prison education programme, Pawson & Tilley (2004) identify the overarching “new mechanism” in the intervention as the prison education programme itself which initiates a trigger “rehabilitation” process of mechanisms that are pre-identified. These “rehabilitation” (Pawson & Tilley, 2004: 113) or “reintegrative mechanisms” (*ibid.*: 105) are identified as *self-realisation*, *economic potential*, *social adaptability*, *moral or civic responsibility* and *cognitive change*. In this context the rehabilitation programme as overarching mechanism triggers other identified

“reintegrative” mechanisms at the level of the individual to bring about a range of outcome patterns (Pawson & Tilley, 2004). I have followed a similar approach to identifying mechanism in this research.

As discussed in Chapter five, realist evaluative research differs from other evaluative approaches that view programmes as “...some kind of unitary happening which either does or doesn’t work”; instead it examines what mechanisms need to be triggered by a programme in a specific context to bring about the expected outcomes and focuses on “what is it about a program that works for whom” (Pawson & Tilley, 2004:109), with specific focus on the mechanisms at both a programme level and, particularly, the level of structure and agency. Thus, while the programme can be viewed as an overarching change mechanism, of particular interest are the other mechanisms inside the “black box” (*ibid.*:114) that generate intended development and change. In addition, although tendencies or causal powers may be present, the conditions (Danemark et al., 2006) in which they are triggered into becoming operative mechanisms with transformational power are important so that the *Learning Schools Initiative* and other initiatives can focus on developing these conditions in partnership with schools.

The configuration of the *Learning Schools Initiative* as an overarching change mechanism is depicted in figure 7.1.

<b>Context</b>	+	<b>New Mechanism</b>	=	<b>Expected outcome</b>
Two secondary schools in historically disadvantaged communities in Port Elizabeth, South Africa.		Whole school development initiative facilitated by non-governmental agency		Development and change at a school (organisational) level and ultimately at a classroom level.

**Figure 7.1: Overarching CMO configuration**

This framework is developed on underlying premises and understandings of the need for mechanisms at the level of intervention (initiative, project or programme) that in turn trigger generative mechanisms in structure and agency at a school and ultimately classroom level that are required to bring about a deeper level meaningful change (see 4.12). An overarching mechanism such as the *Learning Schools Initiative* is comprised of “sub mechanisms” that

aim at triggering a specific mechanism at a school or classroom level. For example, leadership and management programmes are specifically aimed at developing leadership and management capacity within a school, and accredited professional development programmes are aimed at improving educator performance in a specific area. As outlined and discussed in Chapter six, the *Learning Schools Initiative* framework was continuously adjusted to create and sustain these conditions as the pilot progressed. Thus, while at the beginning of the pilot process very few key generative mechanisms were targeted at both a project and school level, as the awareness for the need to focus on these grew through both the piloting process and engagement with school reform theory, they were targeted more directly, i.e. leadership, educator motivation, etc. The action learning, evolutionary nature of the *Learning Schools Initiative* intervention framework resulted in an awareness of some of the key mechanisms required for meaningful change at a school and classroom level only becoming manifest during the latter phase of this study. This also meant that, while a greater understanding developed at a theoretical level of the type of leadership, empowerment, etc. required to bring about and support change, there was not opportunity to pilot and document these during the course of this study. Recommendations for the further development of some of these mechanisms are made in Chapter eight.

Thus, while the *Learning Schools Initiative* is described as the overarching mechanism in terms of a whole school development intervention (figure 7.1), the revised model (see figure 6.3) aims to trigger mechanisms that initiate, support and sustain change at the school and classroom level. For example, educator motivation and personal development sessions are used as a mechanism with the aim to improve educator motivation, confidence and insight at a school level in the anticipation that this will impact positively on the way in which educators interact with learners and ultimately on the quality of teaching and learning. These mechanisms and their CMO configurations are summarised in figure 7.2. The broad context for each mechanism is applied generally in figure 7.2; a more specific context is given as an example in figure 7.3. It is acknowledged that some of the issues described in the context presented in figure 7.3 are also applicable to other mechanisms and to the overall intervention.

<b>Broad Context</b>	<b>Intervention level change mechanisms</b>	<b>School level change mechanisms</b>	<b>Expected Outcome</b>
Two secondary schools in historically disadvantaged communities in Port Elizabeth, South Africa.	Vision crafting Whole school identification and integration of values vision and mission.	Supportive organisational culture	A school culture that supports and sustains school development and change.
	Recommendations for "restructuring" and planning templates, databases, etc. to manage change.	Supportive organisational structure	Structures established within the school to support and sustain school development and change.
	Leadership and management programme and/or workshops and mentoring.	Effective leadership and management	Leadership developed at various levels of the school to lead and support school development and change.
	"Motivation" sessions and integration of self-actualisation, motivation and commitment into all interventions.	Personal growth and meaning	Educators are motivated, committed and empowered at a personal and professional level and readily participate in development and change processes.
Restorative practice workshops, team building session and integration of relationships and teamwork into all interventions.	Restoration of relationships and development of capacity to work together	Improved relationships and team work that support teaching and learning as well as school development.	

Accredited programmes.	Professional development	Improved level of
Non-accredited	(of educators)	professionalism and
workshops.		quality teaching and
Cultivation of Learning		learning.
Communities.		
Framework for		Increased
accountability (e.g. WSE	Accountability	accountability of
guidelines).		school.
Support		Strengthening of school
		capacity for change.

**Figure 7.2 Learning School Initiative mechanisms**

Micro Context	Change Mechanism	Expected outcome
Low morale, lack of commitment and motivation of educators. Demotivated by the impact of poverty, crime as well as lack of respect from learners. Lack of acknowledgement from DoE and leadership. Lack of self-development and empowerment opportunities.	Personal empowerment and development of educators	Educators are more motivated, committed and empowered at a personal and professional level.

**Figure 7.3: CMO configuration of mechanism with description of the micro context.**

As was highlighted in Chapter five (5.3.1), absence of mechanisms and causal powers, is often as important as their presence. A focus on absence and why certain change was not happening provided a useful deficit approach to identifying what needed to be in place for meaningful change to happen in the two pilot secondary schools. The absence of many of the key characteristics associated with effective schools resulted in the introduction of interventions and the exploration of mechanisms that would create these. Therefore the discussion below includes discussion around absence, and the nature of what was required in order to create the environment to support change, in particular to support quality teaching and learning. This discussion also echoes questions raised by Hopkins (2001b) and Taylor (2007 (forthcoming)) of what essential mechanisms need to be in place initially to support the

development of other mechanisms, as well as what mechanisms need to be in place to enable non-governmental organisations to make a meaningful contribution.

Given that the *Learning Schools Initiative* has concentrated on identifying school and to some extent classroom level needs and piloting interventions to address these, I have assumed the approach of focusing primarily on mechanisms at the schools level and introduced and discussed initiative (or intervention) level interventions within this context. This is except for 7.3.6 where I have focused on both intervention and school level mechanisms in the form of accountability and support. The other discussion is conceptualised within the other five mechanisms identified at a school level in figure 7.2 above. Context has played an important role in influencing the mechanisms identified as key triggers for school development and change. Context was also identified as a critical influence by the participants and is therefore given due attention in the discussion of each mechanism. The presentation and discussion of each mechanism is divided into three sections: (i) introduction, (ii) school context and the identification of mechanisms and (iii) discussion. It is acknowledged, that evaluative research is primarily theory driven (Pawson & Tilley, 2004). While, as mentioned, the *Learning Schools Initiative* was not structured around a theory-driven, CMO approach, this study used theory as its point of departure (Chapter four) and focuses on the identification of mechanisms related to this that are confirmed through an evaluative study of the *Learning Schools Initiative*. The sections below do not revisit all of the theory that is relevant to each change mechanism, but instead highlight key aspects that particularly relate to the findings of this study. The way in which a programme (or initiative) is structured to bring about development and change also emerged as critical during this study and this is discussed in section 7.4.

### **7.3 Key development and change mechanisms in the *Learning Schools Initiative* initial pilot schools**

#### **7.3.1 Supportive organisational culture and structures**

##### **7.3.1.1 Introduction**

This section will discuss the concepts of organisational culture and structure (i.e. the structure of time and work) as separate but related mechanisms. These mechanisms relate directly to the three major elements identified by Hopkins (1996:41) in his framework for

school improvement: the givens, the strategic dimension and the capacity building dimension (discussed in 4.4.2). The “givens” refer to the essentials that shape the school as an organisation – the core values, vision, mission, etc. which underpin a school’s culture. According to Hopkins (1996) it is often at this level that resistance to change is experienced. Given the legacy of South African education and training and the vast number of dysfunctional (Taylor, 2007 (forthcoming)) or “ineffective” (Hopkins, 2001b:162) schools, many school development initiatives in this country follow an organisational development approach (Roberts 2001), often presented within the context of whole school development (Bayona & Sadiki, 1999), that focuses on addressing the organisational culture and environment necessary to support quality teaching and learning. While this approach is often criticised for its lack of focus and impact on what happens in the classroom (Muller & Roberts, 2000) it addresses issues related to the basic functionality of schools that are lacking or seriously impaired in the majority of South African schools. Addressing issues related to the development and sustainability of a culture that supports change, nurtures relationships and enhances and supports quality teaching and learning is a priority not just for “ineffective” schools, but can also benefit “low-achieving” and “good” schools (Hopkins, 1996; Lawrence Lightfoot, 1983). It must ultimately, however, be the priority outcome of all school directed initiatives to ultimately impact on the core business of schooling i.e. teaching and learning and to make substantial improvements in this area. The reality faced by many South African schools is that challenges, such as violence, abuse, malnourishment and social welfare support, impact dramatically on the extent to which a school can focus on its core business (see 2.4 and 4.8.4). This entails a broader development focus than just that of the classroom. Hopkins (1996:44) supports this and states that the introduction and sustainability of change in teaching behaviour needs to be supported by, in all cases, some modification to school culture.

In addition to encouraging the development of a school culture to support change and development, attention needs to be given to the other two dimensions identified by Hopkins (1996) – the strategic dimension and the capacity building dimension. While these three elements are interrelated they require different interventions that result in triggering mechanisms associated with “reculturing” and “restructuring” (Hargreaves & Fullan, 1998:129).

### 7.3.1.2 School context and the identification of mechanisms

#### 7.3.1.2.1 School culture

Following preliminary research the GMSAF team took the decision to follow in the footsteps of other school development initiatives (Imbewu; JET; TESM) and to adopt organisational development approaches to school development (Dalin, 1998; Davidoff, 2002; Harris et al., 2003; Schmuck & Runkel, 1985; Senge et al., 2000). This approach provided scope to address the psychological climate of change (see 4.9.3) and commenced with an exploration of each school's culture through a vision-crafting weekend. While these vision-crafting sessions provided an opportunity for the schools to revisit their core values, vision and mission and to explore some of the underlying dynamics and potential within their schools they merely touched the tip of the iceberg in terms of changing school culture.

It was found that what the vision crafting sessions did was to refocus the schools on their core business of teaching and learning, to encourage Bonthoogte to revisit its vision and mission and to provide an opportunity for Masihambe to develop a vision and mission for the newly merged school. The feedback from each school following the vision crafting sessions indicated that both schools found the sessions to be most beneficial in that they provided opportunity for deepening of relationships, an audit of the schools' problems, a revisiting of school and personal vision and a renewing of confidence in terms of what they as a school were capable of. In addition staff indicated that the vision crafting workshop "... *framed the process that allowed every role player to become part of a long-term project*" and the division of staff into focus area groups that developed mini visions contributed to a sense of empowerment in terms of individual staff members being able to contribute towards the overall school vision.

The process of "reculturing" (Hargreaves & Fullan, 1998:129) is acknowledged as a complex (Senge et al., 2000) process that requires an understanding of what culture involves (Davidoff, 2002). This complexity was highlighted in the *Learning Schools Initiative* pilot schools. It was only as the initiative progressed that some of the "values and norms of the school" (Davidoff, 2002: 52), together with the "unwritten rules which determine and establish a set of behaviours, a particular way of being, relating, working, working in the context of the school" (*ibid.*), began to surface. Some of the more specific issues relating to this are discussed in 7.3.3 and 7.3.4. In some ways the school cultures were vastly different, however, in others they were similar.

Bonthoogte's culture still, to a large degree, had teaching and learning at the centre of school activities. There was, however, a pervasive script of negativity (Harber & Davies, 1997) and resignation. Many educators felt overwhelmed by things that they felt were beyond their control (e.g. discipline, vandalism, inconsistent leadership, etc.) and this impacted on how they experienced their work (see 7.3.3). The unspoken rule of double standards (see 7.3.2) and lack of trust of management (see 7.3.2) further contributed to this negativity. Some of the women educators indicated that there was a culture of male dominance and the statement was made that *"to me it's like the school is still a man's world, not everyone is informed equally"*. It appeared that educators generally operated in a "silo" (England, 2004) environment where they taught, interacted with one another when necessary, and generally minded their own business. The collaborative culture introduced by the *Learning Schools Initiative* challenged this culture and many staff members welcomed the opportunity to work with their colleagues and to contribute towards achieving their school vision. The 2005 Evaluation Report highlighted that the most important changes, experienced in all the schools, were improvement in staff morale and collegiality and the increased responsibility taken by all staff in the well being of the school. This was reinforced in the Restorative Practice workshop where some of the unspoken rules and negative patterns of interaction (e.g. nick names and lack of classroom supervision) were addressed.

Masihambe's culture was linked to chaos and disruption where teaching and learning happened in between. While the school essentially presented a very positive script in that most educators were confident that they could make a difference in their school and in the lives of their learners and made a good effort in contributing towards this, there was no established culture of centrality of teaching and learning. There was evidence of a strong sense of collegiality amongst many of the staff members and this was particularly evident on the Umlambo camp; however, the interviews conducted by both myself and the investigatory leadership programme researcher revealed that not everyone felt part of this extended "family". This could partly be attributed to the schools history (the merging of two separate schools) together with the actions of leadership (see 7.2.1).

In many ways the infrastructure problems faced by Masihambe (e.g. lack of chairs and desks), constant vandalism, etc. also hindered the creation of a supportive teaching and learning environment – however particularly concerning were the results of the educator attendance survey (see 7.3.3 and Vol. 2, appendix 14) and the constant flow of educators in and out the school during the GMSAF team visits. The investigatory leadership report made particular reference to the physical state of the school: *" although the school is in a good brick building, the many broken windows and other signs of neglect detract from the general*

*impression the school makes ...the staff room was very untidy and pointed to a lack of pride in their surroundings*" (GM South Africa Foundation, 2006: 1). Although meetings with the focus areas indicated that the staff (particularly the infrastructure group) were doing much to improve the school infrastructure by replacing windows and attempting to educate learners to use dustbins, etc. the school often appeared untidy and the Language Across the Curriculum ACE lecturer was shocked by things such as faeces on the stairs when she made her school visits.

Both schools lacked a culture of planning, rigour and problem-solving. This varied in degrees in that Masihambe appeared to lack these more than Bonthoogte. Masihambe's focus areas worked within a "non-writing" culture where written documents were seldom presented at meetings, school inventories were nowhere to be seen and most planning took place without pen and paper. However, although Bonthoogte's focus areas always had the right files and documents to present at meetings, evidence indicated that Masihambe's focus areas were in some respects achieving more than Bonthoogte's. An educator from Bonthoogte stated that *"although the school looks good on paper to the final process and output – you will have a problem there"*.

Despite the lack of rigour there was talk of reflection in Masihambe. This was captured in statements such as: *"we had an introspection meeting to consider what was happening in our focus area – but this did not improve the attendance quota"* and *"control and regular checkups of the process are important together with reflection – always coming back to see where you are because people sometimes forget to do things"*.

Bonthoogte, however, seemed to work on the basis that "there is one way of doing things" which threatened the process of school development. Although the initial principal had a good understanding of learning organisations and development which was demonstrated in mention that *"the principal must embrace evaluation, development and school effectiveness as a core process in the organisation"* and *"whole school development is the continuous process of renewing, revitalising, developing, growing, sustaining and making better and improving the school in its entirety – making sure the school is a dynamic institution in society preparing its citizens or its learners to become responsible citizens who are able to meet the challenges of the new economy and also to be productive in the market place"*, this was not evident in the school culture.

A serious issue in both schools was not only the culture of silence but also the culture of non- or problematic communication. Educators of both schools indicated that not all staff members

were equally informed of events and decisions. This has already been alluded to above with the statement that male educators are more privileged to information. In Masihambe the principal's group of "friends" were more privileged to information. Educators at both schools indicated that a culture of sharing information on a regular basis was required to support the school development process and also to enhance staff relationships. Communication at all levels needs to be clear, open and regular. In addition both schools need to work on a culture of trust and confidentiality linked to communication with management (see 7.2.1).

Thus, although the vision crafting session set the tone and momentum for changing organisational culture and the Umlambo camp, motivation sessions, restorative practice workshops and leadership workshops contributed towards this process they were not sufficient. In a reflection session with Valerie Dovey and Sue Davidoff, following the Restorative Practice and Leadership workshops, the following was noted by the GMSAF team:

- ❑ The organisational culture (unspoken rules) plays a big role in terms of what happens in a school.
- ❑ Focusing on the school culture is crucial for the *Learning Schools Initiative*. Should consider individual interviews with the staff to get an idea of what the culture of silence is all about.
- ❑ Need small focus groups to unpack issues – investigate what would take schools forward. Ask educators "what part can I play?"
- ❑ All initiatives need to recognise the psycho-socio environment of the school.
- ❑ Many schools have scripts of resignation.
- ❑ Vision building needs to be linked to school culture.
- ❑ Need to focus on bringing the unconscious to the conscious.
- ❑ Values need to infiltrate all aspects of the school.

Following this session the GMSAF team realised that a much more intense, consistent and continuous approach was required to impact on and change school culture. It is envisioned that part of this process would involve determining core values, unpacking the existent school culture, and planning and monitoring the schools growth of a positive culture that not only supports school development, but also enhances quality teaching and learning. Determining practical ways of integrating values and vision into day-to-day school activities, relationships and individual performance is important in the sense that the abstract needs to become observable and to some extent tangible.

### 7.3.1.2.2 School structures

The *Learning Schools Initiative* also confirms that “restructuring” (Hargreaves & Fullan, 1998: 129) is particularly important if development is to be sustained in the long term. This “restructuring” includes what Hopkins (1996:46) refers to as the “strategic dimension and relates to the practical structural changes that need to take place to accommodate development and change. To a certain extent “capacity building” (Hopkins 1996:46) seems to form part of “restructuring” but also seems to go beyond it to address additional factors.

Hopkins states that in order for school improvement to become a reality school structures need to be adapted accordingly (Hargreaves & Hopkins, 1991). Given the work overload and other challenges voiced by the educators in this study one of the biggest threats to school development aimed at involving the whole school community is that of time. Many of the participants made reference to the difficulty of finding time, not only to take part in school development, but also in terms of finding time to carry out duties associated with the core business of teaching and learning (see Vol. 2, appendix 17). Many educators made reference to the extent and burden of the workload that they were carrying this is seen in statements such as “...we are under tremendous pressure in terms of school workload” and “we would like to spend more time planning, but are hampered by workload.”

It was evident that, given the heavy workload of educators, which is aggravated by recent curriculum and related assessment changes (the most recent being the introduction of the new National Curriculum Statement at the FET level in 2006), educators feel overwhelmed and time has become a precious commodity (see 7.3.3). Hargreaves & Hopkins’ (1991) observation, that if there is not an element of a school’s activities dedicated to development then change will not be sustained, is particularly apparent here. If whole school development is to involve staff members then there ideally needs to be dedicated time blocked off in the school timetable to deal with school development. It is acknowledged that school time tables are already extended to the maximum and that it is difficult to fit in additional activities, however there needs to be a specific time known as school development time. This could be time blocked off on one afternoon every second week after school where staff stay behind for an hour or so to plan and work on school development activities. A dynamic principal who inspires and encourages all staff to attend after school sessions will be needed to support the latter process. In addition to time for planning in their groups, the opportunity needs to be created for the whole staff to share their plans and to gain an overall picture of what is happening in the school. Such a session can also provide opportunity for the groups to troubleshoot together, to identify cross-links and to integrate specific activities (e.g.

fundraising). These meetings could also provide an opportunity for the groups together with leadership to monitor the school development projects and process. The need for planning and other meetings and incorporating the process into the school activities was expressed by a number of educators in the two schools (see Vol. 2, appendix 17). Educators also made the suggestion that the school should identify the quieter periods in its cycle (i.e. during the beginning of exams and towards the end of the year) and then allocate specific time to school development during these periods.

The *Learning Schools Initiative* followed a cyclical process similar to that used in most school development programmes (Christie & Potterton, 1997; Hargreaves et al., 1989; Hopkins, 1996) that commenced with a school audit (needs analysis) making use of a reworked version of the whole school evaluation criteria. The process then moved into a project planning approach (that included action plans with targets, tasks, responsibilities and timeframes) (see Chapter 6 and 7.4). A problem analysis component was also later introduced into this planning cycle. This was introduced based on the observation that many groups were identified that had jumped head first into a project without first making sure that the proposed project presented a solution to the identified problem. For example, there can be many reasons why the parents don't attend parent meetings: the meeting times may not suit them, they may not receive a message or invitation from the learner, they may have a fear of secondary schools and feel intimidated by the educators, they may fear that they will be asked to contribute money, etc. Educators were therefore encouraged to work hard on identifying the possible causes and solutions to the problem before commencing with project planning (see Vol. 2, appendix 6). This was not an easy process as many of the problems faced by the schools are complex and require a huge amount of problem solving ability and energy. However, many of the groups, especially those in Masihambe, rose to this challenge and developed some innovative solutions to their problems, i.e. a health box in which learners were able to confidentially place their problems linked to a social worker who attended the school once a week, the announcement of important school events at local churches in the community, etc.

The lack of a culture of rigour and planning is a potential threat to (i) following a meaningful school development process, and (ii) to the sustainability of whole school development in both schools. If whole school development is to be taken seriously then the groups need to actively plan their projects with pen and paper. This is not only important for planning but also for monitoring individual projects and the overall school development process. The GMSAF team drew the various projects together into a school development plan and presented this to each school. Schools ultimately need to be able to undertake this

consolidation and integration process themselves. The principal of Bonthoogte expressed the need for more strategic planning sessions together with the need to monitor the projects himself in his statement that *"I would like to have in my office for everybody else to see a progress chart of every single project and how it is ticked off – completed. Although just on paper- it helps everybody to keep focused on the dream"*.

Following the Umlambo camps each school was presented with a large white board divided into eight of the nine whole school development focus areas. As discussed in 6.7.2.1.2 the area of *Basic Functionality* was excluded as this seemed to be an overarching summative area. These boards were displayed in each school's staff room. Although initially there was some evidence that these boards were being used this diffused over time. There appeared to be little reinforcement of this planning tool by management together with no joint meetings where progress could be reported and monitored.

The recording of school development progress is important for another reason – that of identifying achievements and for acknowledging both the groups and individual members that have contributed to this achievement. Again, due to a lack of joint planning and consultation many of the groups were not aware of the other groups' achievements. Some of the groups had long-term complex projects and were despondent that other groups were achieving things while they still had a long way to go (e.g. setting up the school library). These groups were encouraged to identify achievable short-term goals that they could "tick off" along the way.

Some of the educators highlighted the need for incentives that would encourage staff to participate in the school development process. Scheerens (1992:104) identifies "achievement stimulating incentives" as a school improvement lever – the challenge is to find the right incentives. The nature of possible school development incentives needs a great deal of exploration. Some of the staff referred to the IQMS component that requires educators to provide evidence of participating in school development as a possible incentive. However, the rewards of this are not directly observable – especially since the IQMS performance measurement component is not as yet being authentically implemented. It appears that, at least presently, schools need to work on developing their own incentives linked to whole school development achievements. Linked to achievements is the concept of celebration of achievements.

As the project planning and project implementation phase progressed within each school it also became apparent, as differentiated by Hargreaves & Hopkins (1991), that there was a

difference between maintenance and development activities. There was a need for structures to develop and activities to be devoted to new projects and development. Simultaneously there was a need for new procedures, policies and structures that evolved from the projects to be included into the school's maintenance and day-to-day activities. For example, once a school asset and repairs inventory has been designed and implemented this needs to be integrated into the school's activities. Some staff stated that once they had drafted the required policy they were faced with the challenge of implementing it. They often faced the difficulty of integrating the policy implementation requirements into the school's culture, structures and procedures.

### 7.3.1.3 Discussion

This study indicates that "reculturing" and "restructuring" (Hargreaves & Fullan, 1998:129) are important mechanisms that support and sustain school development and change. In essence these are themselves overarching mechanisms that are comprised of other elements (or mechanisms) that give rise to and support change. For example a positive school culture that has transformational potential is comprised of elements such as those discussed above, i.e. core values, inspirational vision and mission, regular and transparent communication, trust, reflection, etc. If a school development initiative is to bring about change then school culture needs to both support and sustain the rationale, motivation and impetus for change.

Similarly, as can be determined from the experiences of the *Learning Schools Initiative* and the data generated in this study, school development needs to be supported by structures and processes within the school such as specific time identified and set aside for school development and reflection on progress, planning templates and procedures, events or opportunities to record, acknowledge and celebrate successes, etc. Many of these in turn need to be embodied in a school culture committed to rigour, documentation, reflection, acknowledgment of individual and team performance, etc.

While school culture and structure need to support and sustain school development, there is also great potential for a school development process to impact on both the culture and structure of a school (Harris, 2001; Hopkins, 1996). That is given that other mechanisms such as effective leadership (see 7.3.2.) are in place to support this. The very nature of development involves taking stock, moving forward (changing) and reviewing within the context of an action learning cycle (Senge et al., 2000). A school development initiative must be designed in such a way as to have maximum impact on school culture and structure and

to see these as mechanisms that initiate, support and sustain change. School development initiatives therefore need to be aware of the intricacies of the school development planning and implementation process and the relationship between school development and the transformation of school culture. Following this, initiatives need to recognise culture and structure as key mechanisms that need to be developed to support and sustain the whole school development process and other processes aimed at improving the quality of teaching and learning in a school.

### **7.3.2 Effective leadership and management**

#### **7.3.2.1 Introduction**

Effective school leadership is identified as a key requirement for school effectiveness and appears at the top end of the scale in school effectiveness studies (Macbeath & Mortimore, 2001; Sammons et al., 1994; Scheerens, 1992). It is also highlighted as an important feature of “resilient” (Potterman & Christie, 1998) schools and a critical factor in schools facing challenging circumstances (Ansell, 2004). This study reinforces the premise that real change and development linked to quality education needs to be driven and supported by committed and professional leaders who display high levels of integrity. While this leadership needs to be in place at the helm of the organisation it also needs to be encouraged and displayed at various levels throughout the school community.

#### **7.3.2.2 School context and the identification of mechanisms**

The *Learning Schools Initiative* did not initially set out to address leadership. Participating schools were selected according to their status in the community together with their fairly sound reputations and essential evidence that they had reached and maintained a basic level of functionality. The GMSAF team anticipated that leadership issues and needs would be revealed through the whole school evaluation baseline analysis. However, as the initiative progressed it became evident that there were issues amongst top leadership at both schools that required urgent attention before school development could take root and strengthen these schools. The sensitivity required and risk involved in uncovering leadership concerns did not manifest naturally through the baseline needs analysis process (see 6.8.3.1), but were instead revealed through interaction with the school staff, observation of school activities and primarily through the in-depth interviews conducted in this study. As the initiative progressed, a leadership component was introduced to develop and support the school leadership. This unfortunately happened towards the end of this study and there was

insufficient time to monitor and evaluate the long-term effects of this intervention in the schools.

The top leadership issues (which are discussed in more detail later in this section) were very different for each school, but had the same effect of threatening the implementation and sustainability of whole school development as a school community initiative. Of more concern, the effects of problems at a top leadership level were not confined to the *Learning Schools Initiative* but permeated all aspects of the school. These effects hampered the creation and sustainability of a conducive teaching and learning environment, threatened the overall effectiveness of the school and ultimately impacted negatively on the quality of education offered by the school. It must be acknowledged that both schools are situated in extremely challenging socio-economic contexts and that the problems faced by each school are complex and demanding. In addition to this it must be acknowledged that the school principals received little guidance and support from the District Department of Education or other government departments (e.g. the Department of Social Development) (see 7.3.6), however, despite this there did appear to be essential ways in which the leadership could have contributed more effectively towards creating a more positive teaching and learning environment in each school and towards supporting the *Learning Schools Initiative*. The leadership context of each school is presented below.

There is no doubt that the history of a school and the particular journey that a principal (and other leadership members) has travelled with a school influences the way in which they are perceived, received, respected and treated by a school community (Fullan, 2001a). It also affects the way in which the principal interacts with the school staff. In my interview with the principal of Bonthoogte he revealed that he had been reluctant to trust his staff members to contribute towards the development of the school, or, it would seem, to involve them in other routine school activities. In his words he had a "*phobia of asking people to do things, because I thought I was going to burden them*". A candid discussion with one of the focus area groups (where they switched off my tape recorder and declared they were now going to tell me the truth about why the school functioned the way it did) revealed that the principal had risen through the ranks of the school and that many of the current SMT members had been in higher positions to the principal prior to his appointment as deputy principal, and then principal. The SMT therefore expected "special privileges" and for him to "turn a blind eye" to certain of their activities such as leaving school early. This information was reinforced by the fact that none of Bonthoogte's SMT members attended an SMT school leaders workshop organised for the Learning School Initiative schools. The principal made a brief appearance at this workshop and apologised for their absence. However, contrary to this most of the

SMT members did attend the Umlambo team building and planning camp and a group of young female educators did not attend. The leadership programme's investigatory report (GM South Africa, 2006) on Bonthoogte further revealed some of the dynamics at play in this school: "the staff was very reluctant to speak when they were asked whether views can be freely expressed without fear of intimidation or victimization. After much cajoling they spoke but were very guarded. While the SMT of this school were confident that staff were free to say what they wanted to, staff had a different impression. Part of the staff's concern revolved around lack of confidentiality on the part of management in a culture where "talk in corridor" was very much alive

The vision crafting session, however, changed the Bonthoogte principal's perception of the willingness of his staff members, particularly the younger staff, to participate in improving the school. When he saw how enthusiastically and competently they participated in the school development planning process the principal stated that he decided to make a conscious effort to try and change his way of working with them. In identifying the most significant change that had taken place in the school since the commencement of the project he said "*it is being able to call on any person or group in the staff to deal with a problem in which they are perhaps a little more familiar with. It is also knowing that you can engage more people on an issue or a challenge or a project without it being your sole responsibility*".

As the process progressed this principal tried to move from an authoritarian position of leadership to one that was more participatory and democratic. During a visit to the school he showed me a diagram he had compiled linking the eight whole school evaluation focus areas to the school management organogram and elaborated on how he was attempting to allocate activities that fell within focus areas to those specific groups. This approach had its benefits in the sense that more committed educators did rise to the challenge and did organise certain activities (e.g. letters to the feeder schools regarding learner skills, motivational speakers for the learners, the valedictory service, a newsletter to the parents, etc.). Things, however, became more difficult when activities involved finances or complex issues such as vandalism. Tensions also arose between school management who were allocated specific duties and responsibilities and post level one educators who had no formal authority but were responsible for achieving specific goals. This was particularly evident in the infrastructure and resource focus area who had plans to upgrade the sports fields, repair the school toilets, erect a fence, etc. but had no formal budget for this and no formal avenue for channelling funds. It also became apparent that the post level one educators who were prepared to take on extra responsibility soon found themselves overloaded while other less enthusiastic educators continued as usual. It was also inevitable that questions around

incentives and position should arise in this situation where post level one educators were doing extra work and not receiving acknowledgement for this in the form of remuneration and/or position.

Thus, while complaints were heard amongst the groups that the principal was still too authoritarian in his general school leadership and management approach, his approach to whole school development seemed to demonstrate an attempt to adopt a more participatory approach. In my initial interview with him he discussed his vision for the focus areas in similar terms to those that the GMSAF used to reflect its relationship with the schools, e.g. "ownership", "empowerment", "responsibility", etc. His initial vision seemed to be for the focus area groups to take control of the process and to run with it of their own accord. He, however, simultaneously stressed that the focus areas should not feel that they have to do everything by themselves and should take on more of a planning and evaluators role allowing the school administration and management to do the bulk of the project work. This message, however, never seemed to have filtered down to the focus areas, or perhaps it was not a workable alternative.

In my second interview with the Bonthoogte principal he spoke about leadership needing a hands on approach to managing the groups and wanted to implement a system by which he could monitor and evaluate each group's progress. This monitoring system and more hands on approach never seemed to materialise except in the form of the principal holding meetings with the focus area groups as the need arose to deal with certain events and activities. A number of times he spoke about organising meetings or workshops to co-ordinate the groups planning so as to present the GMSAF with a WSD plan or to address particular working issues but these never took place. As the initiative progressed it became evident that top leadership in the schools needed assistance on how to lead and manage the whole school development process. This was highlighted in a direct request from the principal of Bonthoogte for "*mentoring on how to oversee the development process and how to guide the projects and troubleshoot*".

Initially there was potential for working with the principal of Bonthoogte and gradually involving the SMT in the whole school development process, and through this addressing some of the problematic leadership dynamics. This was, however, undermined by the suspension of the school principal by the Department of Education at the beginning of 2004 for not following correct protocol in a learner disciplinary procedure, and ultimately by his resignation at the beginning of 2006. The suspension of the principal was highlighted by a number of the focus area groups in the 2004 interviews as having "*impacted negatively on*

*the staff and influenced the whole school development process". A more dramatic effect of the suspension of the principal was the influence that this had on the learners. Staff felt disempowered in that they no longer had recourse against problematic learners and that the discipline situation was out of control and impacting negatively on what took place in class (see 7.2.3.). The appointment of the new deputy principal (an HOD who had taken over from the retired deputy at the beginning of 2006) as acting principal presented a new set of problematic dynamics. It was revealed at the restorative practice workshop that a core group of educators had not attended this workshop, as they did not support the appointment of the acting principal.*

Leadership and management of the whole school development process cannot be separated from the overall ethos of school leadership and management. Double standards in the handling of certain members of staff did not go unnoticed: *"leadership is not always visible, they give an instruction but do not follow up. Post level one teachers is 'moeg om uit te skull te word' (tired of being told off) while nothing happens to management, while management is not doing their job...". This lack of disciplining of management staff members together with the lack of role modelling by management had negative ripples throughout the staff: "you find a situation where I'm sitting back and I look at you post level two – you should be in your classroom – the kids are waiting for you. So if you are a post level two person doing that why must I be in my classroom?"*

Staff were also demoralised when the morning following a particularly positive motivation session organised by the GMSAF and attended by the majority of the staff they were all "slated" by the principal in the staff room for bad time management. The lack of follow through or consistency was seen in other activities and in the overall school development planning and monitoring process. For example many staff identified the Umlambo camp as being one of the most significant interventions of the *Learning Schools Initiative* especially in the light of the suspension of the principal, however, disappointment was expressed that this was never extended and reinforced in the school. The following are extracts from the staff nearly a year following the camp:

- *The esprit de corps that was generated from that weekend, the strength or the momentum is not completely dead yet, it is there – it is just that we must find ways and means of rekindling that fire now.*
- *One of the downsides of it is that we probably would have had to have small Umlambo's after the big one to revisit our vision and our strategies to date and from a management point of view I really feel we should have done that.*

- *Umlambo was great, lots of money spent, like I say whatever was done there was never truly implemented so you can't see what the positive spin offs were.*

Following through what was initiated at Umlambo was particularly important given the problematic relationships at Bonthoogte (discussed in 7.2.4.). The staff feedback from the follow up Restorative Practice workshops was positive and again provided an inroad for leadership to address these issues. However, again it is up to leadership to drive the process and to bring about positive relational and other changes in the school that support positive discipline and other factors that impact on teaching and learning.

The impact of history was still fresh in the corridors of Masihambe as the school had only recently been formed from the merging of two schools in the immediate vicinity. The principal of the newly merged school had previously been principal of the smaller of these two schools. The other school that formed part of the merger had been without a principal for a few years as the staff had ousted the previous principal. While the new principal brought a highly motivated staff with him he faced the challenge of working with "inherited" staff members who were not used to reporting or responding to authority. The situation was aggravated by the fact that the new school had no Head of Department (HOD) positions and only two deputy principals. Eight HOD positions were created in mid 2006, however there was dissatisfaction on the part of certain staff that had been loyal to the principal for many years in their previous school and felt that they should have been promoted. These staff members began a process of silent resistance and lack of participation in all school development activities.

The principal of Masihambe is very dynamic and charismatic with a result that many local institutions and organisations are initially attracted to working with the school. The result of this is what Bryk et al. (1998, as cited in Fullan 2001a:21) refer to as the "Christmas Tree" problem where a variety of *ad hoc* unrelated projects run at the school. It was hoped that the *Learning Schools Initiative* would provide a framework for organising and co-ordinating most of these initiatives. There is therefore a manifest sense of energy amongst a core group of staff that is unfortunately not channelled and cultivated to its potential. Since Masihambe did not initially have an SMT, the dynamics involved in the diffusion of activities to the focus area groups was less complicated than was the case of Bonthoogte. From the outset the principal adopted a participatory leadership and management approach that involved the full devolution of responsibility for various school activities to the various focus area groups. However, as the initiative progressed the GMSAF team became concerned that this participatory approach and easy delegation of tasks to other staff members was problematic

in that the principal did not seem to be in control or steering from the helm. The investigatory leadership report (GM South Africa Foundation, 2006) confirms this in the statement that “the principal left the arrangements of the interview in the hands of a post level one educator and there is some doubt whether all staff members took her seriously. Evidence of this was the fact that not all staff members felt a need to attend the interview. Some came in dribs and drabs and some left the interview early without offering any explanation for their premature departure”.

The Masihambe principal's pride in the sense of ownership and empowerment of his staff was expressed in statements such as : *“what the programme has done is to inject a sense of ownership and responsibility on the part of the educators”* and *“I am so excited because it (the initiative) has unearthed wonderful talent and ability that has been displayed by a number of educators in the school”*.

However, some of the staff members, like the GMSAF team, were concerned about the extent to which this delegation of authority went. My 2005 interview with the one of the focus areas in Masihambe revealed that this group was particularly frustrated with the school management but particularly with the principal who they felt was not steering the SGB as he should. This was embodied in statements such as the following *“he's (the principal) the one that should see to it that when there are problems in the SGB he should be the one who is responsible for leading”* and *“I've been put in a position where I've been playing the part of the chairman and the principal as well and I feel it's totally wrong, and I'm also in an awkward position”*.

Thus, while some of the staff members in the groups seemed willing to accept more responsibility and authority this needed to be done in a controlled and organised manner. There were also clearly duties – such as steering the SGB – that could not be delegated to post level one staff. While the principal acknowledged that it was important to recognise and capitalise of the different strengths of the educators in his statement that *“you will understand that we tend to complement one another very well. I may not be strong in one aspect but someone else may be strong in another so that is exactly what we do in the subcommittee”*, some educators did not feel that this was been done. They felt that the principal had a group of “friends” who he drew on for support and who he allocated certain tasks to. Specific reference was made of the allocation of management tasks to this group of “friends” above management. Educators not in this group stated that they felt excluded and that their talents were not being used. The investigatory leadership programme report (GM South Africa Foundation, 2006:2) discusses staff concerns about “openness” and states “generally

teachers felt they had to be very careful in what they say. They did not like the style of management (of the new SMT) and alleged that certain individuals, leaders and learners acted as spies for the SMT".

While proposed and planned meetings related to whole school evaluation activities seldom took place, unless insisted on and driven by the GMSAF team, the lack of meetings in the school appeared to be a general problem and the comment was made that the principal does not like meetings and therefore avoids them. The investigatory leadership programme report (GM South Africa Foundation, 2006:3) states that "the principal does not chair meetings, but staff is allowed to appoint rotating chairmen". However, there were also reports that staff committed to meetings on paper and then did not attend.

The investigatory leadership programme report (GM South Africa Foundation, 2006) further revealed that that the staff was concerned that:

- *Decision-making was characterised by an ongoing "state of flux" and ad hoc planning.*
- *Consultation was not consistent in all decision making. They acknowledged that situations would arise in which they would not be consulted and in such situations trusted the SMT to make decisions on the part of the school. They, however, wanted to be informed regarding what decision had been taken.*
- *The chopping and changing of procedures which is a limiting factor.*
- *Quality assurance of teaching and learning (by HODs) is not up to scratch.*
- *Chronic educator absenteeism is affecting the school negatively and no action is being taken in this regard.*
- *There is constant disruption to the school timetable due to managerial decisions.*

However, the overall feeling of staff, as indicated in the investigatory leadership programme report (*ibid.*) seems to be that they are hopeful that once essential issues have been sorted out the SMT has the potential to effect change.

The leadership development workshop facilitated by Sue Davidoff exemplified many of the leadership and management issues prevalent at Masihambe. Permission was obtained from the Department of Education for the schools to attend this workshop on a school day. Despite the fact that this should have been business as usual, at 08h30 only twenty two out of the forty one staff members were present. The final attendance grew to thirty four. Some staff members left during the course of the day (especially after 14h00 when the school day ended) without excusing themselves and showing a total disregard for the school leadership.

Frank discussions were held with the principal regarding the lack of attendance and early departure of staff members. The following day he phoned the GMSAF manager requesting an urgent meeting with the GMSAF team and requesting support to deal with these issues. A particular request was for advice on how to deal with the resistant group of staff that were unhappy that they had not made it to the SMT. Sue Davidoff's report on the leadership training states "the principal is open to learning, though seems to lack abilities to follow through and to be consistent with his staff. I would recommend that he has individual one-to-one mentoring" (Davidoff, 2006b: 2).

At a secondary leadership level it was apparent in both schools that there were post-level one educators who displayed strong leadership potential. The principals identified the following important qualities and skills for a whole school development co-ordinator:

- ❑ *Leadership potential*
- ❑ *Good organisational skills*
- ❑ *The right drive/passion*
- ❑ *Not put off by people who don't want to get on board*
- ❑ *Respect*

Another characteristic that can be added to the above list is that of risk of unpopularity or even courage (Bellis, 2005a: 13). This was particularly seen in the school attendance study (see 6.8.4.5.) initiated by the whole school development co-ordinator of Masihambe. She was not afraid to publicly present the results to her school (including representatives of the SGB) at a whole school development planning session. This presentation had a major impact on the school community in that a different system of class rotation (i.e. the educators and not the learners rotate) was introduced as a starting measure to combat the absence of learners from class. It was unfortunate that this whole school development coordinator did not apply for an HOD post at her school and there was evidence that either her enthusiasm or power to drive the whole school development process in her school diminished towards the middle of 2006. There was not opportunity within this study to explore what the reasons for this were.

The principal of Masihambe was particularly proud of his whole school development co-ordinator and in my first interview stated: "*to say that I am happy (with her performance) would be an understatement. I do not know the correct adjective that I can use to describe how excited I am to see such a young energetic female staff member leading all the staff*

*members in the school. Whether you are a principal, whether you are a male educator, whether you are old, bottom line is that we are led by this lady!"*

Both whole school development co-ordinators took their roles very seriously, always arrived for meetings with the GMSAF, tried their best to drive the process within their schools and were committed to improving the quality of teaching and learning in their schools. Both principals trusted the whole school development co-ordinators with their roles and responsibilities and were outspoken about how impressed they were with the co-ordinators leadership and management abilities. However, both whole school development co-ordinators indicated that as post-level one educators they were not taken seriously by many of the staff members and lacked authority to call meetings, set deadlines and demand results. This was not for lack of trying, enthusiasm or respect but seemed to be directly related to the fact that they lacked positional authority. This was particularly an issue in Bonthoogte where the whole school development co-ordinator was requesting management to fulfil certain whole school development responsibilities. The difficulties faced by the whole school development co-ordinators are embodied in statements such as: *"I was doing it (reminding groups to meet), but I feel that the management must sometimes, because of my level. Because of the meetings at the beginning of the year we had regular meetings and I found that sometimes I had to remind my seniors. So I believe if management can make sure there is control"*.

This problem was also experienced by some of the focus area co-ordinators: *"it becomes kind of difficult when you are a post level one teacher at the same level to get people to do things, unless it's that you are normally friends"*.

The *Learning Schools Initiative's* experience at both of these pilot schools again highlights that effective leadership and management is a prerequisite for the introduction and sustainability of nearly all initiatives at a school level. The role of the principal as key change agent is critical (Fullan, 2001a). While teaching and learning based initiatives perhaps have more of a hit and miss approach, in that the enthusiasm of individual educators will ensure that pockets of success are experienced, they still ideally require sound instructional leadership at all levels in the school to have maximum impact. The type of leadership and management required for whole school development is in many ways no different to type of leadership and management linked to effective schools. Out of the list below compiled from interviews and presentations by the schools, only the last two items are specifically linked to whole school development and these could still be useful for a number of other school leadership and management activities.

- ❑ *The 'make up' and role of school principal is a key factor.*
- ❑ *The principal must embrace evaluation, development and school effectiveness.*
- ❑ *The leadership at the school must have capacity and must adopt an organisational learning and change management approach.*
- ❑ *The leadership and management must act as role models.*
- ❑ *Leadership must be visible.*
- ❑ *Leadership must have commitment.*
- ❑ *Participatory leadership is important.*
- ❑ *Management must be cooperative and encourage staff.*
- ❑ *The principal must be a motivator and an inspiration to people*
- ❑ *Encourage ownership of school and its activities.*
- ❑ *Good leadership isn't always leading, its allowing others to lead.*
- ❑ *Must be motivated by the principal as a leader.*
- ❑ *The principal must show unwavering support for the groups*
- ❑ *The principal must go out and advocate the entire programme and talk positively about it so everyone can realise the importance of it and the meaning it can have for the entire school.*

It cannot be denied that South African school principals must lead in very complex and difficult contexts that are not only influenced and shaped by socio-economic conditions but also by the history of our country. In some instances structure seems to be so positioned against change that agency has to be exceptionally inspirational, skilled and in instances unpopular and courageous in order to bring about change. While it was obvious that both principals had much head knowledge of change and leadership (the principal and deputy principal of Masihambe had attended the GMSAF leadership and management programme for school principals, while the initial principal of Bonthoogte was busy with his PhD in elearning linked to school leadership and management), mobilising, structuring and sustaining change within their schools seemed incredibly difficult. Both the initial principal of Bonthoogte and the principal of Masihambe requested support from the GMSAF in the form of mentoring and moral support.

### **7.3.2.3 Discussion**

Effective leadership is a key mechanism in any organisational change process. However, if leadership is to act as a change mechanism, then it needs to embody certain characteristics, approaches and to be equipped with specific skills and knowledge. One of the most

challenging areas for school leadership, apart from the socio-economic environment in which they work, appears to be staff relations, dynamics and power plays. Change involves addressing relationships and often changing the dynamic of these. These are discussed in more detail in 7.3.4. Transformational leadership places a particular emphasis on relationships (Higgs, 2003) and with managing and strengthening these within a change context. Covey (1990) describes transformational leadership with words such as developer, mentor, value clarifier, and exemplar and believes that this type of leadership supports the human need for meaning. School leadership needs to be empowered to be inspirational, create meaning and to manage human relationships and change. Leadership also needs to be supported by the Department of Education in additional areas that require the disciplining of staff who breach of their code of conduct (see 7.3.6).

Thus, while there obviously are school principals who already are in a position to facilitate change on their own without the assistance of an external agency (i.e. the Department of Education) there are other principals who have the potential but require development and support. The *Learning Schools Initiative* and other interventions such as the GMSAF Leadership and Management Programme indicate that training and workshops are not sufficient to develop leadership as a powerful mechanism for school change. Instead development processes that incorporate mentoring and support (possibly in the form of a critical friend) are required to nurture and develop school leaders.

The type of mentoring and support required by school principals is again the type of support required by the whole school development co-ordinators and other “invisible leadership” (Volmenc, 2004) especially in terms of involving other educators in school change and development. There is much commitment, enthusiasm, skill and talent amongst staff members that can be capitalised on and developed. This needs to be done in a way that involves school management and gives authority and recognition to the roles and responsibilities of “invisible” leaders with potential and passion. The principal is central in relation to developing others. This is illustrated in Maldonado & Lacey’s (2001:87) study where one of participants compares moral leadership to “leaders of jazz bands: they stand in the middle, listening, knowing the skills of all the members as well as their own skills, and therefore, they call forth the value and the talents of each person; this leads to harmony”.

A school’s core values, vision and mission (see 7.3.1) can create a positive ethos for the development and maintenance of an effective teaching and learning environment (Fullan, 2001a; Hopkins, 2001a; Macbeath & Mortimore, 2001). The principal and school management play an important role in creating and maintaining this environment. Essentially

the principal, supported by management, is the mediator of the school's values, vision and mission. In addition to displaying transformational leadership qualities they also need to display moral and ethical leadership qualities for as Kanungo & Mendonca (1998, as cited in Maldonado & Lacey, 2001:81) claim " it is a leader's ethical conduct guided by moral principles and integrity that gives legitimacy and credibility to the vision of the organisation". It is therefore vitally important that the school principal and management role model the school's values and display passion for and commitment to the school's vision and mission through supporting continuous learning and development. In South Africa many schools are still working hard towards their vision and mission by getting the basics in place. This process must be driven and supported by the school principal and school management. While a whole school co-ordinator can play an important and valuable role, the school principal and management must stand behind them every step of the way, by addressing staff on their behalf, authorising meetings and reinforcing the school development process. Encouraging ownership of school development and empowering and nurturing the leadership capacity of others has been identified as an important dimension of leadership in a culture of change (Fullan, 2001b). However management and staff must actively witness the principal's presence and drive if school development is to be taken seriously. This is particularly important for sustaining momentum and enthusiasm.

The principal and management, together with the whole school development co-ordinator (or SMT), need to carefully monitor the school development process, to identify logjams, to work on solutions with the relevant role players, to assist where applicable with practical project implementation, and very importantly - to give praise and acknowledgement where it is due.

In my interviews with the focus groups, one educator said, "*I kind of get the sense that there is a certain type of leadership that is needed for people to participate*". Sue Davidoff expanded on the concept of a "different" type of leadership in her report on the Leadership Development Sessions where she states:

*"So much that goes in the name of leadership development, development of leadership capacity, leadership training, focuses on aspects of leadership such as 'distributive leadership'; 'participatory leadership'; transformational leadership', etc. While all of these are important, they tend to lose sight of the most important dimensions of leadership which have to do with vision, passion, love, imagination, and a burning sense of commitment to the social and human dimension of education – and to the importance of leadership in this context. Thus current approaches tend to focus more on skills development and conceptual understandings of specific*

*paradigms rather than providing opportunities for people in leadership positions to be inspired to inspire – for themselves to undergo profound paradigm shifts through experiencing what it really means to lead into the future ” (Davidoff, 2006b: 6).*

Involving educators in school development is expecting a lot from people who are already working in difficult conditions (see 7.2.3.). In order to truly inspire and involve people in striving towards schools of excellence, South African school principals need to move beyond being managers (Bayona & Sadiki, 1999; Sterling & Davidoff, 2000) who focus on putting out fires and surviving in chaos to being leaders who inspire, motivate, create meaning for and restore their school communities. This is no easy task, especially given the impact of South Africa's historical context. Many principals themselves need inspiration, motivation, training and support to overcome the challenges they face so that they can gradually develop their schools into centres of quality teaching and learning. It is hoped that concerns such as those expressed by Williams (2001) regarding the lack of development opportunities for school leaders will be addressed through government initiatives such as the Leadership and Management ACE for school principals and other such initiatives.

### **7.3.3 Personal growth and meaning**

#### **7.3.3.1 Introduction**

The critical role of agency in school change is a key focus of contemporary school improvement initiatives. While the role of the school principal as key change agent is stressed (Fullan, 2001a), so is the role of every person as a change agent (Fullan, 1992). Senge's (1994) work on organisational learning also emphasises that it is the individual who is at the centre initiating and sustaining organisational change. Education is essentially about people who work together in different relational patterns towards education goals. The social nature of education is highlighted in the *Report of the Public Hearing on the Right to Basic Education* (HRC, 2006) together with the need to focus on educators who "...are undoubtedly the most important role-players within the education" as "...they are the people who spend huge amounts of time with our country's children and are responsible for ensuring that quality learning takes place successfully in the classroom" (HRC, 2006). The whole school development co-ordinator of Bonthoogte also identified the educators buy-in and motivation as prerequisites for change: *"...you are working with living matter and believe me I'm positive you can have the best motivational speakers – if that individual educator walks*

out there and shrugs it off and comes back here – if that person doesn't buy into the process nothing will change and that's what we find here". Thus, identifying mechanisms at the level of agency in social research is important as through engaging with these mechanisms, agency has the potential to transform structure (Archer, 1989, 1995) (see 5.4.7). Identifying the causal powers within agency that when triggered result in powerful mechanisms is important when considering the structure and impact of whole school development interventions. There are many mechanisms operational at the level of the individual that either support or constrain their participation in change processes. Archer (2000, 2003) highlights some of these and I refer to these in the discussion at the end of this section. Once triggered some of these mechanisms in turn stimulate other mechanisms. For example, finding meaning in activity (Frankl, 2004) can in turn motivate people and encourage commitment. Meaning can also be triggered through personal growth (Rogers, 1961) and in turn contribute further to personal growth. It is difficult to isolate the mechanisms that operate at the level of the individual in educational change and which mechanisms exactly trigger others. For the purposes of this study, based on my investigation of the *Learning Schools Initiative*, I focus on personal growth and meaning as the underlying mechanisms that in turn generate motivation, commitment and professionalism.

### **7.3.3.2 School context and the identification of mechanisms**

It is important that any initiative that attempts to involve the school community and particularly educators in school improvement needs to be aware of their needs and context and to target mechanisms that empower them in a variety of areas. While the principal of Bonthoogte stressed the importance of and insisted on 100% buy-in from staff members prior to entering into partnership with the GMSAF – it was evident as the programme progressed that much of this buy-in took place at a superficial rather than a meaningful level. Both schools also experienced the situation where staff would indicate on paper that they would attend workshops and meetings and then not arrive for these. This type of experience was echoed in the 2005 *Learning Schools Initiative* Evaluation Report which highlighted the disappointing discovery that many teachers seem to live a professionally schizophrenic life, whole heartedly and publicly endorsing responsible education practice on the one hand, and then acting with a distinct lack of professional commitment on the other.

Relevance and meaning are key change mechanisms at both the individual and school level (Armenakis & Harris, 2002; Frankl, 2004; Fullan, 2001a) (see 4.12). It was evident from my interviews and discussions with the educators together with observations of the school environment that any school improvement initiative must not only be meaningful and relevant

but also assist educators in finding practical workable solutions to some of the challenges that they face. The *Report of the Public Hearing on the Right to Basic Education* (HRC 2006:30) attributes the low the morale of educators to issues such as "...lack of career advancement and recognition and dissatisfaction with teaching conditions (e.g. working hours, workload, policy overload, lack of discipline in the classroom and lack of respect from learners)". In addition to identifying workload as a major challenge (see 7.3.2.) educators in this study echoed similar issues to those discussed in the *Report of the Public Hearing on the Right to Basic Education* and other contemporary research (see 4.9.4) which contribute to low morale and impacted negatively on their motivation to contribute towards improving their schools. Issues highlighted in this research were discipline, time management and stress, lack of parental support, vandalism and violence, and absenteeism. Each of these is discussed briefly below.

#### **7.3.3.2.1 Contextual challenges**

##### ***Discipline***

Discipline was particularly a problem for Bonthoogte that was situated in an area fraught with gangsterism and poor role modelling for learners. The suspension of the school principal in mid-2004 for not following correct disciplinary procedures and channels in dealing with a problematic learner had a negative effect of the school and staff. The educators felt disempowered and that they no longer had any recourse regarding discipline. Many expressed concern that the discipline situation in the school was getting out of control and that they had no way of addressing this as a school or as an educator in the classroom. This is embodied in statements such as: "*the behaviour has gone backwards and the children are not working as they used to and things like that. They feel they can't be disciplined*", "*we have a big problem with discipline – this impacts on any progress that may be made in other areas, we as teachers are struggling to regain control*" and "*the spirit among the teachers...we were totally ...I mean, I just became depressed, because I didn't know what to do. Our hands were chopped off. The department really and then the learners started to take over following the suspension of the principal*". In addition to feeling disempowered educators also felt that learners did not respect them and some expressed despair at ever being able to solve the discipline situation at the school and to gain control of the learners. Feelings of disempowerment and lack of respect and appreciation by learners impacted negatively on many educators' morale especially in relation to how motivated they were to offer quality education and to make a difference in the lives of learners.

At Masihambe discipline did not appear to be a major problem. There were, however, still rumours of corporal punishment being administered in the school. Masihambe educators, generally did not seem as despondent as the Bonthoogte educators although they also expressed concerns at the low levels of learner motivation to learn.

### ***Time management and stress***

Time management has already been touched on in section 7.3.1. Educators at both schools expressed this, not only as a hindrance in terms of undertaking school development projects, but also as a general problem that impacted on their day-to-day activities and in many instances resulted in high levels of stress. Time management was expressed as a threat to achievement, not only in relation to school development, but also generally in terms of offering quality education. Educators highlighted that problems related to time management included *"...having so many things we find it hard to juggle"*, and the introduction of new curriculum and other policy: *"see, there are two new things that we must do now, this thing and the new curriculum ... there's a lot things to handle now. It's also new for us and we struggle to handle all this stuff at one time"*

Educators at both schools expressed the need for assistance in this area and a time management workshop was organised for both schools. The motivation sessions also focused on relaxation as well as time and stress management techniques. Despite these interventions requests continued for assistance in these areas.

Apart from time management other stress triggers appeared to be: problems with discipline of learners (Bonthoogte), problematic relationships with other staff members (see 7.3.4), poor leadership, the threat of violence and the impact of poverty.

### ***Lack of parental support***

Lack of parental support was problematic for educators at both schools. Many educators were overwhelmed by the fact that the sole responsibility for educating the learners rested with them and there was not reinforcement of skills, knowledge and in many instances values at home. Masihambe struggled to get parents to attend parent meetings at the school. The *Parents and community* focus area at this school worked hard at identifying ways of encouraging parents to attend school meetings and at introducing them to outcomes-based education and new subject choices. Educators at Masihambe identified the low literacy rates of parents as a particular problem and were also working on ways to offer opportunity for

parents to improve their levels of literacy. Concern was expressed that the lack of parental support often reinforced the lack of respect for learners.

### ***Vandalism and violence***

Both schools struggled with continual instances of vandalism that impacted negatively on school infrastructure and the quality of the learning environment. One of the main tasks of Masihambe's *Infrastructure and Resource* focus area was to constantly find funds to replace the classroom windows that were broken over the weekend. Bonthoogte also reported high instances of vandalism and struggled to find ways of securing the school. Educators at Bonthoogte indicated that attempts to make their classrooms pleasant learning environments were often destroyed by vandals (sometimes in the form of the learners themselves). Both schools lacked sufficient caretaker and security staff.

Although both schools had raised funds to erect wire fences around the school, these fences did not keep out gangsters and vandals. In turn learners were not safe on the school grounds. Bonthoogte reported "*we had an incidence the other day when someone came on the school property at the back and undressed one of the girls*" and there was a concern that neither property nor people were safe on the school grounds.

The impact of violence in the community was also expressed in various ways by learners on the school grounds in the form of bullying and fighting. Both schools reported high instances of abuse of learners at home and expressed concern in finding ways to deal with this.

### ***Absenteeism***

The *Human Rights Commission Report on the Right to Basic Education* (HRC, 2006:26) identifies absenteeism as one of the major challenges facing South African education in that many educators and learners are not in the classroom to start with. Problems of educators not being in their classes included (i) teachers simply not arriving on time or leaving early, (ii) involvement in union meetings and activities, (iii) departmental training, functions, workshops and conferences, (iv) attendance of funerals and (v) illness. While the HRC report raises concerns about the high drop out rate of learners and non-attendance due to not being able to pay school fees, this study highlights other concerns such as learners simply choosing not to go to class, leaving the school grounds, not attending classes that bore them, etc. The lack of an environment and atmosphere of teaching and learning, together with low motivation on the part of learners also seems to impact on this. Absenteeism of both

educators and learners was a problem at both schools. Absenteeism of educators in this study was attributed to leave (often due to stress and illness) (see 2.4.3), leaving school during school time to pursue their own activities, and being present, but not in the classroom. High levels of educators on formal leave were observed at both schools. Absence of educators from class impacted negatively, not only on the learners, but also on other educators : *"if I have a class that I don't enjoy teaching, its nothing for me to sit at the bottom (in the staff room). The bell rings and I'm rid of that class for another day until tomorrow. But the fact that I'm not in my classroom, those children are undisciplined, they are unsupervised so now you are compounding problems for other educators"*. The issue of late coming was raised at the Restorative Practice workshop and it was interesting to note that one educator stated in the evaluation that she had never realised that her late coming impacted negatively on other educators and would make an effort to change this behaviour (see 7.3.4.).

The *Quality of Teaching and Learning and Educator Development* focus area at Masihambe were particularly concerned about educator learner attendance rates and undertook the survey of educators and learners in the classroom during the third term of 2003. Learners in each grade were identified and instructed to record the number of learners and educators present in each class over a nine-day teaching cycle. This survey revealed that over the nine-day cycle a total of 50.1% teachers were present in their classes across the whole school (a full presentation of the educator attendance survey is included in Vol. 2, appendix 14). The highest percentage of attendance was at a Grade 11 and 12 level. Attendance of learners over the nine-day cycle was 84.5% attendance of GET learners and 78.15% attendance of learners at an FET level. What was interesting to note was the variation in attendance which indicated that learners elected not to attend certain classes. The results of this survey were courageously presented to the school by the *Quality of Teaching and Learning and Educator Development* focus area at the end of the year 2003 feedback and planning session. Many educators and the SGB representatives expressed concern at the results especially as regards to educators' attendance. It was acknowledged that while a shortage of educators (especially Maths and Science educators) posed a problem it was not acceptable for educators to focus more on higher grades especially while learner attendance was higher at a GET level (see Taylor, 2007 as regards focus on matric results). In 2005 the school rotation system was changed to one where the educators changed classes as opposed to learners. By mid 2006 the school had managed to acquire extra educators from the Department of Education and had also managed to secure six Head of Department appointments.

### 7.3.3.2.2 Personal challenges

#### *Motivation, commitment and professionalism*

Motivation of educators was expressed as key need in both schools. This was expressed by the *Quality of Teaching and Learning and Educator Development* focus areas at both schools and further highlighted in the formal interviews. Particular factors identified by the educators that impacted on motivation and morale included some of the contextual factors discussed above together with other factors. Educators identified the following as influencing factors: work load, under payment for their work, lack of respect from learners, lack of motivation on the part of learners, absenteeism of colleagues, the deteriorating state of education and the lack of parental and home background support and lack of acknowledgement from either the learners, management or the Department of Education. These were expressed in statements such as:

- *“we are very demoralised as teachers – the workload is too heavy – we are administrators”*
- *“we are very demoralised as teachers – the workload is too heavy we are administrators”, “we can be as highly organised and you know as on the ball as you would wish us to be but at the end of the day if you don’t see the response from the children then it’s a fruitless exercise. That is what we are fighting with at the moment we are fighting to get that back. But its citywide, its countrywide that we have that problem.”*
- *“...and we’re underpaid, we’re sitting in a hell of an environment, your employer doesn’t care about what you are doing, it’s a thankless job you are doing, but for some reason you have to get out of bed and you come here for a purpose. So the only people who can effect change is ourselves”.*

Educators at both schools expressed the need to be acknowledged by the school leadership and management as well as the Department of Education for the work that they do. Linked to this was the need to be encouraged. Educators also wanted their different talents and skills to be acknowledged and to see that *“that small bit that I do does have a positive influence on the school functioning as a whole”*. Most educators at Masibambe seemed fairly positive about being able to make a difference in the lives of their learners and to contribute towards making their school a better place. Many educators at Bonthoogte spoke despondently about the discipline issues in the school and the level of motivation of the learners. It seemed as though many of these educators felt disillusioned and disempowered and were not

convinced that much could be done to remedy the current situation. However, there were a few highly motivated educators at Bonthoogte who were committed to making a difference. The educator who attended the GMSAF Peace Education training and who on returning to her school organised an advocacy session for all the staff members and then requested a Life Orientation class to teach for the following year, is an example of this. The RCL teacher-liaison officer who has a passion for developing young people is another example.

Many educators expressed the need for dedication, passion and professionalism despite, or perhaps as a way of overcoming, the challenging contextual factors. This was expressed in statements such as *"teachers must question how dedicated are they to their school. How dedicated or passionate are they towards the school. If they are not passionate towards their school then they will not succeed"*. While there was evidence that there were many educators at both schools that were committed to making a difference there was also evidence that there were educators who simply "clocked in and out" and who were not committed to providing good education and/or to making a difference in the lives of the learners. Educators at both schools expressed concern about the lack of professionalism and responsibility displayed by many staff. This lack of professionalism and responsibility was displayed through: lack of attendance of school and/or class, absence from meetings (both those to plan for school development and other), absence or early leave taking of workshops, leaving school early, leaving school during school hours to undertake their own business, not putting effort into teaching, etc. Some of this was directly observable to the *Learning Schools Initiative* team as they worked with the schools. It was also highlighted in the interviews in statements such as: *"I would say people's apathy to do what expected of them – the general apathy to their profession and the question of 'is it really necessary for me to do it?' is a problem"*, *"The professionalism isn't there, the accountability, the fact that I'm part of a team and for the school to be successful and to be functional every team player must bring their part"*, and *"Look I'm honest with you in saying that many people just collect their salary."*

### ***Personal growth interventions***

Evidence from a variety of sources, including the restorative practice workshop, supported Colyn's (2001) findings that educators want to participate in a process that develops and empowers them as individuals. As mentioned the initial focus of the *Learning Schools Initiative* was to respond to the needs of the schools. These responses adopted a "quasi therapeutic" (Reynolds, 1996:160) approach that provided opportunity for personal growth (Rogers, 1961) and related to this increased self-esteem and greater openness to

experience. They also provided opportunity for educators to revisit meaning (Frankl, 2004) in a personal and professional sense.

Bonthoogte staff suggested that many staff members were dealing with severe depression and stress and would benefit from a counselling or session of a therapeutic nature. It was not possible to explore individualised therapy further within the context of the *Learning Schools Initiative*; however, this approach was integrated into the process in various forms. The motivation sessions offered by the initiative focused on the educators as person first and followed a process of investigating feelings, learning stress management and coping techniques, exploring time management within the broader context of their lives, revisiting their personal values and visions, etc. The motivation sessions initially started with only thirteen people (from both schools). As the process progressed attendance from both schools increased dramatically. In the final session the total number of people from both schools was forty three people. In the interviews staff members also highlighted the impact of the motivation sessions: *"the initiative has helped us a lot – especially the motivation sessions. Every time we come back and do some report back and evaluate our progress"* and *"Yes, there are positive changes, I will always refer to motivation, because if teachers are not motivated there is nothing that we can do. Ja, there is a big change because everyone is anxious to achieve, to have something that he or she has done for that particular year.* In response to the lack of social work or other counselling support for learners at both schools the GMSAF funded two educators from each school to attend the Lifeline personal growth and counselling course. These staff members highlighted the personal growth component as being very beneficial to them on a personal level. Their enthusiasm resulted in a number of staff members from both schools funding their own costs to attend the course.

The restorative practice workshop focused on interpersonal relationships and the school environment, there was, however a strong emphasis and related exploration of the role of the individual in relation to others. In the post workshop evaluation many of the educators highlighted the personalised focus as having the most impact on them and wanted to explore this further. This was indicated in statements such as *"...it got me thinking of what a valuable unique person I am. I now see myself as a very important person in life"*, *"It was very personal and stressful because I had to look honestly at who I am. I haven't looked at myself in this way in a very long time"*, *"I think getting to know myself better will also enable me to also try to understand my fellow educators better. It will spin off on the learners to start knowing themselves better and to become more tolerant and respectful towards one another"* and *"yes, change starts with yourself"*.

It was interesting to note echoes of what Jantjes (1998) shares in the documentation of her experiences as a South African educator (see 4.9.4) that her personal process of introspection and retrospection empowered and enabled her as an educator to assist her learners in transforming their worldviews. The one-day leadership workshop offered by Sue Davidoff, designed to meet the needs expressed in the investigatory leadership reports (GMSAF, 2006), also focused on person and school values and provided opportunity for the educators to share their problems and concerns related to teaching in challenging conditions with each other.

As the initiative progressed the GMSAF team began to develop a broader conceptualisation of empowerment that extended beyond a focus on personal growth to include offering programmes that would empower educators in other areas (e.g. language ability, subject content, computer literacy, etc.). It is anticipated that this form of development will also have extensive benefits in terms of self-confidence and motivation. Of particular importance to the school development planning process is the equipping of all staff members with project planning and monitoring skills. This process extends to include rigour in relation to causal problem analysis and associated solutions as well as the tracking and reflection process. Many educators commented that they had found these skills useful, not just in relation to school development planning, but that they also assisted in improving their general problem solving and administrative skills.

While many educators were not confident that the initiative had as yet made a difference to the school, they were very positive that the initiative had contributed to their personal empowerment and development. Educators from both schools identified ways in which being involved in the whole school development process had impacted positively on their levels of motivation and accountability together with a sense of commitment to the improvement of their school. Some educators also expressed a renewed sense of hope that they could make a difference in the challenging environment in which they work and that the *Learning Schools Initiative* was equipping them with some of the skills with which to do this: *"I don't know how it (Lifeline course) will benefit the school but for me as a person I'm really looking forward to it, just to grow as a person. So as far as me is concerned the GMSAF has done a lot for me. I've learnt a lot and if they don't feel they have succeeded with the school as such as a whole, they must just bear in mind that individuals have gained a lot from that", "I think the project has provided the opportunity for us to rise up and take responsibility in various areas. I've also noticed that people are proud that they are doing something for the school" and "We are more empowered now because of the GMSAF initiative"*.

### 7.3.3.3 Discussion

Empowering human agency (both on a personal and broader skills/knowledge level) is critical to any education initiative aimed at transforming structure and is a powerful project (initiative) level mechanism. This study identifies personal growth and meaning as two key mechanisms that trigger causal powers such as motivation, commitment, and professionalism that in turn support development and change at both a personal, classroom and school level. It is only through a process of human reflexivity (Archer, 2003) that morphogenesis (Archer, 1995) can give rise to new forms of structure. Human reflexivity is central to personal growth as process (Rogers, 1961). Self-reflexivity related to a personal internal dialogue or conversation (Archer, 2003) which both initiates, sustains and extends personal growth and competency can be identified as an additional causal power that contributes significantly to both individual and organisational change and transformation.

The affirmation of self worth and self-esteem through a process of personal growth is central to preparing educators for change. Self worth and self-esteem linked to confidence not only in self, but in one's ability to perform particular tasks are also important motivators. Archer (2000) highlights that the impact of social reality (Archer, 2000), with particular focus on self worth, is related to the success or failure (Archer, 2000:219) of agency's success in various projects (e.g. career, family, community, club or church). Educators therefore need to be equipped in the practical skills of their career project to avoid "...frustration, boredom and depression" which ensue as "emotional commentaries" (Archer, 2000:212). Instead "emotional commentaries" that embody meaning, motivation, commitment and professionalism need to ensue so as to position agency to support change. Thus personal empowerment takes on a broader focus than just growth at a personal level, but also growth and the development of competency at a professional level. The latter is discussed in more detail in 7.3.5. Recognition and personal affirmation and efficacy (Evans, 2001) are important determinants and levers that motivate educators in any change process. In addition both personal and school vision that present a different possibility to the present *status quo* are important drivers.

Essential for any change process is meaning and relevance for the individual (Fullan, 2001a, Armenakis & Harris, 2001), particularly in contexts that elicit trauma and stress (Frankl, 2004). Frankl (2004:104) equates meaning with motivation in his statement that "...this striving to find meaning in one's life is the primary motivational force in man". Linked to finding meaning is a sense of purpose. It is at this level that issues of responsibility, accountability and answerability (Euvrard, 2006) can be addressed. Educator development

and preset programmes should meet educators at the point of determining meaning, purpose and essentially answerability. The ability of agency to move from a position of homostatis (Frankl, 2004:110) and to impact on structure (Archer, 1995) so that it in turn moves from a position of morphostatis to morphogenesis needs to be activated through a process of cultivating meaning and the belief that agency can make a difference; and that where necessary, can transform structure. Associated with this is the will to act (Heneveld 1994; Hopkins et al., 1994; Scheerens 1992). While meaning and relevance may be apparent, individuals may not feel sufficiently motivated to act, due to whatever reason (e.g. lack of recognition for what they do, depression, stress, lack of material incentives etc.). In the interviews a number of educators touched on the "will to act", stressing that the *Learning Schools Initiative* presented opportunities for educators. It was up to the individual educator to grab an opportunity and to run with it. Thus, first and foremost educators must be motivated to participate in development and change. In the *Learning Schools Initiative* this was addressed through provision of personal growth opportunities that essentially focused on the educators in their personal, as opposed to professional role, and were based on the premise that people who are psychologically free also function more fully in their life roles (Rogers, 1961). Given South Africa's historical context, providing opportunity for educators to commence a process of personal growth that affirms self worth and confidence initiates change at a personal level that supports participation of agency in external change processes. Personal growth and meaning need to be infused in all interventions, not necessarily as separate programmes, but instead need to be incorporated into all programmes offered.

An awareness of and belief in the power of agency needs to be developed and encouraged in all school development initiatives. Agency needs to be capacitated and empowered to move beyond a position of inactivity and inertia rooted in South Africa's apartheid legacy (Christie & Potterton, 1998) and encouraged to be proactive as well as responsible, accountable and answerable (Euvrard, 2006). Assuming ownership of school improvement also entails taking responsibility and being both accountable and answerable for one's actions (or lack of action). In addition educators need to believe that they can make a difference in the lives of the children that they teach, explore practical ways of doing this and to be acknowledged, affirmed and supported throughout this process. This acknowledgement and affirmation needs to happen at all levels of the system starting with the learners and extending to at least the District Office Department of Education. Educators also need to affirm and support each other and to become allies in the change process (see 7.3.5). Given the conditions in which educators currently find themselves, particularly due to the impact of poverty on education, realistically they may not be able to make dramatic

changes. However each “little” change, albeit in their classroom with their learners, must be seen within the context of structural constraints in which educators perform and must be recognised as valuable.

### **7.3.4 Restoration of relationships and development of capacity to work together**

#### **7.3.4.1 Introduction**

Fullan's (2001a: 69) statement that “education change is technically simple and socially complex” became increasingly obvious as the *Learning Schools Initiative* unfolded in each school. As already discussed in 7.2.3, schools are complex living social organisations (Davidoff & Lazarus, 2002; Whitaker, 1998) and any change process aimed at schools must take individual (see 7.3.3.) and group histories and dynamics into account. The importance of human relations in organisational development is stressed in both organisational (Dalin, 1998) and school development (Reynolds, 2001). Reynolds (2001:37) discusses how recent research reveals the relational component of school change as important enough to be categorised alongside the organisational and cultural components as the “third dimension” of schooling (see 4.9.3).

While “good” staff relationships may not be considered an important determinant of what happens in the classroom, there is evidence that the creation of a positive staff relational environment contributes towards an environment that enhances teaching and learning (Blankstein, 2004). In contrast, dysfunctional staff relationships can undermine attempts to create a positive school culture and contribute to organisational breakdown (Christie, 1998; Davidoff & Lazarus, 2002). The 2005 *Learning Schools Initiative* Evaluation Report highlights that the politics in the staff room often had more influence than any aspiration for the greater common good of the school. It is evident from the *Learning Schools Initiative* pilot and the results of this study that strengthening relationships between school staff to support a positive and collaborative school culture is an important mechanism that not only supports change but also teaching and learning. It is acknowledged that other relationships such as those with parents/guardians, the broader school community and the Department of Education are also important; these, however, were not directly targeted in the initial *Learning Schools Initiative* pilot.

#### 7.3.4.2 School context and the identification of mechanisms

The *Learning Schools Initiative's* change strategy involved educators at both a macro organisational and a micro team level. It was therefore important, as stressed by Hopkins (1996,2001) and Uline (2003), that relationships at both these levels be taken into account. While secondary school educators were used to working in "isolation" (Fullan, 2001a; Sarason, 1995) or in "silos" (England, 2004) where they could tolerate certain behaviours and ignore those whom they did not relate to, the *Learning Schools Initiative* required that the educators interact and plan together towards the greater vision of improving their school. In this context, issues that may previously have been ignored came to the fore. After two years of interacting with the *Learning Schools Initiative*, in response to a question of "what type of relationships are necessary for development?" the principal of Bonthoogte responded: "*there should be cordial relationships between people as a rule. The project will fail if you have relationships that are hostile and people have this competitiveness amongst each other. People mustn't bring their personal baggage into a project, it's going to break relationships down*".

Working together in a team on specific projects revealed which educators were willing to work and participate in the development of the school. In addition, attendance of workshops, especially those held on a Saturday or weekday afternoon, gave an indication of who was committed to the development of each school. At times questions related to the non-attendance or non-participation of certain staff members were raised and strategies to address these were discussed. In both schools educators seemed to be prepared to participate in the school development process according to different levels of motivation and commitment. In each there was a core group of educators who did not participate in the process at all. While these educators sometimes attended workshops and camps they did not follow through with project planning and school meetings. They were also the ones who would leave a workshop as soon as their "school time" ended or not attend weekday afternoon and Saturday workshops.

Following the initial set of interviews with both schools, and having observed the staff dynamics hindering enthusiasm for and participation in the school development process, a weekend team-building camp was organised for each school separately at Umlambo near Kirkwood in the Eastern Cape. Subsequent interviews revealed that these camps were considered by many educators to be the highlight of the *Learning Schools Initiative* process in that they fostered and strengthened staff relationships generally as well as creating an opportunity for the focus area teams to bond. This is embodied in statements such as: "*I've*

*noticed that people who didn't really interact with one another previously have been able to do that freely now", "Umlambo helps with the team spirit ...the team building is really ...the goal was reached there with that one. When the Umlambo camp came along our morale was really low (due to suspension of the principal). It actually brightened us up a little; it actually gave us more hope. Umlambo gave us hope", and "not all of the staff have opened up, but some of us started to open up, because we know that people will support and people will assist with actually ...even your personal life...you can only speak to your colleagues now...you couldn't in the past".*

Regret was expressed by educators at both schools that this process had not been extended within the school context: *"Since the Umlambo camp – the esprit de corps that was generated from that weekend, the strength or the momentum is not completely dead yet, it is there – it is just that we must find ways and means of rekindling the fire now"* and *"one of the downsides of it is that we probably would have had to have had small Umlambo's after the big one to revisit our vision and strategies at that date, and from a management point of view I really feel we should have done that.* Thus, while the need to strengthen staff relationships and to cultivate a spirit and process of teamwork was identified as important, so was the need for this not to be a series of once off events initiated by an external agency but for these to be embedded in the culture and structure of the school (see 7.3.1) and to be nurtured and developed on a regular basis.

At the vision crafting workshop the staff of Bonthoogte highlighted the "gees" (spirit) of the staff as a positive factor and much of this was seen during the workshop. However, as the initiative progressed the staff revealed many relationship challenges. The suspension of the school principal severely undermined the "gees" of the school, as did his failure to address the SMT regarding unacceptable behaviour. However, while team building and relationship development components were built into other planning sessions by the GMSAF, relationships remained a problematic factor in Bonthoogte. This was also highlighted by the principal where in my second interview with him towards end of 2005 he stated: *"this year we've had very successful and unique staff functions and as you can see there's spirit. But there are also still very, very serious staff problems".*

Problematic relationship issues also presented at Masihambe during the course of the pilot. These particularly seemed to revolve around groups that supported the school principal and groups that did not (see 7.3.2), as well as around issues related to frustration of educators who were willing to work and to *"go the extra mile"* at those who *"clock in and clock out"*. Similar frustration around the latter issue was also expressed by Bonthoogte educators.

Challenges to good staff relationships included:

- The history of staff relationships (e.g., in Masihambe where two different staff components had merged in one school).
- The relationship of management with each other and with the staff (e.g., an expressed lack of trust about "corridor talk" and "spies").
- Lack of inspirational leadership that role modelled and encouraged healthy staff dynamics.
- The lack of responsibility on the part of certain staff members (e.g., arriving late for class, or simply not attending class, not taking their teaching seriously, etc.).
- The lack of participation of a core group of staff in the school development process.
- The idea of cliques or groups of privileged "friends" who participated in certain activities and excluded others.

In an attempt to further address the problematic staff relationships at Bonthoogte it was decided, in consultation with school management, to commission a restorative practice workshop in the attempt to create a more harmonious working environment. As was the case with Masihambe's leadership workshop (see 7.3.2), some Bonthoogte staff showed their lack of support for the acting principal by boycotting this workshop. Apart from this, a lack of respect for each other and the workshop organisers and/or a lack of meaningful buy into the process of restorative practice was demonstrated in the number of people who arrived late for the restorative practice workshop. This behaviour was in dire contrast to a workshop hosted with a primary school on the previous weekend where the majority of the staff arrived early despite transport challenges, and four educators who had attended the funeral of a learner who passed away from HIV/AIDS related illnesses arrived later in the morning ensuring full staff attendance of the workshop.

The catch twenty-two situation of those who most needed to participate in the process being absent presented itself a number of times during the course of this study. While an enthusiastic critical mass seemed to be present in both schools, educators continually expressed concern regarding those who chose not to participate in the process. In reflecting on "how much of a critical mass is required to bring about whole school change" the GMSAF team conceded that it was impossible to bring everybody on board. Despite the hope that many would be inspired by leadership and colleagues to buy into the process, it was acknowledged that a legal imperative was the only thing that would ensure the participation of some educators (see 7.3.6). Of more concern are questions related to the quality of teaching of educators who do not support broader school initiatives.

The following responses extracted from the restorative practice post workshop evaluation indicate that the workshop did much to create an awareness of issues related to the restoring and sustaining of healthy relationships amongst Bonthoogte's staff:

- *"...If we build on what we have discussed today, we will be able to become united and take our school to a different level".*
- *Accepting acting principal as leader and putting basic restorative and relational practice principles to use will promote harmony, cooperation and a better working environment.*
- *I think it will have a positive impact especially among the staff members. Many issues were raised that we see happening but never talk about at school. Staff were not afraid to raise their issues and if you are sincere and committed in what you are doing, we can take the school forward.*
- *Helped to identify the strengths and weakness of staff; Renew the energy and vision for the school.*
- *If we start applying what we have learnt, it can have a positive impact. We should do the application as a team. We need everybody's input and support. We can start with key issues, even if it is just common courtesies.*
- *A committed effort by all, not again a "flash in the pan" exercise. We all need to acknowledge the reason why we entered this teaching profession, and restore that professionalism paying attention to others first and then self.*

Staff also made statements in the feedback evaluation about what they would do differently in future at school. These included: being supportive in decisions that were being made; "pulling my weight more"; assisting the SMT in identifying and addressing solutions to problems; cooperating with the principal and SMT; becoming more involved in learner and other administrative activities; being punctual; being consistent in behaviour and attentions; building and maintaining positive relationships with colleagues; being considerate; helping learners to be their best; valuing one's contribution to creating a positive school environment (a climate of understanding, sharing and caring) and reaffirming one's commitment to the school.

When considering ways in which the restorative process could be sustained in the school, educators again stated that the process needed to be maintained and monitored. Some time was also spent exploring ways in which the process could be extended to the staff who did not attend as well as how the process could be sustained in the school.

The *Learning Schools Initiative* was heralded by the principal of Masihambe as a key mechanism in bringing the staff from two schools together to work towards a common vision. As the initiative interacted with the school there was evidence of a growing sense of comradeship amongst team members and the school staff generally. This was displayed at Umlambo where the staff supported and encouraged each other in the teambuilding activities and were literally not afraid of getting their hands dirty while assisting each other over and through obstacles.

My 2005 interviews, however, revealed that some people felt excluded from certain processes (see 7.3.2.). The appointment of the HODs was something that many staff had highlighted in their interviews as critical to the smooth running of the school, in particular the academic component. Conversely, however, the appointment of the HODs seemed to impact on relational dynamics in that certain people who had worked very hard and had come with the principal from his previous school felt that they had been overlooked for promotion. This component now refused to participate in school development (see 7.3.2.). The investigatory leadership programme interviews with staff and management highlighted some of these issues. Tangible examples were presented at the leadership workshop, where staff who should have reported to the workshop which was held on a school day (with permission from the Department of Education) failed to arrive without notifying the principal of the reason for their absence. Similarly a number of staff members disappeared after lunch when the "school day" ended, again without reporting to the principal (see 7.2.2.).

#### **7.3.4.3 Discussion**

Although healthy relationships amongst staff members (and obviously other school community stakeholders) are not a prerequisite for good teaching and learning – the extent to which they can and do contribute towards a positive school environment should not be overlooked. Good relationships are important, not only within the context of school development, but are also highlighted as one of the keys to successful schools (Blankstein, 2004; Fullan, 2001a). Concurrently, as discussed in 7.3.3, the extent that dysfunctional staff relationships are symptomatic of causal powers related to a deeper level of school (and to some extent system) dysfunctionality (Christie, 1998; Davidoff & Lazarus, 2002) must also be taken into consideration. In order to intervene at a relational level and to offer powerful interventions that trigger relational mechanisms, it is important to understand the nature of causal powers related to dysfunctional relationships such as vulnerability and professional jealousy (Davidoff & Lazarus, 2002), as well as power dynamics (Pym & Lazarus, 2001)

within a particular school. The influence of psychological causal factors such as depression and other mechanisms at deeper strata of reality (see 5.4.3) must also be taken into account.

The historical and cultural dimensions of relationships also need further exploration with a particular need to unpack “the tall poppy syndrome” (Feather, 1989; Wikipedia) with a particular focus on how this unfolds in an environment where people are pressurised by heavy workloads and complex social challenges. While it was difficult to pinpoint the “tall poppy syndrome” within the *Learning Schools Initiative* there was an indication that informal leadership (particularly the whole school coordinators who had no formal position) struggled with staff resistance. When asked to arrange a date for the literacy, numeracy and lifeskills assessment feedback session the whole school development co-ordinator of Bonthoogte stated that “*if they think it is another thing from me they will not attend*”. In contrast, the focus area groups of Masihambe were positive about the competition between the various groups; this was viewed as a “group” or “team” as opposed to an individual achievement. Some educators at the school did, however, indicate that they resented the competition amongst groups.

It is also important to understand the causal powers that contribute towards healthy relationships, i.e. respect, competence, personal regard for others and integrity (Blankstein, 2004: 59) and to explore ways of developing and sustaining these positive values as part of a school's culture (see 7.3.1). Leadership, management, vision, values and organisational culture all contribute towards an environment that encourages, nurtures and sustains healthy staff relationships. In addition, staff need opportunity to interact with each other in a non-threatening environment where a real sense of openness and collegiality can be cultivated. Exposure to conflict management techniques (Davidoff & Lazarus, 2002) and issues related to tolerance and acceptance may also form part of the agenda of creating healthy staff relationships. Again, the restoration and maintenance of healthy relationships within a school environment requires a willingness and motivation on the part of individual educators to participate in this process (see 7.3.3.). Core organisational values that epitomise good relationships (see 7.3.1), a structure that supports constant nurturing and restoring of relationships (see 7.3.1), and a leadership that both role models and encourages healthy relationships while simultaneously addressing non-acceptable behaviour (see 7.3.2), are also critical mechanisms that effect and sustain relational change.

### **7.3.5 Professional development of educators**

#### **7.3.5.1 Introduction**

The improvement of teaching and learning is depicted and emphasised as being central to the *Learning Schools Initiative* (see 6.5.2.4). It is therefore important that professional development as a mechanism is investigated with particular focus on what form this mechanism should take in specific contexts. While there needs to be a differentiated approach to developing schools at different levels (Hopkins, 2001b), all approaches should be centred around, and have as their end goal, the improvement of teaching and learning. For example, leadership and management must be improved to ultimately support quality teaching and learning (through a strong instructional leadership component), security needs to be improved to create a safe environment in which teaching and learning can take place, etc. In “developed” countries much of what falls under the umbrella of school improvement are “type II” and “type III” strategies (*ibid.*) and are aimed directly at the improvement of classroom practice and the development of learning and support communities within schools (see 4.9.5). In most South African schools there are many other major concerns that demand the attention of management and leadership and that have direct impact on the classroom environment and learners’ potential to perform (i.e. the affect of HIV/AIDS, malnutrition, school safety, etc.) (see 2.4 and 2.5). The challenge for development initiatives working with schools in disadvantaged communities in South Africa is to find a classroom exceeding (Harris, 2001) approach that supports management and leadership to address issues that impinge on ensuring a safe, secure and well managed teaching and learning environment while simultaneously improving classroom practice and curriculum delivery. Central to this approach is the improvement of teaching and learning through triggering identified mechanisms in this area. This study explores professional development as a mechanism with particular focus on its structure in a secondary school context.

#### **7.3.5.1 School context and the identification of mechanisms**

The first question related to professional development, as highlighted in 7.3.3.2.1, is “are teachers in the classroom teaching and are learners in the classroom learning?” While it is acknowledged that classrooms are not the only contexts where learning happens they are the primary context in South African public schools. It has already been discussed in 7.3.3.2.1 how educators at both schools expressed frustration and concern about the absence of particularly educators from the classroom. Thus, in keeping with Hopkins’ (2001b) strategies, authoritative measures by the Department of Education or strong

leadership and/or a triggering of mechanisms such as personal growth and meaning (see 7.3.3), may be needed as a forerunner to any professional development interventions.

There was a strong reliance in the *Learning Schools Initiative* pilot secondary schools on educators within the *Quality of Teaching and Learning and Educator Development* focus area, and to a lesser extent the *Curriculum and Resources* and *Learner Achievement* focus areas, to identify and instigate projects (with the assistance of the GMSAF) related to improving the quality of teaching and learning in both schools.

Initially, prior to the introduction of IQMS, the GMSAF team worked with the *Quality of Teaching and Learning and Educator Development* focus area groups at both schools to use the educators needs analysis instrument developed by the Foundation to analyse the educator's development needs. Bonthoogte was particularly interested in the results of this process and staff worked together on collating the results and transferring these into graphs. The *Quality of Teaching and Learning and Educator Development* focus area groups and the application of this instrument highlighted motivation of staff as a major concern in both schools and workshops were designed and offered to address this (see 7.3.3.). IQMS was introduced to the schools by the Department of Education in mid 2004. It was evident that staff now needed to work with the instrument and related performance standards contained in the section C of the IQMS document. Schools also expressed the need for training in the implementation and administration of the IQMS process (see 6.5.2.5.). The GMSAF team worked with Professor Ian Bellis, a private education and training consultant, in an attempt to merge the GMSAF Educator Needs Development Instrument with the IQMS Instrument. They, however, found that the performance indicators presented in the IQMS instrument were too disjointed and differentiated to allow this. Ultimately it was decided that since IQMS was legislated that the GMSAF should find ways of working with the schools to implement this. A session was organised in which an ex-model C school that had also been grappling with the IQMS process trained groups of educators from both schools to implement and administer the IQMS process. The IQMS process commences with educators (as well as leadership and management) conducting a self-evaluation of making use of the performance indicators in the relevant sections of the IQMS instrument. Each educator identifies a Development Support Group (DSG) that must include the educator's immediate senior (Education Specialist/HOD/Subject Head) and one other educator (peer) who has the phase/learning area expertise necessary to guide and support the educator. The DSG conducts a pre-evaluation discussion with the educator followed by an evaluation that includes the observation of the educator in practice (ELRC, 2003). The end product of this evaluation process is the development of a personal growth plan (PGP) which indicates

areas earmarked for improvement at four levels: those in the control of the educator (e.g. punctuality), those for which the DSG can provide guidance (e.g. record keeping), those for which the DoE should provide INSET or other programmes, and those where the educator is un-or underqualified and needs reskilling. The PGPs of all the educators at a school are then combined to form a School Improvement Plan (SIP).

The IQMS process is fraught with challenges and it is not within the scope of this research to discuss these. However, to mention briefly, of primary concern were (i) issues of relationship dynamics related to the evaluation of the educator by a DSG and related to this concerns about objectivity and validity, (ii) the poor quality of the overall School Improvement Plans (SIP) presented by both schools, and (iii) lack of cohesion in overlaps between the Whole School Evaluation Instrument's focus areas of *Quality Teaching and Learning and Educator Development, Curriculum and Resources* and *Learner Achievement and Resources* and the IQMS instrument. This section does not discuss the assessment of leadership and management, however, different criteria were also used in both documents to assess this. In an attempt to simplify (iii), the GMSAF initiative used a slightly adapted version of the IQMS criteria in the relevant sections of the whole school evaluation instrument that they developed.

The lack of valuable data by which to design interventions to meet educator development needs raises concerns about the potential of the IQMS as a mechanism to both identify areas for intervention, and to initiate change in this area. The primary emphasis in the Personal Growth Plans (PGP) of both schools was the need for teaching resources. While it is acknowledged that resources are important evidence (e.g. literacy, numeracy and lifeskills assessments), discussions with the Language Across the Curriculum ACE lecturer indicated that there was a need for intervention at both schools in other areas, such as the subject knowledge, encouraging language across the curriculum, classroom management, etc.

As the initiative progressed the GMSAF team became increasingly aware that it was particularly difficult to work with the educators in identifying their learning area/subject training needs. The introduction of a new curriculum at the Further Education and Training level (Grade 10 to 12) commencing with Grade 10 in 2006 presented the opportunity to provide workshops in subjects related to this curriculum, with a particular emphasis on new subjects such as Mathematical Literacy and Life Orientation. While the Department of Education had sponsored one educator from each school, as part of a Provincial initiative, to attend an ACE in Mathematical Literacy and an ACE in Life Orientation, there had been little focus on preparing educators for other subjects. Following discussions with the schools the

*Learning Schools Initiative* commenced with Mathematical Literacy and Life Orientation workshops particularly aimed at educators not attending the Advanced Certificates of Education in these areas. The first Mathematical Literacy workshop held in 2005 in preparation for 2006 was initially well attended by both schools. However, the teachers from Masihambe, who were Mathematics educators, indicated that there was no difference between Mathematics and Mathematical Literacy and did not attend any further workshops in this subject. The educators from Bonthoogte, including the educator who was attending the Mathematical Literacy ACE, continued to attend these workshops. In response to this the Bonthoogte whole school development co-ordinator highlighted the role of the Mathematics HOD in encouraging attendance of this workshop: *"I can tell you one thing has been positive is for the Maths people. I mean when that fax came it didn't take the HOD one second to say every Maths teacher will go. So it depends a lot on the person at the top (the HOD)"*

The attendance of the Life Orientation workshops was poor. At the initial workshop educators were asked to express their needs and an educator from Bonthoogte identified lack of resources as a priority. These workshops were halted due to poor attendance of educators from both schools.

When asked *"do you think if one targeted more direct teaching subjects as a form of intervention teachers would be more prepared to co-operate and go to workshops?"* the Bonthoogte whole school development co-ordinator, confirmed the benefit of interventions that trigger motivation and assist educators in other areas prior to professional development: *"If the mindset is another workshop then it won't work" and "so It doesn't matter what you put on a silver platter – if people don't want to buy into it you are sitting with a dead duck. So if you can skill people how to manage their time they can actually find that 'yes' I can fit it in. And yes the mindset is still my job is until two and that is it".*

The experience with the Language Across the Curriculum ACE was very different. As discussed in 6.7.4.4.1. five educators from Bonthoogte and thirteen educators from Masihambe enrolled for the course. Attending the ACE was voluntary and the university screened candidates for entry. Of the eighteen educators who enrolled in the course one educator dropped out and two educators (one from each school) left the course due to health and termination of employment. Of the fifteen educators who completed the course six graduated *cum laude*. In the second year of the programme the candidates mentored a fellow member of staff (who was not registered for the ACE).

Extracts from the candidates' exam papers identified the following as changes that have taken place in their schools as a result of the Language Across the Curriculum ACE programme: teachers now plan learner-centred lessons; teachers are now facilitators in-line with outcomes-based education; language and content teachers have closer cooperation; the approach has encouraged team work amongst staff; it has assisted with improving discipline in the class room as learners are constructively engaged in activities; learner performance has improved; educators are more positive and confident about their teaching; educators feel more knowledgeable; a language policy has been developed for each school and the programme has changed the "teaching lives" of educators.

In addition, in the interviews the educators who attended the Language Across the Curriculum ACE programme highlighted the following benefits: it has given the schools a step ahead of other schools (reference was made to being ahead especially in terms of IQMS); it benefited people on a personal level; people feel more "in control" of outcomes-based education and other class situations; it has assisted educators to address problems related to learners' language ability; it has created a culture of planning (also provided know how to plan lessons); the work of the learners has improved; educators now know how to engage learners in the learning process; it has assisted the schools in developing a language policy and educators now feel confident to teach and to have others sit in on their lessons. The latter is particularly relevant in terms of the IQMS peer evaluation procedure.

In his discussion of the *Quality Learning Programme*, Taylor (2007 (forthcoming): 10) states that "most notable was the effect of language-across-the-curriculum interventions on the overall matric pass rate". It was hoped that the language across the curriculum intervention would, in the long-term, have a similar effect in terms of improving the poor literacy levels at the two schools. It was, however, also acknowledged that more buy into the concept of language across the curriculum was needed, especially at Bonthoogte, so as to ensure maximum sharing of the experiences of educators who attended the Language Across the Curriculum ACE.

Thus, while it was acknowledged that any intervention with schools must focus on improving teaching and learning at a classroom level, the experiences of the GMSAF are that it is difficult to intervene in this area at a secondary school level without offering accredited courses. Although not part of this study it is perhaps worth noting that the LSI experience with the four primary schools was very different to this. Other issues related to this, as highlighted by the whole school co-ordinator, are again those of time management and

motivation, commitment to learning and specifically to offering quality education and a culture and attitude of professionalism.

It was not a primary aim of the *Learning Schools Initiative* or this study to determine the need or impact of teaching and learning resources in the two pilot secondary schools. While resources surfaced as a priority need in the IQMS and were constantly requested by or referred to by educators at both schools, there was not opportunity to explore the role of resources as mechanisms within the scope of this study. It is, however, worth mentioning a few issues that arose in direct relation to this. The first is that textbooks particularly seemed to be in short supply with learners in many classes not having textbooks. Where there were textbooks learners were not allowed to take these home with them. These were kept in the classroom and in some learning areas/subjects one set of textbooks serviced a number of classes. Many educators appeared to struggle with how to access their own resources from community organisations and other sources. There was a dire need at both schools for reading books and/or reading material relevant to the learners' age and context. While ideally both libraries needed to be improved to accommodate these, a reading structure was set up in some of the classes and books were supplied by the GMSAF to assist this process with the ultimate aim of improving literacy levels. In situations where a culture of reading is not encouraged, where learners do not have their own "take home" textbook in many subjects and/or reading material, it is questionable whether their level of literacy will improve significantly to make an impact at the level of National Senior Certificate. In addition, Masihambe had received donations of computers from various sources. When the GMSAF started working at the school these computers were simply stored at the school. Later in a partnership with the Shuttleworth Foundation a computer laboratory was set up at the school. However, educators reported that this laboratory was used primarily by the staff and not by learners and the community as planned. This again highlighted that resources need to be integrated both into the timetable and into classroom practice to avoid the danger of them being stored and/or under utilised.

#### **7.3.5.3 Discussion**

This study highlights that professional development, as a mechanism, is only effective if other supporting mechanisms and a supportive context are in place. Firstly, as previously stated, prior to initiating and investing resources in professional development interventions, first and foremost educators and learners need to be in the classroom and educators need to be committed and motivated to offer quality education. Where necessary the Department of Education needs to intervene to ensure that this, as the prerequisite for other inventions, is in

place (see 7.4). Educators also need to be motivated to participate in professional development, committed to applying what they learn to improve the quality of teaching and learning in their class and school, and to work within a professional ethos. It is acknowledged that motivation, commitment and professionalism, while internal constructs, are also extended and supported through external mechanisms (e.g. incentives, acknowledgment, etc.).

Judging from the educators' response to the Language Across the Curriculum ACE programme, especially in regards to the impact that the programme had on actual classroom practice, there is great potential for accredited programmes to act as a mechanism in improving teaching and learning (Frost et al., 2000). These programmes must, however, be of high quality and focus on developing skills that ensure reflective practice and an attitude of lifelong learning. In addition, it would seem that courses that directly contribute towards improving practice in a learning area/subject (e.g. Mathematical Literacy) can be of benefit. Where, however, intrinsic motivation is missing, attendance of these courses needs to be driven and supported by school management or where relevant the Department of Education. More attention needs to be given to incentives that motivate educators to attend professional development programmes and workshops, together with issues related to personal growth and meaning as discussed in 7.3.3. The Department of Education needs to support the process of professional development by ensuring that their workshops are of a high quality and directly contribute towards improving teaching knowledge and practice.

There is also great potential for change and learning in the form of "professional learning communities" (Fullan, 2001a:253) something that needs further exploration as a mechanism to improve teaching and learning. This was evident in the way in which the Language Across the Curriculum ACE educators worked together on the programme and within the school. Educators should be encouraged and structures set up in schools to share experiences and "learnings" and to discuss and reflect on improving teaching and learning. These professional learning communities create a forum for continuous action learning. Such forums, however, need to be supported by a school culture of openness and trust. They also need to be integrated into the structure and culture of the school so as to ensure buy-in and sustainability.

### **7.3.6 Support and accountability**

#### **7.3.6.1 Introduction**

In Chapter four section 4.7. I refer to Hopkins' (1996:47) question of whether school development is a naturally occurring phenomenon or whether it requires some form of external support? In a sense Hopkins (2001b:45) answers his own question with his typology of schools and the proposal that there are different types of interventions for different schools. This typology suggests a high level of support for "failing" schools; a moderate level of support for "low achieving" schools and little or no support for "effective" schools that can search out their own support and networks. In addition to the amount of support provided is the question of the nature of support provided. In other words support provided to "failing" schools may be very different to the type of support provided to "low achieving" schools. Intervention at the level of "failing" schools may emphasise accountability in addition to support. A primary mechanism for establishing a basic level of functionality in a school is authoritative accountability. I refer to this as authoritative accountability in that in "failing", and possibly also to a degree in "low achieving" schools, the employer, i.e. the Department of Education, must reinforce accountability. As discussed in 7.3.1, only the government has the authority to intervene in certain circumstances such as removal of leadership and situations of extreme conflict (*ibid.*). This is highlighted in the research conducted by Roberts (2001) where she states that NGOs lack the authority to enforce accountability, and that this is primarily the realm of the Department of Education. Taylor (2007:18) reiterates this when he states that "it is clear that non-government interventions, on their own, can have little or no effect on type I schools at the present time".

Once accountability is established, support from external agency (either the Department of Education or other non-government agencies) can impact on causal powers and perform the role of a supportive change mechanism in a variety of ways. The investigation and exploration of accountability and support as change mechanisms are discussed below.

#### **7.3.6.2 School context and the identification of mechanisms**

Bonthoogte and Masihambe could in most respects be categorised as "low achieving", as opposed to "failing" schools; however, both schools were desperately in need of government intervention on a number of fronts. Both school principals seemed to lack authority to reprimand staff and to reinforce punctuality, attendance and performance (see 7.3.2). This was particularly notable at Bonthoogte when the whole school development co-ordinator

asked the GMASF to insist that all staff attend the Umlambo camp as opposed to the principal using his authority in this situation. It was also notable in the situation of the Masihambe leadership workshop where staff members were absent without the consent of the principal and he was unsure how to address this (see 7.3.1). While the *Learning Schools Initiative* could lend support to the school principal and management and work on creating a culture that supports commitment on the part of staff and learners, they could not exert the type of authority required in some instances (e.g. attendance of workshops, attendance of school, adherence to policy). In many cases accountability ultimately needs to be reinforced by school leadership and the Department of Education. In addition, based on the experiences of the *Learning Schools Initiative*, the introduction of policy aimed at tightening accountability such as the National Policy on Whole School Evaluation (South Africa. DoE, 2001d) needs to be reinforced externally by the Department of Education and monitored regularly. Thus, while external school evaluations are planned, schools require more ongoing monitoring and support to improve in identified areas to ensure that this does not just become an additional activity to perform as opposed to being linked to meaningful change and real accountability.

In general there was very little presence of the Department of Education felt in either school. The 2005 Learning School Initiative evaluation highlights the absence of the Department of Education in the schools together with a lack of respect for and trust in the Department of Education. The schools indicated that letters to the Department of Education were ignored and Education Development Officers were not contactable and seldom visited the schools. Perhaps one of the biggest challenges in this regard is capacity at the District Office level; for example, each Education Development Officer has thirty schools to attend to in their circuit. Support Services that should respond to cases concerning learner welfare are understaffed and cannot cope with the ever-growing problems in this area. Recent changes to the structure of the support services for schools will also reduce the direct assistance of the Department of Education for LSEN learners and learners with psycho-social problems. As from 2007, the Port Elizabeth District Based Support Team will essentially consist of three people (a remedial expert, a psychologist, and speech therapist) who are to visit and support over 250 schools in the Port Elizabeth District. There is a critical need for at least one social worker on this team. This team will target educators and not learners. Each school needs to form an Internal Learner Support Team to deal with social welfare and LSEN cases. The Department of Education will only intervene in extreme cases. The abandonment of Guidance Counsellor and School Psychologist posts leaves schools even less equipped to deal with this challenge than they may have been previously. Schools now need to develop their internal capacity to support learners with barriers to learning and social problems and

need to find ways of accessing support elsewhere than just the Department of Education. Both of the pilot secondary schools on the *Learning Schools Initiative* had initiated projects to address problems related to the social welfare of learners (see 6.8.4.5) through establishing links with community organisations. However, while community organisations such as Lifeline, Childline and FAMSA can provide some support to address these problems, this was not sufficient given the magnitude of the need.

On another front both schools were desperately in need of assistance in securing the schools from external negative influences. While both schools found sufficient funding (Masihambe through fundraising and Bonthoogte through competition money) their fencing was not sufficient. There was also a need for intervention in terms of feeding learners at the secondary school level and setting social welfare structures and follow up interventions in place. While the schools were successful to a certain extent in tapping into community based organisation support such as Missionvale Care for support with feeding the intensity and longevity of these interventions was not sufficient to address the continuous need. The extremity of poverty surrounding both schools manifested and impacted differently on each school. Both schools are in need of government assistance to address the affects of poverty, social dysfunctionality and health related issues such HIV/AIDS so that they can ultimately concentrate on their core business.

Both schools were very positive regarding their relationships with the GMSAF team. Some educators highlighted the way in which this relationship differed to the one that they have with the Department of Education. In the interviews educators identified the following reasons for the problematic relationship that they have with the Department of Education: the Department of Education has too many schools to service properly; the involvement of the Department of Education with the school is episodic; the cascading model of training applied by the Department of Education lacks effect; the Department of Education puts too many demands on the table and doesn't support schools to deliver these; the Department of Education seldom visits the school "*to see how we are doing*"; the Department of Education workshops are too short and there is no follow up; too many new things are introduced by the Department of Education too soon; often the workshops presented by the Department of Education are not of a high standard and the trainers are not competent (see 7.3.5.3).

While not an ideal relationship, the GMSAF relationship with the schools appeared to embody some of the qualities that the principals and educators were looking for in a relationship with an external agency. In the interviews, the principals and educators highlighted the following as positive characteristics of the relationship with the GMSAF

through the *Learning Schools Initiative*: non-interruptive interaction with the school; lending administration to support the project; lack of spoon-feeding; the GMSAF team are modest and non-prescriptive; availability of support and expertise; an equal and open relationship, “proper” involvement (also referred to a “hands on approach”); a professional approach; external pressure; pride in their school’s relationship with the GMSAF; and working within a planned approach where “everything comes together”. Educators also identified the opportunity to gain new knowledge and experience as an important factor in their relationship with the GMSAF: “the GMSAF has helped us a lot because it has shown us some things that we didn’t know such as how to get to the minds of the learners. It has helped us a lot”.

The principal of Bonthoogte indicated that given the socio-economic context of the schools they would have appreciated more resources from the GMSAF. Although it was emphasised at the beginning of the pilot with the secondary schools that the GMSAF would not supply resources, but would assist the schools to access resources, Bonthoogte continued to ask for resources and sponsorship that ranged from golf shirts to the sponsorship of a learner to attend an entrepreneurship indaba in Durban.

Again educators highlighted that for a school to maximise a relationship with an external support agency, the school needs to follow through on initiatives and school culture and structure needs to be adapted accordingly. Furthermore, educators need to make the most of opportunities offered and be motivated to contribute to improving their school. This is highlighted in the following statements: “I think it comes down once again to – my own energy must get me where you want me to be – not your instructions and your legislation and your policies – it’s going to make it more difficult for me to get there” and “people did not make full use of the GMSAF – if people made more use of you could have done more”.

### **7.3.6.3 Discussion**

The involvement and interest of external agency was important in initiating and sustaining the process in the two pilot schools involved in the *Learning Schools Initiative*. Initially the GMSAF hoped that as the initiative progressed these schools would institutionalise the initiative and develop their own internal change mechanisms. However, it was realised that the internal conditions in both schools needed to be improved sufficiently to support and sustain school development and in the interim they required external accountability and support to drive the process.

The tension between driving the initiative from the outside as opposed to allowing it to be driven from the inside (i.e. the tension between accountability and support) was something that the GMSAF team struggled with throughout the initiative. This was also complicated by the fact that the GMSAF had no real authority and was not providing substantial resources that could elicit accountability. Accountability was therefore dependent on the internal mechanisms of the school and educators. While the GMSAF team continually emphasised ownership of the school development process, they also became increasingly aware of the complexity of this and of ensuring a learning approach to adapting school culture and structure to accommodate and sustain change. In addition, the schools did not appear to have the internal ability or external support from the Department of Education to address the complexities of issues related to leadership, management (7.3.2), personal growth (7.3.3) and educator relationships (7.3.4). Ansell's (2004) research in schools facing challenging circumstances stresses the need to engage people or organisations that have a high level of expertise during the initial phase of school improvement in dysfunctional schools (see 4.10). Expertise together with capacity needs to be developed within the Department of Education at both a district and provincial level (Taylor, 2007 (forthcoming)). As the initiative progressed it also became evident that certain forms of accountability and support needed to come from government departments and the broader community. While an NGO can work with a school to lobby for support from government and the community they cannot take on this role on the part of the school. A much more consultative action-learning concept of partnership began to emerge for the GMSAF. This involves the GMSAF working closer with the school SMT and other stakeholders to bring about identified changes in the school.

Some of the focus area groups indicated that they needed some external monitoring and pressure to keep them motivated and a certain level of support to keep the process flowing (e.g. not too much intervention). Being accountable to an external agency also assisted with keeping the groups motivated to deliver to identify deadlines. While ideally encouragement, support and monitoring of school development should be situated within the school, where it is not, it initially needs to be sustained by an external agency. The principals and staff of both schools emphasised that the type of external support required for school development needed to be ongoing and readily accessible as opposed to a once off training session based on the cascading model. Essentially what seems to be required is a "critical friend" (Doherty et al., 2001:139) (see 4.10) whose roles and responsibilities, as are that of the school, are clearly defined (*ibid.*, Hargreaves & Hopkins, 1991).

Engaging the broader community in its capacity of external agent is also something that requires further investigation. The decentralisation of schooling (see 2.3.2) emphasises that

schools are part of a community and that the school and community need to work together to improve and maintain the quality of schools in specific areas. However, involving the different constituents of community is itself a complex process that requires much time and effort on the part of a school. The extent to which community organisations can address the enormity of psycho-socio problems presented by learners is also questionable. This is unless government supports these organisations to develop sufficient capacity to support schools in these areas. The question must also be raised concerning where the roles and responsibilities of the state versus financially impoverished communities begin and end in terms of securing, resourcing, supporting and holding schools accountable. In many instances, schools may not be able to move forward without mechanisms such as resources and support from the Department of Education. Like all other intervention mechanisms the way in which support and accountability are structured and the nature of these is critical in determining whether or not other mechanisms will be triggered at a school and classroom level. The structure of support is discussed in more detail in 7.4.

#### **7.4 Whole school development programmes as overarching mechanisms: structure and processes.**

There are many ways of structuring and introducing whole school development interventions. Explicitly or implicitly different interventions target different mechanisms at a school and/or classroom level. As discussed in 7.2 interventions are themselves mechanisms that are designed, in turn to trigger other mechanisms that will hopefully, given a supporting context, result in the anticipated change at a school and/or classroom level. Thus, an overarching project framework and underlying principles need to hold causal power, as does the nature of each sub-component intervention (i.e. vision crafting, restorative practice, professional development, etc.) that targets school and/or classroom level mechanisms.

As has been highlighted in this chapter, different schools at different levels of effectiveness require different types of interventions (Hopkins, 2001a). In addition the context in which a school is situated will also influence the required strategic intervention. Non-governmental organisations are in many cases afforded the luxury of selecting the type and number of schools with which they work, while government must generally roll out initiatives (e.g. whole school evaluation, curriculum – linked training, etc.) across a large number of schools in a district and/or province. The *Learning Schools Initiative* is a pilot project and a primary focus of the project is action learning. As is illustrated in Chapter six the *Learning Schools Initiative*

model and approach was adapted and refined as the GMSAF team consulted with the stakeholders and others involved in education development projects and reflected on what was taking place in the pilot schools.

A key "learning" fairly early in the initiative was that the schools should have been selected through means of a stringent selection process as opposed to being approached and invited to participate in the initiative. While the two pilot schools were selected by the Foundation according to specific criteria required for the pilot study they did not have to go through any further selection process. They were invited to join the Foundation as equal partners in piloting a whole school development. When the GMSAF reflected on the process it was noted that the manner in which the schools had been selected influenced the way in which they perceived the initiative and the way in which they responded to the initiative. As the initiative expanded to include primary schools it was also noted that primary schools required a slightly different intervention strategy to secondary schools. The selection process in itself, as the forerunner to intervention, can to a large degree determine the way in which a school responds to a non-governmental agency and the interventions it proposes. However, government is not afforded the luxury of selecting schools to work with. The Department of Education must target all schools for improvement and this in itself presents many challenges, especially in terms of finding approaches and interventions to improve "failing" or dysfunctional schools.

As discussed in Chapter six the GMSAF initially followed a needs driven intervention strategy linked to an adapted version of the Whole School Evaluation criteria. This followed what was initially named the "wow-now-how" process where the schools revisited their vision for the school, developed a vision for each focus area, reflected on where the school was in each focus area according to the given criteria, and developed an action plan for transforming each area. This process is not unlike that followed by most whole school development initiatives (Christie & Potterton, 1997, Hargreaves & Hopkins, 1991). The needs analysis process was important as it assisted the schools to really take stock of where they were and to engage in an intensive project planning process regarding the problems that faced the school. Plotting and monitoring action was also key to this process and assisted the staff to develop important skills in this area. It, however, became apparent as the initiative progressed that there were inherently dysfunctional components in each school that threatened not only the success and sustainability of the whole school development process but most other improvement initiatives in these schools. The identification of these dysfunctional components did not arise through the needs identification process – but instead emerged through interviews, conversations and observations as the initiative

progressed. These dysfunctional components included: lack of infusion of school values and vision in school activities; leadership and management issues; lack of motivation, commitment and professionalism on the part of many educators; problematic relations between staff members and relationship with community.

Thus, while it was acknowledged that the needs analysis approach linked to the whole school evaluation instrument was useful, in that the criteria presented a measuring stick for schools to judge what should be in place in their school in different areas, it did not reveal the more complex organisational dynamics that required attention. It was realised that a different approach was needed to tap into these deeper level dynamics and to pilot ways of addressing these with the both the internal and external school community. This process involved determining the concerns, needs and fears of the people at the heart of an organisation and to position these at the forefront of the change agenda (Senge, 1994). The model that emerged from the *Learning Schools Initiative* towards the middle and end of 2006, was therefore significantly different to the model piloted at the beginning of the initiative. The revised model proposed a dual approach of using a needs analysis instrument linked to the whole school evaluation criteria (including an educator development component linked to the IQMS instrument) and a different consultative, interview and discussion based approach to determine the school culture as well as the leadership, relational and personal dynamics that operated at a "hidden" level. This deeper layer of dynamics is similar to what the IQEA project refers to as the internal conditions of the school. A key finding of the IQEA was that if these internal conditions do not support change and improvement then these need to be created during the first phase of any project (Ainscow & Hopkins, as quoted in Gray et al., 1996:43). This again highlights that interventions need to be tailored according to the context and needs of the school and supports the first two steps in Hargreaves & Hopkins' (1991:40) model of school development planning (following the audit) of "taking account of the context" and "consulting about possible priorities".

The GMSAF team acknowledged that, although planning and development workshops were held with the pilot schools these need to be situated more within an action-learning model approach (Davidoff & Lazarus, 2002; Revens, 1982; Senge et al., 2000). Such an approach will allow, firstly for more ownership of the process on the part of the school, and secondly provide more opportunity for greater reflection and growth at a school level. It will also allow for the development process to be a change agent in the transformation of school culture (Hargreaves & Hopkins, 1991) and support the concept of the "self-renewing" school (Hopkins, 1996; Scheerens, 1992). Critical to this process is problem solving around key challenges such as finding meaningful and innovative ways to involve broader community in

the school improvement process. The GMSAF team is also proposing that more of the strategic planning and engagement process happens at the SMT level, rather than at the level of whole school development co-ordinator and focus area co-ordinators. This “engagement group” could also possibly include the SDT which allows for the inclusion of a whole school development co-ordinator in the process. However, as highlighted in 7.3.1, if the whole school development co-ordinator is a post level one educator they will need to be supported by management in order to effectively perform their role in the school. While teams of motivated and enthusiastic individuals within the school can be responsible for driving certain projects it is felt that this needs to be situated within the school planning context and to also involve management representation where relevant.

While many of the educators of the *Learning Schools Initiative* pilot schools highlighted that an overview of the model would have assisted them with buy-in and planning, it was extremely difficult to do this given the fact that the *Learning Schools Initiative* was a pilot project. It is also questionable to what extent a clear intervention strategy can be presented until such time that a thorough analysis of the school has been undertaken. Thus, perhaps at best an intervention framework with a menu of options can be presented until the different levels of needs analysis have been undertaken.

The way in which an intervention is structured will play a significant role in determining the mechanisms required that in turn would activate mechanisms within the school to bring about meaningful and sustainable change. This was pinpointed in the school development overview conducted by Roberts (2001:14) where she states that a common problem of many of these projects was that they “...lacked the mechanisms to compel change or institute the reforms which they promoted” (see 4.8.2.). Change mechanisms within a school can only be triggered if a whole school development initiative is knowingly structured in a specific way to target these. In addition school structure and culture need to adapt to sustain meaningful change (see 7.2.2.). Schools and agencies can go through the motions of change and development without effecting any real change in the process. Much concern has been expressed recently about the fact that some schools are inundated with different initiatives (Fullan, 2001a) which are carried out in an *ad hoc* manner and which target different parts of the school without being coordinated within a broader structure and vision. It is questionable whether such initiatives are sustainable in the long term. Of particular concern is that school development initiatives need to be designed in such a way that they identify the dysfunctional components of the school and develop workable intervention strategies with associated mechanisms to address these. The school community must be part of this design and intervention process. Where necessary external support in the form of the Department of

Education or the broader community must be elicited to assist in this process so that collaboration and ownership mechanisms are also triggered to drive and sustain school improvement process. The ultimate goal of everything that is initiated in this process must be to develop and secure an environment and the relevant knowledge and skills that contribute towards improving learner outcomes (Hopkins, 2001a; Reynolds, 2001).

## 7.5 Summary and concluding remarks

This chapter discusses some of the mechanisms at both a project (initiative) and school and classroom level that were identified in this study as important to bring about change in a specific context. While the contexts of the schools in which the intervention was initiated were different, there were many similarities regarding the contextual factors that contributed to or constrained change. Most of the mechanisms and causal powers discussed in this chapter also have implications for other school improvement processes that may be initiated in similar types of schools. Much change is still needed at various levels in each of the pilot secondary schools to create and sustain the type of school environment that supports quality teaching and learning. Until these changes are implemented there may be pockets of excellence in some classrooms and elsewhere in the school (e.g. Bonthoogte's RCL and Mathematics Department), however, the impact of this will be limited.

This study highlights a number of issues related to a whole school development intervention as initiated by an external agency. This study has primarily focused on the nature of mechanisms that are needed to support development at a school level. Reference has also been made to classroom level mechanisms from the perspective of professional development, as opposed to mechanisms that trigger learner performance. Within this context possible intervention mechanisms have also been identified and discussed. Where these intervention mechanisms have been piloted, the results of these have been highlighted and discussed. It became evident during this study that there are so many mechanisms that can be triggered at different levels to produce particular outcomes. For example, as discussed in 7.4 "ownership" and "collaboration with community" are also mechanisms that can be explored in terms of their causal powers and potential to drive and sustain change. This study, however, focused on the mechanisms that emerged from the *Learning Schools Initiative* pilot as essential (or foundational) for school development and change in a given context. The interplay between these mechanisms is also important and needs to be addressed through a well-structured intervention that acknowledges that some mechanisms are required to support and sustain others. Each of the six mechanisms identified in this

study is considered to have an important role in initiating and sustaining change both in the pilot secondary schools and other similar contexts.

School culture and structure are separate, yet interdependent, mechanisms that are required need to accommodate and support change and development. The dual process of culture facilitating school development and school development influencing and changing culture is something that needs to given due attention by any development initiative. The process of developing a school culture to support development and change was given some attention by the *Learning Schools Initiative* especially during the initial vision crafting sessions, it was acknowledged that this was not sufficient and more attention needs to be given to infusing the school vision and values through everything that happens in a school. It is, however, also acknowledged that leadership and management plays an important role in this process and, while it can be initiated by an external agency, it needs to be sustained from within. The importance of creating structures within a school for both development and maintenance is highlighted in school development literature (Hargreaves & Hopkins, 1991) and was affirmed in this study. Time is also highlighted as a valuable commodity in school life and school development processes need to take this into account by setting aside specific times for school development and maintenance activities. School culture and structures that support openness, vision, communication, collaboration, acknowledgement, reflection, development and change are crucial to sustain any whole school development intervention.

The area of leadership and management (7.3.2.) is a priority area of concern for every school. Leadership and management were highlighted as areas that required specific attention in both of the *Learning School Initiative* pilot secondary schools. Leadership and management to a large extent embody and promote organisational culture and structure the school accordingly. Much of what happens at the level of staff motivation, commitment, professionalism and relationships is governed and influenced by school leadership and management. Leadership and management therefore hold strong potential as change mechanisms. This study supports the move to explore and cultivate the type of leadership that not only guides, supports and monitors school development and change, but also nurtures staff and learners and creates an environment for quality education to take place despite the many challenges presented.

Proactive agency is essential in transforming structure from a state of morphostatis to morphogenesis (Archer, 1995) (see 5.7.8). The emergence of new structures through a change process requires the activity of agency. While leadership in particular needs to be proactive, so do educators and ideally also the supporting school community. In many

schools agency, for various reasons, supports a state of morphostatis. If meaningful transformation of structure is to take place then change mechanisms need to be triggered at the level of agency to assist change. In the context of the *Learning Schools Initiative*, staff morale, motivation, commitment and professionalism were seen not only to impact on educators' participation in school development projects, but also on the quality of teaching and learning. Problems with the disciplining of learners, in particular, as well as a feeling that learners did not appreciate or respect them, seemed to contribute to the despondency of staff at Bonthoogte. While staff at Masihambe expressed motivation and commitment to making a difference in the lives of their learners, this was not always obvious in terms of their presence in the classroom or commitment to teaching. Empowerment of educators at a variety of levels (personal as well as in terms of knowledge and skills) through different interventions that triggered personal growth was welcomed at both schools and appeared to be an important mechanism in rekindling meaning, motivation and commitment.

Related to this, staff relationships need to contribute towards a healthy organisational environment that supports "being one's best" (Dovey, 2006:5) in difficult and challenging circumstances. Restoring staff relationships and in association with this re cultivating trust for management is key for Bonthoogte. While the process of developing a culture of openness and sharing has commenced in both schools this needs to be extended and to become an integral part of both school cultures. Other relationships, such as those with the Department of Education and the broader school community, are also important especially in supporting school improvement.

Finding ways of intervening at a classroom level in a significant and meaningful way at a secondary school level remains a challenge for the *Learning Schools Initiative*. This is where the most significant change must take place so as to reach the *Learning Schools Initiative's* and ultimately the whole school evaluation policy's central goal of improving teaching and learning. The Language Across the Curriculum ACE shows that accredited programmes can be a potentially powerful mechanism if designed to target educator professional development needs. The IQMS holds great potential as a mechanism if adapted to yield results that are both reliable and valid and which are contextualised within the concept of a professional learning community. As highlighted in this study personal motivation, commitment and professionalism need to be considered in the context of professional development. If they are absent educators (possibly those who most require professional development) will not enrol in professional development programmes and may not maximise professional development opportunities so that they result in improved learner performance.

In South Africa accountability and support are presently essential change mechanisms for most schools. All schools need to be accountable to learners, parents, the broader community and the Department of Education for the quality of education that they offer. The National Whole School Evaluation Policy (South Africa. DoE, 2001e) presents the framework of a mechanism in this regard. However, while accountability is important, support to be able to deliver in terms of accountability is equally important for most South African schools. While non-governmental agencies can provide some support for schools this essentially needs to be done in partnership with the Department of Education. In many instances only the Department of Education has the authority and resources required to create enabling educational conditions.

All whole school development intervention initiatives as overarching mechanisms, specifically those aligned to whole school evaluation, need to be structured for maximum impact and incorporate knowledge from contemporary literature on international and national school effectiveness and improvement while simultaneously drawing on experience in these areas. The way in which an initiative as mechanism is structured has implications for the way it is received together with the way in which it is integrated and sustained within an organisation. Its structure also impacts on the extent to which it as mechanism can trigger other essential mechanisms required to support school development and change.

The way in which the different mechanisms and causal powers discussed in this chapter interact impacts on the extent to which a whole school development intervention will bring about change in a school. Each of the mechanisms discussed in the different sections above are important, however, it may be argued that some are more important than others. For example attempts to restore staff relationships and motivate educators may be undermined by ineffectual leadership. Similarly, an intervention that focuses on developing leadership and restoring relationships, but ignores the classroom level may make little real difference in improving the core business of schooling. In this regard, again, the way in which a school development intervention is structured is critically important. In addition, a needs analysis must access a school's needs at a variety of levels ensuring that issues related to leadership, relationships, personal empowerment and improving the quality of teaching and learning surface in addition to other essential needs such as securing the school environment and feeding learners.

Thus, while the *Learning Schools Initiative* did not necessarily commence the process of whole school development as a mechanism ideally structured around triggering key change mechanisms, partly due to lack of sufficient knowledge of school effectiveness and school

improvement, the nature of the piloting process and action learning approach ensured that valuable learning was integrated along the way and that the model was adapted accordingly. The result is the identification and exploration of key change mechanisms and their causal powers that have been integrated into a revised intervention that will hopefully result in sufficient school change. As can be seen in Chapter six the present whole school development process proposed by GMSAF in 2006 is very different to the initial process piloted during 2003 to 2005. However, it is acknowledged that only the *Learning Schools Initiative* and the project schools can achieve so much without sufficient support from the Department of Education and broader community.

As discussed in Chapter five this study focuses on an intensive rather than extensive model. The in-depth focus on a few schools allowed for the initiative to explore the intricacies of development and change within a given context. This study of whole development in two pilot secondary schools as facilitated by a non-governmental external agency affirms similar studies and highlights many issues that are currently being raised in South African media and academic literature. These are consolidated as recommendations and presented in Chapter eight.

## CHAPTER EIGHT

### CONCLUDING RECOMMENDATIONS, DISCUSSIONS AND REVIEW OF RESEARCH PROCESS

#### 8.1 Introduction

Chapter seven identifies and discusses the key mechanisms that contribute to the successful initiation and sustainability of a whole school development initiative in two pilot secondary schools in Port Elizabeth. It is apparent through this process, that identifying what is required to bring about change in a specific context also presupposes that the absence (Bhaskar, 1993) of some, or all of these mechanisms will not facilitate the desired outcome. While I have tended to focus on the identified mechanisms as separate constructs, the discussion of each highlights that they do not exist in isolation but that they interweave to produce different effects. The outcome of the interplay between the mechanisms depends on numerous factors that include context, willingness of agency and history. However, as mentioned in 7.5 while all of the mechanisms discussed in Chapter seven are important some may be more important than others in the context of school development. The recommendations in this chapter extend this discussion further.

As indicated in the goals and aims in Chapter one, this research focuses on a particular initiative and two specific schools in a given time and space (see 5.4.5). However, this research also reinforces many of the findings of contemporary school reform research and supports recent research into South African education that raises issues such as concern over educators' level of stress, motivation and preparedness, and highlights the impact that poverty has on schooling. Thus, while the recommendations in this chapter specifically refer to the *Learning Schools Initiative*, where appropriate these make reference to broader contexts. There has been much benefit in adopting an intensive approach and focusing in detail on whole school development in two schools over a four-year period. The levels of trust established with educators together with the opportunity to spend time verifying findings has been useful for this type of research. While not a case study in the traditional sense, a focus on two "cases" in the form of two schools has provided opportunity to intensively engage with the dynamics of these organisations. The freedom of the GMSAF to experiment with unique and innovative approaches has also provided opportunity to observe how non-conventional processes could address the needs of schools and educators and to make recommendations for refinement of these.

This chapter also reviews the research design and process. Finally suggestions are made for future research in this field that can further enhance the transparency of the mechanisms and causal powers that not only contribute to school development but that also influence the extent to which schools can perform at their maximum potential to deliver quality education for all learners.

## **8.2 Recommendations for whole school development initiatives**

This section makes recommendations for the future direction of the *Learning Schools Initiative*, and where appropriate makes suggestions of how the findings of this research can be of benefit to other school development initiatives. I have selected not to isolate and discuss each mechanism according to the structure presented in Chapter seven, but rather to discuss the mechanisms in the context of broader recommendations.

### **8.2.1 Structure of the intervention**

The structure of a school development intervention will determine what it targets as priority change elements and mechanisms and in turn what mechanism it constructs to trigger these. In order to determine which intervention mechanisms and which school and classroom mechanisms are important an initiative needs to (i) take the level of effectiveness (Hopkins, 2001a, 2001b; Taylor, 2007) of the school into account, (ii) take contextual factors into account, and (iii) determine how to bring about meaningful and sustainable change that ultimately improves the quality of teaching and learning in the given context. Each intervention is underpinned by a particular change philosophy and ethos that also guides the focus of the intervention and determines the mechanisms that it will address together with the methodology it will apply in this process. For example, the concept of a “self-renewing” school (Hopkins 1996) is underpinned by a belief in the capacity, ability and will of school communities and their potential to change despite constraints and external support. It is suggested that when agencies structure their interventions that they familiarise themselves with existing school reform theory and research, particularly research conducted in developing countries. In addition interventions need to work within the context of the numerous socio economic problems faced by the majority of South Africa’s schools and find ways of assisting schools to address these problems while not losing sight of and ultimately improving their core business.

The *Learning Schools Initiative* was developed and initially piloted within the framework of the National Whole School Evaluation Policy (South Africa. DoE, 2001e). This resulted in a needs-driven approach in which the needs of the school were determined by the school community and interventions tailored to address these. The GMSAF team linked this process to a vision-crafting session and adopted what they initially referred to as the “wow-now-how” approach where the school vision and mission set the tone for the intervention, the school community reflected on where they were currently in terms of the vision making use of a whole school evaluation instrument, and then developed a school development plan and action plans to address priority problem areas. This is a valuable process in that it involves the whole school community in school development. Many educators indicated that they felt empowered through this process that presented a framework in which they could contribute to the development of their school in a meaningful way.

The biggest threats to involving educators in school development, apart from issues related to the will to act, motivation and commitment, are those of (i) the time that educators have available for this process and, (ii) the management of the process within the school. Both of these issues need to be explored further within the *Learning Schools Initiative*. It is also suggested that following the whole school evaluation (as undertaken by the whole school), instead of dividing educators into the focus area groups, the option of motivated and committed educators working on priority projects that interest them should be explored and that this be incorporated under appropriate school management structures (e.g. HODs, management responsibilities, etc.). This will address three issues within the current *Learning Schools Initiative* structure (i) the problematic move from focus area assessment to working on projects, (ii) educators feeling overwhelmed by too many problems in a focus area, and (iii) the conflict experienced by post-level one educators working in areas that overlap with management structures. It also offers a way to harness the energy and potential of enthusiastic staff members and works on developing a critical mass (see 8.1.3) as opposed to expecting the unwilling to participate in the process. Specific school projects may also provide a tangible way for an external agency to work with a school on achieving set goals and measurable outcomes. It is not necessarily suggested that an agency work with a school on all its priority projects, but that rather the school and agency identify one or two of these projects that they can jointly tackle. Alternatively an agency may have a specific expertise (i.e. improving literacy) that they are able to offer to the school to address a specific project.

The school development process fits well within the concept of a learning school community and it is recommended that it be situated within a model of reflection, planning, implementation and evaluation. It is also recommended that the whole school community,

including the SGB, participate in this process. In addition it is suggested that this learning process also include how to create development and maintenance structures (Hopkins, 1996) within the school that will both sustain the development process and entrench new initiatives in the day-to-day school activities and culture.

As discussed in Chapter seven, while a needs analysis approach is valuable, the real needs of the school are not always made apparent through this process. Issues that hindered school development such as problems at a leadership level and problematic relationships were not revealed. These only came to the fore in the in-depth interviews conducted with the staff at the schools and through a process of interaction with staff members. It is therefore recommended that a dual needs assessment process be followed. The first process, situated within the framework of whole school evaluation, would be that described above where the school community undertakes an annual school evaluation and addresses these within a learning approach linked to a school development plan. Some schools may be sufficiently effective that they would need to undertake only this initial school evaluation process. The second process, that would need to be undertaken by an external agency, would involve interviews with the staff members to determine deeper more sensitive dynamics related to leadership, relationships and personal commitment that have a significant impact on the successful implementation of the first process. It is recommended that this second process form the basis for designing a tailor made intervention that can activate positive change support mechanisms in a school. It is acknowledged that many of these mechanisms are not just necessary for initiating and sustaining school development processes but also impact on the overall performance of school staff and ultimately on the quality of education provided by a school. It is not suggested that a new process and programme to address these areas be developed for each school, but rather that the particular programme mix and process be adjusted together with the programme content and process.

Priority also needs to be given to creating a school culture that supports change and development (Davidoff, 2002; Hargreaves & Fullan, 1998; Hopkins, 2001b.). While it is anticipated that some of this will be addressed in the programmes and processes suggested above, a more specific intervention that targets the transformation of school culture might be required. It is suggested that this be linked to a process of determining core values linked to the schools vision and mission and that these be the basis for school policy, interactions, activities and any decisions that need to be made.

It is therefore recommended that in the next phase of piloting the Learning Schools Initiative explore a school development model that is structured according to the principles and

process of (i) a dual process of needs-assessment, (ii) the creation and mentoring of a learning community, (iii) interventions to address key change mechanisms such as leadership, relationships and personal empowerment, (iv) “reculturing” (Hargreaves & Fullan, 1998:129), (v) a stratified and flexible approach that caters for different types of schools (see 8.1.5), and (vi) a method of working with schools on key projects. While it may not have been possible during the initial piloting process to provide the schools with an overview of this process, and it is acknowledged that the overview will be dependent on the deeper level needs that arise, it is suggested, as requested by some educators, that they be provided with a tentative overview of what the intervention will involve.

### **8.2.2 Key focus on leadership and management development**

This research affirms the premise that very little meaningful development can take place in a school that lacks effective leadership. It also highlights that lack of effective school leadership not only influences change and development but also influences all aspects of school effectiveness. The identification of the school principal as the key change agent (Fullan, 2001a) emphasises the importance of this role. The leadership style and approach of top leadership in both of the *Learning School Initiative* pilot schools does not create an environment that supports sustainable change directed at improving quality in these schools. This is not to say that the leadership does not appear willing or capable but rather that the challenges faced by leadership require specific interventions and approaches. It is acknowledged that internationally school leadership faces many challenges (*ibid.*), however, South Africa’s high poverty level and the impact of this on schooling, together with lack of sufficient support from the Department of Education in certain provinces exacerbates these challenges.

Two areas that specifically influenced top leadership in this study were history and staff dynamics. The history of the principal’s relationship with the school influences the way in which he is accepted and respected by staff members. The second area that at times linked to this is “pockets” of resistance to leadership within the staff. This was evident in both pilot schools. In addition leaders need to be able to deal with difficult staff dynamics and to be able to create an environment in which relationships can be restored and strengthened. They also need to be able to exercise appropriate authority when staff members do not adhere to their code of conduct and/or uphold the values of the school.

As was discussed in 7.3.1 what seems to be needed is a “different” type of leadership (Davidoff, 2006b: 6) that equips leaders, especially school principals, to deal with the specific nature of challenges in South African schools. First and foremost a personal development empowerment approach is needed (see 8.1.3) where leadership can reflect on their own abilities and identify factors that might inhibit effective leadership, such as past history with a school. Secondly leaders need to be equipped with important leadership skills that enable them to manage their staff and school effectively, access and network with partners, manage the instructional component of the school and lead others in a change process through creating a learning community that reflects on and adapts to ensure quality teaching and learning. Thirdly leaders need to role model what they expect of others and through this to cultivate a culture of respect. Thus, while leaders need to be able to display an important combination of different leadership styles that embody elements of transformative (Higgs 2000), participatory, charismatic (Roberts & Roach, 2006) and moral leadership (Evans, 2001), they also need to display the dimensions of leadership highlighted by Kouzes & Posner (1998) and Ansell (2004) in their research (see 4.9.1) and specifically those identified by Davidoff (2006b: 6) that have to do with “vision, passion, love, imagination, and a burning sense of commitment to the social and human dimension of education”. Support mechanisms need to be developed to ensure that principals do not burn out in this process and receive support sufficient to their needs and abilities.

One of these mechanisms should be the development of the SMT as a circle of support for the principal. The SMT members, as the core leadership in a school, should jointly work on developing their leadership capacity and on driving and sustaining school change and development. The School Governing Body could also be developed to reinforce this support. It is recommended that the *Learning Schools Initiative* develop a leadership programme that targets the development of the SMT so as to equip this team with important skills and knowledge and to rekindle their passion for education and development. It is recommended that this process incorporate a mentorship component where an identified mentor initially works with the SMT to deal with core issues in the school. It is also recommended that this link with the SMT, rather than with a separate person in the form of the whole school development co-coordinator, be the agency's point of interfacing with the school for whole school development and other related change processes. Again specific leadership interventions need to be based on the need of the school, and, as highlighted by Ansell (2004), sometimes the only meaningful intervention may be to remove the principal from a school until such time that certain issues are dealt with or if need be indefinitely (see 8.1.5).

This research also highlights that there are many educators with leadership potential in schools that should be given opportunity to develop these skills and to apply their motivation and commitment to the benefit of the school. As indicated in this research these informal leaders may struggle to work within the management structures of the school. Channels therefore need to be created for them to contribute towards aspects of school development, and formal school leadership needs to add support and authority to what they have been tasked to do. The SMT therefore needs to be encouraged to draw on the strengths, talents and passion of identified staff members and to provide them with opportunity and support to use these in an approved and structured way. Management also needs to guard against this becoming a clique where other staff members are overlooked or feel offended. Structures that are established in schools to facilitate school development need to draw on these informal leaders and to provide opportunity for their growth in this process.

It was not within the scope of this research to address the issue of School Governance with particular reference to School Governing Bodies. While the school SGBs were involved in the school development and planning process neither school appeared to have a fully functioning SGB and the Learning Schools Training programme for SGBs only commenced in late 2006. However, the role of the SGB in school development is acknowledged as being potentially powerful.

### **8.2.3 Personal empowerment and relationships**

The social nature of education is highlighted in Chapter seven. Education essentially involves individuals and relationships at different levels of the system. In order to deliver their best educators need to feel motivated to do so and be committed to improving learner performance. They ideally also need to work in a positive environment that supports what happens in the classroom.

This research confirms other findings that many educators feel despondent and are no longer motivated to be involved in extra curricula activities, or in some cases even to perform their core business of teaching in the classroom. The latter, apart from being expressed vocally, is indicated in the high level of absenteeism amongst educators both in attending school, arriving on time and even while at school being absent from the classroom. Some educators also indicated a disinterest in learners and a lack of understanding of, or interest in, the conditions in which the learners lived. Lack of return from learners in the form of appreciation or respect together with a lack of acknowledgement or affirmation from their

employer, the Department of Education, further contributes to the low morale of educators. The absence of meaning that educators experience in relation to their work is a key mechanism that needs to be reactivated so as to stir the will to act.

Early in the *Learning Schools Initiative* educators highlighted motivation sessions as a priority need. Bonthoogte went as far to suggest a form of therapy to assist educators to deal with the effects of severe depression and stress. Many educators indicated that they benefited from the motivation sessions initiated by the *Learning Schools Initiative* and particularly enjoyed the opportunity to focus on themselves and experienced a sense of personal growth. It is evident in this research that many educators have not been afforded an opportunity for personal growth and development. Many are therefore struggling with personal issues and lack of skills to deal with both intra- and inter personal relationships. Educators are expected to teach learners to be their best and to role model this behaviour when they do not necessarily possess the skills and knowledge to do so themselves. As discussed in 7.3.4 good staff relationships positively influence what happens in the classroom while negative relationships have the opposite effect and create a more stressful working environment for educators. In addition educator self-actualisation strengthens the educator learner relationship and positively influences the way educators perceive and interact with learners (Jantjies, 1998).

While initially the *Learning Schools Initiative* focused on motivation sessions for educators it is recommended that these sessions adopt a stronger personal growth and empowerment focus. This needs to incorporate mechanisms that trigger meaning within the context of striving towards a school vision and core values and examining ones personal vision and values in relation to this. Part of this intervention should focus on equipping educators with coping mechanisms and skills (e.g. time management, stress management, etc.). In addition they should also focus on skills that relate directly to the teaching environment but which simultaneously empower educators in a specific area, e.g. coping with LSEN learners, dealing with conflict management, new discipline techniques, developing their language ability, etc. It must also be considered that some of the most significant empowerment opportunities may be linked directly to improving educators' knowledge and skills in their learning area or subject.

Evidence of tangible results is important in this process. Educators (and community members who are involved in school development) need to see improvements in their school so as to reinforce this feeling of empowerment and belief that they can make a difference. It is therefore important that all contributions that educators make towards school improvement

are acknowledged and that overall school improvements are publicised and celebrated to fuel commitment and motivation.

It was initially also envisioned that personal motivation (and development) and restoring of relationships were two separate interventions. However, the feedback from the restorative practice workshops and my observation of subsequent workshops suggests that this is not the case. Much of what is addressed in a relationship context also relates to the individual and how they relate to others. One of the most revealing comments made by one of the educators in the evaluation of the restorative practice session was that she had never considered that her late coming had any impact on the other educators. In addition, many educators identified personal insight and time to reflect as the highlight of the restorative practice session. It therefore appears that a programme and related process that, as mechanism, targets personal growth, meaning and restoration and strengthening of staff relationships could be developed and feature as an integral component of the *Learning Schools Initiative*. It is anticipated that one of the additional beneficial outcomes of this programme would be an improvement of staff and learner relationships and an improvement of school and classroom discipline.

The critical question related to such a programme is of course the will of agency to participate in such a process and to be open to change, personal growth and strengthening of relationships. This again raises the question of how many staff members does it take to form a critical mass, and how does a school deal with those staff members who either do not participate in this process or do not apply what they learn? These are issues that need to be explored further through research and experiential piloting (see 8.3).

It must be acknowledged that given different individual history and response, not every educator will participate in the process or participate in the same way, however at this stage in history interventions need to work with the willing in the hope that the majority of other educators will join the process. Perhaps in the future more stringent educator selection and preset development opportunities need to be explored by relevant agencies. This, however, needs to be undertaken against the backdrop of a looming threat of a national educator shortage (see 2.4.3).

#### 8.2.4 Work with mechanisms to improve teaching and learning

Research indicates that at the heart of quality education is what happens at the classroom level between educators and learners (Fullan, 2001a; Taylor et al., 2003; West & Hopkins, 1996) (see 4.9.5). It is highlighted in 8.1.3 that if the ultimate outcome of education – learner performance – is to be improved then all school development needs to have as its goal the improvement of the quality of teaching and learning. It is acknowledged that given the different levels of performance of different schools (Hopkins, 2001b) this may not be the first place of intervention in all schools; all interventions however need to be structured around this as the end goal. As discussed in 7.3.5, finding a way of intervening at a classroom level in the two pilot secondary schools proved particularly difficult for the *Learning Schools Initiative*. It is recommended that the *Learning Schools Initiative* and other school development initiatives investigate ways of impacting on the classroom level through investigating potential levers and mechanisms that work in this area.

It is obvious, from the comments of the educators, that the Language Across the Curriculum ACE had significant impact and was highly esteemed by the educators who attended it. This qualification was also found to have impact on the Quality Learning Programme (QLP) (Taylor, 2007). Educators comments indicate that they gained a wide range of skills in this qualification i.e. an understanding of outcomes-based education, how to manage their classes, etc. This qualification empowered educators professionally to feel more confident in their teaching and to be more open to allowing others to observe their teaching practice. It would therefore appear that accredited high quality focused programmes provide a highly effective way of making a difference at a classroom level. The challenges are that (i) this is a costly route, and (ii) will not be taken up by educators who are not interested in devoting time to a qualification, or who are busy with a higher-level qualification.

Professional development also needs to be situated within a lifelong learning approach where informal learning is as highly regarded as formal structured learning. As is highlighted by Fullan (2001a:253) professional development needs to be supported within the school by processes linked to the concept of a professional learning community. This provides a way of extending external learning experiences within the school environment and provides a way of highlighting and sustaining the centrality of teaching and learning within a school. This process may initially require the assistance of an external facilitator to set a framework in which the principles, processes and structures of a professional learning community are

established within a school. The hope would be for these to influence and become part of the school culture.

The Integrated Quality Management System's educators' assessment component holds much potential as a mechanism that contributes towards the development of a culture of professional learning communities as well for identifying areas of professional development for individual educators. The results of the application of the present instrument as presented by the two pilot secondary schools were, however, not encouraging. It is suggested that this instrument be refined so that it incorporates the standards of quality teaching and learning and is administered within the ethos of a professional learning community. This is an area that the *Learning School Initiative* could investigate in future, i.e. the refinement of the instrument and situating of this within a professional learning community framework. In addition the results of the IQMS need to be met by the Department of Education. Educators may not take the process seriously if no interventions are put in place by the Department of Education to respond to their identified needs. The Department of Education is also in an authoritative position and can insist that educators attend professional development sessions. It, however, needs to ensure that these sessions are high quality, are timeously delivered and directly meet the educators' professional development needs. As discussed in 7.3.5 educators also need to be motivated and committed to undertake any form of professional development, and mechanisms such as those discussed under 8.2.3 may need to be triggered before professional development can result in its intended outcomes.

While the *Learning Schools Initiative* has offered some support at the classroom level in the two pilot secondary schools this has not been sufficient. Additional ways of intervening at this level need to be investigated. The question is also raised of the extent to which an agency without authority can intervene at this level sufficiently in schools that have not reached a certain level of effectiveness. No amount of professional development will make a difference if educators and learners do not spend sufficient time in the classroom teaching and learning. Both of the pilot secondary schools experienced problems in this area due to high levels of absenteeism of educators from school, educators being at school but sitting in the staff room, educators focusing on higher grades at the expense of lower grades, not sufficient educators and lack of monitoring and control of learners. This problem needs to be addressed before any intervention at the classroom level will yield significant results. In addition the extent to which educator motivation and commitment need to be enhanced prior to professional development interventions also needs to be further explored.

### 8.2.5 The need for accountability and support mechanisms and structures

It is evident from this research that both of the pilot schools required support from an external agency to initiate the process of whole school development, to present a framework for this and to work with the schools in developing structures to sustain this process. Both schools responded well to the attention of an outside agency. In essence it seemed as though they needed someone to look in from the outside, take an interest in what they were doing, provide guidance and expertise where required and to praise them as deserved. Both schools also seemed to respond well to a level of external accountability in that it assisted in creating and maintaining internal impetus as they worked towards identified goals. Ideally this role should be performed by the Department of Education within a framework of accountability and support (Taylor et al., 2003) (see 4.8.4).

An intervention initiated by a non-government agency depends essentially on the good will of the educators and the community to take up and utilise what is offered (see 7.3.6). As suggested by Hopkin's (2001b) typology of schools there are schools that will be able to initiate and sustain school development without external support. These, however, seem to be in the minority in South Africa (Taylor, 2007(forthcoming)), especially given the additional challenges that poverty poses to school development. Schools that require external agency may also require the associated authority that is held by the Department of Education to set in place and bring about initial change. Leadership seems to particularly need this authoritative support in dealing with problematic staff members and in stipulating the requirement for participation in development initiatives. In the Port Elizabeth District, the Education Development Officers (EDO) each have approximately thirty schools in their circuits. It is therefore questionable to what extent they are able to support schools in the manner required. Until such time that this situation changes alternative support measures and networks need to be developed for schools. It is suggested that non-government agencies work in partnership with the Department of Education to achieve this.

The concept of appointing a mentor or "support change agent" for schools that require general assistance, as well as within the context of school evaluation and development is also something that needs further investigation. It is envisioned that this person would work alongside management to support the school to meet identified goals. Again, ideally this should be the school's EDO, but given the current situation within the Eastern Cape, this is not a realistic expectation and other people may need to be sourced. While the GMSAF to some extent played this role with the *Learning Schools Initiative* it is recommended that

specific people be appointed by the initiative to perform this role. It is also recommended that these people work closely with the school's EDO and the broader community to assist the school to meet its needs.

To ultimately be accountable to learners, parents and the Department of Education, schools must offer a high quality of education. There are, however, many factors that impact on what happens at a classroom level and these need to be addressed where they impact on quality education. For example, hunger impacts on a learner's ability to engage in learning, as does their level of motivation. The high levels of poverty, violence and issues related to discipline further impact on this (see 2.4 and 7.2.3), as do other issues related to learner welfare and health. In addition inclusive education policy also presents challenges. Of particular concern for the schools in this study and the schools involved in other GMSAF initiatives is the decreasing support services provided by the Department of Education. It is recommended that the *Learning Schools Initiative* work with schools to develop links with community organisations that can assist the school in a number of priority need areas (e.g. social welfare support for learners, feeding of learners, etc.). In addition, if schools are expected to deal with social welfare and LSEN issues then they needed to be equipped with the expertise to do so and to be supported in this process, especially where the services of a professional psychologist or social worker are required. In addition there is much need for extra-curricula activities that provide stimulation for learners and that develop their potential in various areas and community organisations can play a role in assisting with this.

Both schools identified lack of parental involvement in learners' education to be problematic. Masihambe identified low literacy levels of parents and their fear of being summoned to the school as potential reasons for this. Other issues such as long working hours and dysfunctional family situations together with parent absenteeism also play a role in this. While both schools have started working on ways of addressing this such as holding sessions to inform parents of the new curriculum and improving parents' levels of literacy, there is still a very low level of parental involvement in both schools. Additional ways of involving parents in school activities and providing them with essential skills and information need to be investigated. Using school facilities (such as the computer laboratories installed at both schools) to benefit the surrounding community may also result in greater ownership of the schools by both parents and the immediate community. The *Report of the Public Hearing of the Right to Basic Education* (HRC, 2006:30) also highlights that given the social nature of education social participation is a necessary component. The report stresses that the social challenges of South Africa especially necessitate community participation and proposes that structures such as community forums be formed to facilitate this process.

As discussed in 4.2, although quality schooling can make a difference it cannot compensate for home background. Given the high level of dysfunctionality in South African society, there appears to be a need to explore ways of involving a schools' community in supporting and reinforcing the values and principles as well as knowledge and skills that are promoted through the school curriculum and ideally embodied in a school's culture. The *in loco parentis* role of schools has been extended to such an extent that schools need to provide an environment that role models, counsels, nourishes, supports and educates learners. This research highlights that schools cannot perform this role in isolation; they need the support of the broader community (including community organisations) in order to achieve this. Mass mobilisation of community and the activation of social capital play an important role in this context. Community must be mobilised to support and capacitate schools, especially where other role players are absent or struggle to perform.

#### **8.2.6 The need for resources**

Lack of resources in a variety of forms impacted significantly on the ability of the educators at both pilot secondary schools to offer high quality educational experiences. The need for educational resources such as textbooks has been highlighted as important for learners in countries with a high level of poverty (Fuller 1997; Levin & Lockheed 1993). Lack of textbooks and other reading material also impacts on learners' literacy progress especially in communities where there is generally no culture of reading at home. While providing textbooks for the schools is not a viable option for the *Learning Schools Initiative*, especially in terms of replicability, ways of sourcing textbooks and other educational resources need to be explored with the schools and the District Office Department of Education. It is also acknowledged, that physical resources are by themselves not mechanisms that will bring about improved teaching and learning. They need to be supported by parallel interventions.

Lack of teaching staff is also a problem for both schools. Again this issue rests at the door of the Department of Education. While Masihambe received additional staff from the Department of Education they were still understaffed, as was Bonthoogte with the average class size at both schools being 45 to 50 learners per class. A shortage of desks and chairs was particularly a problem for Masihambe as was the lack of non-educator staff (i.e. lack of caretakers, cleaners, etc).

The schools also had to see to their own infrastructure needs such as securing the school with a fence and replacing broken windows, repairing furniture, etc. Both schools acquired funding of their own accord to fence their school premises. This fencing is not sufficient especially in the case of Bonthoogte where gangs often find a point of entry onto the school grounds. While schools can contribute to raising funds for their infrastructure requirements fundraising appears to be particularly challenging for them. New fees policies have resulted in a drastic decrease in the amount of money schools receive from this source. The amount of money provided annually by the Department of Education is not sufficient and in the case of the two pilot secondary schools was not even sufficient to cover their water and lights accounts for the year. Fundraising is a time-consuming activity that requires specific skills. Both schools tried hard in the area of fundraising but both indicated that the amount of time spent on this did not yield the desired results and in the cases of fundraising events they barely broke even.

While NGOs, such as the *Learning Schools Initiative*, can make some contribution to schools in the Eastern Cape in the form of resources, their contribution is not sufficient to address the extreme deficiency in this area. Providing essential resources and infrastructure to schools is first and foremost the responsibility of the Department of Education.

### **8.3 Review of the research process**

Critical realism provided an extremely challenging although ultimately rewarding paradigm for this research. It was challenging in the sense that it was difficult to source examples of other research in the field. Thus, issues related to choosing methods and particularly data analysis techniques were not apparent and had to be deduced from what was available. There were also different interpretations of what constituted a mechanism within the field of evaluative research. While some studies focused on the intervention as mechanism, others focused on the targeted mechanisms and others focused on both. I opted for the latter approach and while difficult to work with in terms of structured divisions in Chapter seven, I feel that this offers a more comprehensive explanatory discussion of the different levels of mechanisms in a whole school development initiative.

Another particularly challenging part of this process was identifying the generative mechanisms and related causal powers at work within the *Learning Schools Initiative* and attempting to analyse and discuss these as accurately as possible. As the *Learning Schools Initiative* evolved and changed shape so did my conceptualisation of what mechanisms were

critical to whole school development. Working as co-ordinator of the *Learning Schools Initiative* was beneficial in that I could make recommendations for adaptation of the model as new findings emerged and could observe the impact of these changes. I was fortunate in that my relationship with the schools was based on trust and openness, however, being part of the GMSAF team and representing a development agency also meant that educators may not have expressed their criticism of the initiative as openly with me as they might have done with an outsider and this had to be taken in to consideration throughout the research process. In a way focusing on the mechanisms for success or failure of the initiative, as opposed to just the initiative itself guarded against this process to a large extent. Another benefit as mentioned in (1.3 and 3.10.2) is working within the GMSAFs ethos of admitting mistakes or acknowledging challenges and finding ways of addressing these. I found the process of focusing on generative mechanisms particularly useful to me in my role as project co-ordinator tasked with overseeing the development of a whole school development model.

The different sources of data when combined provided adequate evidence to make preliminary recommendations for the *Learning Schools Initiative* and similar development interventions. The interviews that were loosely structured around potential mechanisms in the first round and more so in the second round yielded a wealth of information. I found the interview process to be fairly intense at times as many educators welcomed the opportunity to talk to someone about their experiences and the problems that they faced. The interview transcripts were long and involved a careful analysis to ensure that no valuable data slipped through the cracks. Three unanticipated but particularly valuable sources of data were the evaluation feedback forms from Val Dovey's Restorative Practice session, the investigatory leadership programme report and Sue Davidoff's report on the leadership training session. The opportunity to spend a joint session with Val Dovey and Sue Davidoff to discuss issues related to the *Learning Schools Initiative* and, linked to this, general issues pertaining to the development of educators, leadership and schools, was particularly helpful in assisting me to work through some of the questions that emerged from the research process.

Informal discussions with educators from the schools also provided a valuable source of data and required diligence in terms of journaling these discussions as soon as possible. Dealing with confidentiality in relation to informal discussions and information revealed in the interviews was also a challenge especially in terms of not wanting to lose the value that it added to the research and understanding of particular mechanisms, while simultaneously wanting to protect the educators involved.

The planning and reporting sessions and especially the focus area groups project reports and consultations provided another useful source of data that imparted another dimension to the research and provided actual verification of what the schools had achieved. Consultations with the focus area groups afforded opportunity to probe why they had succeeded at some things but were struggling with others.

Despite the challenges, I found it particularly rewarding to work within a critical realist ontology which affirms that a social science researcher can determine a level of empirical reality within a given time and space. In a sense this seems to provide a way to establish a certain level of credibility in the field of evaluative research outside of a positivist results focused approach. What is particularly useful, given South Africa's past history and present socio-economic environment, is the focus on the interaction of structure and agency and on the generative mechanisms and causal powers that interact to produce specific outcomes. In essence this perspective provides a framework for drilling down into deeper layers of reality and analysing each of these in the process as opposed to explaining what appears on the surface.

Perhaps the biggest limitation of this study is its duration. While the study covers just over a four year period it should ideally be a longitudinal study – specifically in terms of being able to intervene sufficiently at a classroom level and to assess the impact of this intervention. Although the APAP assessment of the literacy, numeracy and lifeskills of a group of learners in grade 8 and then again in grade 10 showed good improvements at both schools compared to national aggregates, these need to be tracked over a longer period before being considered a reliable indicator. Only a longitudinal study associated with direct intervention in these areas will be able to determine the extent to which the schools are contributing towards the improvement of learner performance. Another limitation is that the study only focussed on two secondary schools, exploring key mechanisms across a broader base of schools would have strengthened the findings. However, the purpose of this study was to provide an intensive rather than an extensive analysis. In addition, while constant adaptation of the *Learning Schools Initiative* model provided opportunity to test out new concepts it was sometimes difficult to link inputs and outcomes and the mechanisms at work between these. Ideally a similar research process needs to be undertaken of the model in its revised form as it rolls out to other schools in similar and different contexts.

#### 8.4 Suggestions for further research

Improving the quality of South African schooling is high on the agenda of the National Department of Education. Addressing quality must be done in a meaningful way that has maximum impact. Any attempt to improve quality needs to interface with complexities and reality of South Africa's schooling environment and the many challenges associated with poverty together with the impact of a history of poor education and training for the majority of South African citizens. While it is acknowledged that there has been an increase in research into improving South African schools over the past few years (Taylor, 2007 (forthcoming)), very little of this research addresses the complexities of school improvement. Intensive research is needed in different areas of school improvement, particularly in areas where continual logjams are experienced that threaten to undermine any attempts at improving quality.

Potential research areas, based on the findings of this study, include:

- The development and investigation of a stratified school development model that can be applied in various ways in different types of schools.
- Linked to the above, the investigation of the minimum conditions that need to be in place in a school for an external agency other than the Department of Education to work in it.
- An investigation of the factors that create the potential for school development and whether these can be cultivated if absent.
- The extent to which the concept of a "self renewing" (Hopkins, 1996) school can be actualised in South Africa.
- The further investigation of the nature of support and accountability structures that schools at different levels require to facilitate development with particular focus on the role of the Department of Education.
- The nature of support services required by schools to assist them in addressing the holistic needs of the learner and who could provide these.
- The investigation of a mentoring and development programme for school leadership.
- Case studies of exemplar schools and role model principals and educators.
- The investigation of methods that schools can draw on to elicit community support in school development and linked to this ways of engaging parental interest and support in the education process.

- An investigation of the mechanisms and causal powers necessary to cultivate a culture of motivation, commitment and professionalism amongst South African educators.
- An exploration of ways of intervening at a classroom level so as to impact on the quality of education, with a particular focus on developing fundamental skills such as literacy, numeracy and lifeskills at a primary school level and identified learning areas/subjects at a secondary school level.
- An investigation of the extent to which the educators' assessment component of IQMS provides a framework for improving teaching and learning.

A credible body of research and related knowledge needs to be developed within the field of quality schooling in South Africa that can be used to make knowledgeable decisions and to develop meaningful interventions. Most people who work in the South African education environment are aware of the huge challenges that face the majority of South African schools and which impact negatively on the delivery of quality teaching and learning. What are needed now, however, are practical suggestions and quality solutions to address these challenges that acknowledge the capacity of schools and the responsibility of the Department of Education.

## **8.5 Concluding remarks**

School development is often framed in a process that makes it look simple: begin with vision crafting, conduct a SWOT analysis, proceed with planning and implement school development plans. Most schools could complete steps one to four without too much difficulty. The extent to which their vision is meaningful or shared and supported by the school community may be questionable, as may the level of involvement of the school community in the SWOT analysis and subsequent planning process. Thus, a vision may be written and displayed and plans may be compiled but neither of these may make any real difference to the school or especially to improving the quality of teaching and learning. Most South African schools will also struggle at the level of implementation especially if there is not a certain level of functionality within the school. In addition, the contextual factors that impact on implementation are daunting and schools need passion, drive and support in order to make breakthroughs that will bring about meaningful change. School development as a process, must be based on an in-depth understanding of change, organisational transformation and personal development and particularly the mechanisms that initiate and sustain these as well as the mechanisms that constrain them. It is only through engaging

with these mechanisms and exploring how they play out in different contexts that the Department of Education, non-government agencies and policy makers will be able to bring about significant and meaningful change in South African schools.

This study has attempted to investigate mechanisms that contribute to school development in the context of a particular intervention with two secondary schools in the Eastern Cape. I have discussed some of the complexities related to school development as experienced in this intervention and explored some of the mechanisms and causal powers related to these. I hope that these will be of use to other agencies working in the field of school development, quality and change. In working with the two schools in this study, as both a development practitioner and researcher, I have become increasingly aware of the overwhelming challenges that educators and school communities face. As highlighted in the Report of the Public Hearing on the Right to Basic Education (2006) the high levels of poverty in our country are severely felt in the majority of South African schools. Dysfunctional family situations, or in increasingly more cases the absence of parental presence, pose a particular challenge to education in that in many instances the role of educating South African children lies solely with the school. School communities that really want to make a difference have to extend their role way beyond that of educating the learner to ensuring that the learner is ready to learn. This often means catering for the nourishment and other social welfare needs of learners. Schools and educators can choose whether or not to adopt a broader focus to developing the learner and work towards creating the conditions that enhance and support learning potential. The two schools in this study together with the four primary schools that later joined the *Learning Schools Initiative* all indicated a desperate need for support in being able to create these conditions and to deal with other issues such as LSEN. Other priorities such as properly securing the school premises to make sure that educators and learners can teach and learn in a safe non-threatening environment and the adequate supply of textbooks or notes also require external support. While there is indication that great strides are being made in these areas by the Department of Education in some South African Provinces, the Eastern Cape has far to go. If schools are to be expected to deliver quality education they need much assistance from government to do so and some schools more than others. While strong leadership and motivated educators can do a lot to develop their school there are areas that remain the responsibility of the Department of Education or other government departments. In situations where there is no or poor leadership and/or lack of educator morale or accountability, or unacceptable infrastructure, the Department of Education must intervene to establish the basic conditions for education.

Thus, while in first world countries school improvement or development is primarily centred around improving teaching and learning, in South Africa and other developing countries much of what schools focus on in school development involves setting the scene for quality education. All school development structures need to ensure that teaching and learning receives as much, if not more priority than other areas that are identified for development. Ways of impacting directly on a classroom level where accountability and support are equally balanced need to be further investigated within frameworks such as the IQMS and professional development programmes for educators.

This research also highlights again that education is a social process that is essentially about people. Learners need to be ready and motivated to learn, and educators need to be motivated and empowered to teach and make a difference in the lives of the learners that are entrusted to them. In addition people at all levels of educational leadership throughout the system need to be equipped and prepared to lead. School governance and parents must also ideally be supported and equipped for the supportive roles that they need to play. The idea of teaching as a vocation and profession has in many instances lost its meaning both for educators and for society. If school communities and educators are to meaningfully participate in any school development process they need to firstly find meaning in what they do, then be empowered to achieve and be supported, encouraged and acknowledged throughout this process. Not everyone may participate to the same degree, but an enthusiastic and willing critical mass can demonstrate the power of agency and make a difference.

In essence it is in "making hope practical, rather than despair convincing" (Williams 1983:240) that school communities can find ways of moving forward. As further highlighted by Williams (1983:240) "if there are no easy answers there are still available and discoverable hard answers, and it is these that we can now learn to make and share". These hard answers can only be found through intensive research and piloting of possible solutions to key challenges. They cannot be found by schools in isolation but require a partnership approach that involves schools, community (including non-government organisations) and government who work together to provide a safe and supportive learning environment and quality education for South African learners.

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