

The copyright of this thesis vests in the author. No quotation from it or information derived from it is to be published without full acknowledgement of the source. The thesis is to be used for private study or non-commercial research purposes only.

Published by the University of Cape Town (UCT) in terms of the non-exclusive license granted to UCT by the author.

**UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN  
SCHOOL OF EDUCATION  
FACULTY OF HUMANITIES**

**THE APPLICABILITY OF THE SCHOOL  
EFFECTIVENESS AND SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT  
APPROACHES TO SCHOOL REFORM IN AFRICA**

**A dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements  
for the Degree of Master of Education in Education  
Administration, Planning and Social Policy.**

**By Joseph Atsu Homadzi**

**June 2005**

## Declaration

This work has not been previously submitted in whole, or in part, for the award of any degree. It is my own work. Each significant contribution to, and quotation in, this dissertation from the work, or works of other people has been attributed, and has been cited and referenced.

Joseph Atsu Homadzi

University of Cape Town

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I would like to express my sincere thankfulness to my supervisor, Professor Crain Soudien for being very helpful and understanding of my disability as a blind student. The supervisor- student relationship has been very positive which enabled me to finish my thesis on time.

It is also my pleasure to express my gratitude to my sponsors (ESP Germany). I also want to thank my employer for supporting my family while I was away as well as all volunteer readers at the Disability Unit of the University of Cape Town.

Lastly, I want also to acknowledge the great influence and moral support of all my colleagues, friends and my family. May all of you who contributed directly or indirectly to the writing of this thesis find in it my heartfelt expression of gratitude.

## ABSTRACT

This study seeks to assess the applicability of current thinking on educational reform to school change in Africa. It discusses the usefulness of two major theories of school reform, namely school effectiveness and school improvement currently in use in many countries. It uses the body of thinking from the literature on school effectiveness and school improvement along with interviews that were conducted with South African policy makers as a means of reflecting on each of the two theories.

The study points out that both theories can be useful in an African context provided that they are redefined to suit the African cultural setting. The study proposes a merger between the two traditions of school effectiveness and school improvement and the multilevel approach advocated by Riddell. It also proposes a new model referred to as “the collaborative model.”

Key words: School reform, school effectiveness, school improvement, African context.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

|   |    |
|---|----|
| CHAPTER ONE: GENERAL INTRODUCTION .....   | 1  |
| 1. BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY .....  | 1  |
| 1.1 A Brief Introduction of the Major Theories .....                                      | 9  |
| 1.1.1 School Effectiveness .....  | 9  |
| 1.1.2 School Improvement .....  | 11 |
| CHAPTER TWO: SCHOOL EFFECTIVENESS .....   | 15 |
| 2.1 Introduction .....  | 15 |
| 2.2 Research .....  | 15 |
| 2.3 Characteristics of the Effective School .....   | 19 |
| 2.4 The Managerialism and Characteristics of Schools Effectiveness Work .....             | 25 |
| 2.5 Criticism of the School Effectiveness Approach .....                                  | 28 |
| 2.6 Applicability to Africa .....   | 31 |
| 2.6.1 Socio-Economic Factors .....  | 32 |
| 2.6.2 Accountability .....  | 36 |
| 2.6.3 Professionalism .....   | 38 |
| 2.6.4 Redefinition and Reevaluation of the SIER paradigm .....                            | 40 |
| CHAPTER THREE: SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT .....   | 44 |
| 3.1 Introduction .....  | 44 |
| 3.2 Definition .....  | 45 |
| 3.3 Models of Accountability .....  | 45 |
| 3.4 Characteristics of School Improvement .....   | 47 |
| 3.5 Research .....  | 54 |
| 3.6 Implementation .....  | 57 |
| 3.6.1 The Thousand School Project .....   | 63 |
| 3.7 Usefulness of School Improvement in African Context .....                             | 65 |
| 3.7.1 General Limitations .....   | 65 |
| 3.7.2 Some Theoretical Difficulties .....   | 68 |
| 3.7.2.1 The "Whole School" Approach .....   | 68 |
| 3.7.3 Theory in Practice .....  | 71 |
| 3.7.3.1 Implementation .....  | 71 |
| 3.7.3.2 Accountability .....  | 73 |
| 3.7.3.3 Merging the two Paradigms .....   | 75 |
| CHAPTER 4: CONCLUSION .....   | 78 |
| 4.1 School Effectiveness and School Improvement: An Alternative Approach for Africa ..... | 78 |
| LIST OF REFERENCES .....  | 87 |

## **CHAPTER ONE: GENERAL INTRODUCTION**

### **1. BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY**

Quality education is a prerequisite for sustainable development as any number of commentators have argued. Defined by the United Nations as a process "that enriches the lives of learners" (United Nations Education Science Culture Organization (UNESCO, 2002: 1), it should also include a need for learning that goes beyond the academic curriculum and factual knowledge to stress problem solving and critical thinking. Quality education should aim at preparing individuals to become better citizens and prepare him or her to deal with the challenges that life might throw up.

According to UNESCO (2002), regardless of gender, wealth, location, language or ethnic origin, quality education requires the following:

1. healthy, well nourished and motivated students;
2. well trained teachers and active learning techniques;
3. adequate facilities and learning materials;
4. a relevant curriculum that can be taught and learned in a local language and builds upon the knowledge and experience of teachers and learners;
5. respect for and engagement with local communities and cultures.
6. clear definition and accurate assessment of learning outcomes, including knowledge, skills, attitudes and values;
7. participatory governance and management; and
8. an environment that not only encourages learning but is welcoming, healthy, safe and gender sensitive.

Many of these elements are absent in many African schools. Gender sensitivity for example, is not evident in many schools in Africa. For example a study

conducted by Dunne and Leach (2005) in Botswana and Ghana between 1998 and 2000 in terms of students' achievement, showed that "girls were achieving at a lower level than boys." For Botswana, the study also showed that boys outperformed girls in the traditional masculine subjects of Science, Design and Technology. In Ghana, the national picture was of boys outperforming girls in almost all areas (Dunne and Leach, 2005: viii).

Schools in Africa have generally failed to achieve good quality education. This has been due to a number of challenges such as the absence of early childhood care and the presence of education programs which do not take account of poor children, primary education lagging behind because of limited access, poor retention and performance below expectation, poorly prepared teachers and inadequate supervision of schools. Many schools in Africa especially those in rural areas, are poorly resourced. The majority of learners in these schools do not have access to potable water and electricity (Harber and Muthukrishna, 2000:421). Many do not also have telephone facilities for effective communication. This is even the case in South Africa where in six out of nine provinces the majority of schools do not have telephone facilities (ibid). School buildings where teaching and learning take place pose many risks where many are in a state of collapse. In some cases learners have to study under trees (ibid).

Many schools in Africa are also characterized by a lack of good toilet facilities and media equipment. Teaching and learning materials such as textbooks are in short supply. In those schools also, some teachers use contact hours for their private business. Thus there is a lack of accountability and effective supervision of teachers (Harber and Muthukrishna, 2000:421).

According to the report of a conference of the Ministers of Education of African Member States held in Dar- Es -Salaam Tanzania, access to primary education remains a big problem. The report indicates that only 60 percent of primary age

children were actually enrolled in schools throughout the Sub Saharan African countries. For example, in Niger only 26 percent of primary aged children were in schools. The report also mentioned a relatively high level of repetition in the region, with an average of 17 percent of pupils repeating a year (UNESCO, 2002 paragraph 7). In 2000 UNESCO reported that more than one student in ten repeats at least one grade in basic education in more than half of all the countries in Sub-Saharan Africa (ibid). However, the same report showed that pupils do not learn from repetition but instead, continue to be repeating or become dropouts before mastering basic learning skills (UNESCO, 2002). Dunne and Leach, (2005) reported that in Ghana between 1998 and 2000 in urban areas more girls dropped out than boys due to pregnancy and early marriage, while in rural and peri-urban schools there was a high drop-out of both boys and girls. This can be explained by poverty and low performance. As a result of the general poor conditions of schools, about 40 million African children who should be in schools are out of school (UNESCO, 2002).

The 2002 report claimed that secondary education is still not widely open to learners in Sub Saharan Africa. The Conference observed that late entry and high repetitions suggest that the majority of secondary aged learners still find themselves in primary classes. For example, in 21 countries of the region, an average of only 19 percent of young people of secondary school age were enrolled at that level. The story was different in Burkina Faso, Chad, Guinea, Mozambique and Niger. The enrollment level in those countries was less than ten percent (UNESCO, 2002).

The report also indicated that the overall teacher-pupil ratio is 40:1, on average, across the region. But this ratio differs from one country to another. For example, in Mozambique, Uganda, Chad, Mali and Congo, that ratio is more than 60:1 (UNESCO, 2002 paragraph 10). It was also indicated in the report that generally in the Sub Saharan region, teachers are poorly trained. For example in Guinea Bissau only 28 percent of primary school teacher have been adequately trained.

Additionally, 20 percent of primary school teachers in the majority of countries have not had any training.

According to a UNESCO, African countries were spending less than 3.4% of their national budget on education in 2000, a figure which is under the average of 4.1% for developing countries (EFA Global Monitoring Report, 2003/4).

Morley and Rassool (1999) observed that because of the historical lack of spending on education, many developing African countries did not have the required educational infrastructure on which to build a policy of universal access to education. They further noted that the countries inherited problems such as inadequate school buildings, unqualified and under qualified teachers and a general shortage of teaching and learning resources (ibid). Consequently, post-colonial countries possessed a largely dysfunctional and uneven education system with huge inequalities between different sectors of society (ibid).

Morley and Rassool (1999) also argued that colonized developing countries "had been disempowered through regimentation and a systematized process of social, economic, political and educational disenfranchisement" (1999:99). Countries such as these, in their view, have carried the baggage of societal poverty and generally insufficient infrastructure to support their health, housing and social welfare needs (ibid). Reflecting on this, Oxenham et al (in Morley and Rassool, 1999: 104) make the point that "poverty often affects the quality of learning through infrequent attendance and premature withdrawal" (1999:104).

Other challenges facing the continent, as indicated by the UNESCO are: poverty, HIV-AIDS, wars, civil conflicts and high population growth.

The challenges mentioned above have led to poor quality education, which in turn has resulted in low student performance. For example, the Third International Mathematics and Science Study Repeat (Howie, 2001) indicated

that the top South African pupils averaged 504 points. This meant that only the most proficient pupils in South Africa (and incidentally the same holds for Morocco) approached the level of the lowest achieving pupils from Chinese Taipei, Japan and Singapore. The same report shows that the International top 10% benchmark corresponds to a score of 616 out of 800 and is the point where the top performing pupils can be found. Fewer than 0.5% of South African pupils reached this benchmark (as did pupils from Tunisia and Morocco), in contrast to Singapore and Chinese Taipei where 32% and 31% respectively of their pupils did so.

Students' performance in Ghana is no different. For example, when a test on mathematics was conducted for junior secondary school pupils, it was evident that they scored lowest on word problems when just over 50% responded correctly to items dealing with adding two digits, subtracting two digits, and finding the perimeter of a geometric shape (Streicher, 1998:109). This is not surprising at all considering that the results of the English test were disastrous as well. Again when a Criterion Referenced Test (CRT) was conducted for primary school pupils, it was established that a large number of primary school pupils could not read nor understand the simple English that was spoken to them (Streicher, 1998:110).

A study in Ghana revealed that pupils' performance at the basic level left much to be desired. According to a Criterion Referenced Test conducted in 1992, of 11488 grade eight pupils sampled, only 1.1 percent correctly answered more than 55 percent of the items in mathematics (Streicher, 1998:110). The poor performance of pupils in English proficiency was established in a similar way by the research team of the Centre for Research on Improving Quality of Primary Education in Ghana based in the University of Cape Coast (Streicher, 1998:264). According to the research, out of 14 primary schools in the central region of Ghana, only five percent of all the pupils achieved full mastery of reading, writing and speaking English.

At senior secondary level, the issue of academic performance was no different. “When the first classes of students sat the newly introduced Secondary School Certificate Examinations in 1993, the results were, generally speaking, disastrous” (Streicher, 1998:130). From the examination results, it was only four percent who were able to pass all nine subjects while 34% passed four or more than four subjects. A table is provided below to show the examination results of the senior secondary school examinations conducted in Ghana in 1993.

|              | 9<br>Pas<br>ses | 8<br>Pas<br>ses | 7<br>Pas<br>ses | 6<br>Pas<br>ses | 5<br>Pas<br>ses | 4<br>Pas<br>ses | 3<br>Pas<br>ses | 2<br>Pas<br>ses | 1<br>Pas<br>ses | 0<br>Pas<br>ses |
|--------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| Student<br>s | 1.6<br>5<br>6   | 1.7<br>1<br>9   | 2.03<br>6       | 2.43<br>5       | 3.12<br>0       | 3.94<br>8       | 4.66<br>7       | 5.42<br>7       | 8.22<br>2       | 9.74<br>6       |
| In %         | 3.9<br>3<br>%   | 4.0<br>8<br>%   | 4.84<br>%       | 5.78<br>%       | 7.41<br>%       | 9.38<br>%       | 11.0<br>8%      | 12.8<br>9%      | 19.5<br>3%      | 21.0<br>7%      |

Source: Streicher, 1998:131

For some other African countries, the joint UNESCO-UNICEF Monitoring Learning Achievements (MLA) project was initiated in 42 countries to monitor and measure what is taught and learnt and which factors account for differences in learning outcomes between and within countries in African region. Similarly, the Southern Africa Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality (SACMEQ project) (Moloi and Strauss 2005) also looked at reading skills in the sixth year of schooling. A similar survey was conducted in nine countries of second and fifth year primary school children' proficiency in mathematics.

The results of these tests reveal a generally poor level of pupil knowledge by comparison with the national criteria. Disparities found within individual countries were more significant than differences found from country to country: there were disparities among regions within countries, between urban and rural areas, among different groups of pupils. Among different groups of people, for instance, socio-economic status, type of institution and gender played a big role.

Taking regard of this situation, many African countries have been making serious efforts to reform their education systems in the last decade. For example, South Africa has concentrated on preparing its citizens to meet the challenges of the 21st century. In its 5-year plan for the years 2000 – 2004, the Ministry of Education has underscored a series of educational goals with the motto "Tirisano" which means, "working together" or "collaboration". Through the collaboration, South Africa is focusing on implementing new education policies in areas such as curriculum, teacher education and examinations (Ibid). Furthermore, South Africa has embarked on the provision of resources to ensure a high quality of education (ibid).

Another African country, which undertook an educational reform programme to improve education, is Ghana. It is worth mentioning that before 1987, the educational system in Ghana was in near collapse and viewed as dysfunctional in relation to the goals and aspirations of the country (Streicher, 1998). For example, academic standards, support for teachers, instructional materials, school buildings, classrooms and equipment had declined due to a lack of finance and management (Ibid). These deplorable conditions compelled the government of the day to undertake decisive educational reforms that sought to reverse the progressive deterioration of its educational standards (Streicher, 1998). Sadly however, the educational reform failed in Ghana (Streicher, 1998).

As this discussion suggests, the general picture in African educational systems is bleak. In terms of this picture, characteristics of this system can be said to be that:

1. Schools are not functioning
2. Children are not performing adequately
3. Teachers appear to be failing.

It is clear that there are countries where the situation might be different, but the argument can be made that a generalized situation of low quality holds. What

might these educational systems do in response to these general conditions? This dissertation seeks to assess the applicability of current thinking on educational reform to school change in Africa. How applicable are the dominant theories in the field in helping to bring about these reforms that the reformers want to undertake in African contexts? I am asking this question because we are dealing with theories that have been developed in Europe and North America in environments that are well resourced, and have a long history of schooling. Dominant school change theories, School Effectiveness and School Improvement approaches, like many other theories that are used in education in Africa, are borrowed theories.

Transplanting borrowed theories from one context into another usually creates problems. It is against this background that Nekhwevha (2000) argued that borrowing educational ideas through globalization amounts to imposition, particularly the curriculum. He argued further that the South African Curriculum 2005 has no room for indigenous cultural development. He suggested that Africa develops its own curriculum and calls for African intellectuals to form African educational research teams to plan education based on African culture and experience.

The question is how effectively these theories travel and translate into the African context which is poorly resourced and has a relatively thin and new history of schooling? This question will be addressed by essentially looking at the major theories of school reform currently in use in the world. These theories essentially pivot on the ideas of school effectiveness and school improvement.

## 1.1 A Brief Introduction of the Major Theories

### 1.1.1 School Effectiveness

The origins of the school reform movement can be traced to Coleman's report on school effectiveness in the United States of America (Muller and Roberts, 2000) which essentially claimed that "schools did not make a difference" (Ibid). The report indicated that the socio-economic background of the learner was the major factor that influenced the learner's performance (Gilmour, 1997). In support of this, Reynolds and Cuttance', writing in the UK, argued that "only 8-15% of the variation in achievement outcomes can be attributed to school-based factors" as Gilmour argues (Muller & Roberts, 2000:2). Bernstein also made the argument that "schools can't compensate for society" (in Muller & Roberts, 2002:2). In support of this perspective, the Plowden Report, which draws conceptually on Coleman's Report, came to the conclusion that "home influences far outweighed these of the school" (Rutter *et al.*, 1979:2). Bowles also supported this view when he argued that "educational inequalities are rooted in the basic institutions of our economy ... in the mutual reinforcement of class, subcultures and social class biases in the operation of the school system itself" (in Rutter *et al.*, 1979:2). Gilmour refers to Coleman's report as the first generation of school effectiveness research. Muller and Roberts explain that Coleman's report is about poverty and public policy (Muller & Roberts, 2000).

In the 1980s, a second generation of research began to emerge in response to Coleman's report. The argument was that "schools really did make a difference" (Muller & Roberts, 2000:4). There was, as a consequence, a number of studies which showed that "schools did indeed give the lie to Coleman, albeit rather modestly" (Muller & Roberts, 2000:4). Rutter *et al.*, (1979), for example, disagreed with Coleman's report that school did not make a difference. They pointed out that the study of Coleman *et al.* focused on a single measure of

verbal ability which according to them was not sufficient to draw a holistic conclusion since other variables of school life were not catered for. To substantiate their argument, they quote Jencks *et al.*, who pointed out that they "ignored not only attitudes and values but the internal life of schools" (Rutter *et al.*, 1979:5). Consequently, they argued, Coleman *et al.* did not take into account whether children were influenced by differences in the style or the quality of teaching and the kind of teacher-child interaction experienced in the classroom (*ibid*). In addition, the study failed to consider the overall social climate of the school, and its characteristics as a social organization (Rutter *et al.*, 1979). For them the Coleman report was misleading.

In support of the argument, Rutter *et al.*, (1979) also conducted a comparative study of all ten year old children living in an inner London borough, and children of the same age, with homes on the Isle of Wight, in twelve schools (Rutter *et al.*, 1979). The overall pattern of the research findings established that the relationships between school process and outcomes reflected in part a causal process. Thus, to an appreciable level, learners' behaviour and attitudes were moulded and influenced by their experiences at school (Rutter *et al.*, 1979). Rutter *et al.*, (1979) concluded that the implications of their research findings were that schools can do much to instill good behaviour and attainments even in disadvantaged communities. Sammons *et al.*, (in Myers, 1996) also recently undertook a review of school effectiveness research for the Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED) and established that schools could make a significant difference to learner's outcomes even when background factors, such as age, sex and social economic status were taken into account.

Unlike the school improvement paradigm, Carter (1998) indicated that school effectiveness is unable to bridge the gap between the identification of effectiveness and achievement of excellence. This missing link is catered for by the school improvement paradigm, which concentrates on various approaches to development and change in schools. Thus, school effectiveness research

identifies the targets for effectiveness while the school improvement paradigm provides the means through which the targets are to be attained (ibid). To illustrate the point, Carter quoted Barnard as saying "an action is effective if it accomplishes its specific objective aim" (1998: 5).

### **1.1.2 School Improvement**

Stoll and Fink (in Carter, 1998) mentioned that the school improvement approach focuses on the need for careful planning, management and continuity even in times of difficulties. It also focuses on teaching and learning and supporting organizational conditions (ibid). According to Stoll and Fink (in Carter 1998) school improvement has a wide range of goals, which includes among other things those associated with learners, teachers and school organization. Therefore, the main purpose of the school improvement approach is to enhance learner's progress, achievement and development (ibid). Thus, there is emphasis on both learner outcomes and change management capacity (Carter 1998). Hargreaves and Hopkins (Carter 1998) explained that school improvement research is more action oriented in nature than school effectiveness research, which embodies long-term goals aiming at the vision of problem solving school.

The core to school improvement is the stress placed on the notion of the school as the center of the change (Carter 1998). Another characteristic of school improvement is that it operates from within and it cannot be controlled by external forces (ibid). In the same light, Hargreaves and Hopkins (Carter 1998) also express the view that school improvement implies different ways of thinking about change rather than the ubiquitous top-down approach which is popular with policy makers. Hopkins (in Carter) adds that school improvement is "the process through which schools adapt external changes to internal purpose" (1998:8).

Notwithstanding the emphasis put on the internal context of the school, school improvement, however, responds to external conditions in the sense that less

credence is given to external factors (Carter, 1998). School improvement researchers believe that improvement comes from the internal process of implementation but not just from the imposition of innovation outside the school (ibid). Hopkins (in Carter, 1998)) further illustrated the above argument by observing that:

Although policies set directions and provide a framework, they do not and cannot determine student outcomes. It is implementation, rather than the decision to adopt a new policy that determines student achievement. It is also the case that the most effective school improvement strategies seem to be internal rather than external to the school ... what is needed is implementation-friendly policy that is concerned with the process as well as the substance of change at the teacher and school level.

It is worth mentioning that the school improvement paradigm was born as a result of lack of teachers' commitment to the implementation of external policies of the top down approach. Stoll and Fink (in Carter, 1998) argue that the school improvement paradigm has given recognition to teachers as major role players in a bottom up dispensation (ibid). Additionally, teachers' interpretations of the meaning of school improvement research are, therefore, probably more likely to draw a more favourable response than that suggested as being related to school effectiveness research (ibid).

The quality of school level planning is a central factor in enabling the school to develop (Ainscow *et al.*, 1994). All educational planners who are involved in the improvement of the school ought to have a sense of direction of the programmes they wish to implement (ibid). Plans for improving the school must be strongly linked to the school's vision (Ainscow *et al.*, 1994). Additionally, the beliefs and values which the school promotes and practises must be congruent with the initiatives and innovations which are being adopted and implemented (ibid). Furthermore, the core mission of the school must be explicitly associated with plans for development (ibid). Then, the school can improve in ways that are compatible with the school's values, and any changes that are adopted. This will develop practice and strengthen educational beliefs (ibid).

School improvement also has its drawbacks. It mostly concentrates on staff development. Thus, school improvement efforts focus on high levels of planning, networking and training at the expense of strategies for change in the school with little or no monitoring of student outcomes (West *et al.*, 1996). It also usually focuses on the reduction of class size, increasing frequency and quality of staff development and increased availability of books and materials. As much as it is true that the above-mentioned points help to improve school effectiveness, commentators urge that school improvers should not lose sight of the fact that many school improvement initiatives lack a pedagogical vision of the learners and the curriculum (*ibid*). Again, the school improvement approach could have the effect of shifting attention away from student learning. This point is well demonstrated when Huberman (in West *et al.*, 1996:9) observes that “if changes in organizational and instructional practices are not followed down to the level of efforts on pupils, we will have to admit more openly that we are essentially investing in staff development rather than in the improvement of pupils’ abilities”. The school improvement paradigm often adopts a rational and technical approach, which is difficult to sustain within the dynamics of school communities (West and Hopkins, 1996).

The previous sections have traced the origin of school reform and discussed the two schools of thought as to what difference to learners (school or home-background) they make. They have also given accounts on research of the school effectiveness and the school improvement paradigms. I now proceed to show how I will approach each chapter.

This dissertation consists of two major chapters which seek, each of them, to look critically at school effectiveness and school improvement with respect to their applicability to Africa. For the two major chapters, I introduce school effectiveness and school improvements and explicate the key discussions and debates within both theories. It should be noted that the flow of the discussion in

the two chapters marked by sub-headings is different. In the School Effectiveness Chapter, the discussion begins with the section on research and proceeds to consider the characteristics of the approach. In the Chapter that follows, characteristics precede research because this is how, largely, the developments in the field came about. In considering the two approaches, the question to be addressed is whether the theories can be translated into an African context. In addressing this question, I will have access to writers such as Morley and Rassool, Riddel and Gilmour just to mention a few. I will also use data from interviews conducted with five policy makers in South Africa. The choice of five people was deliberate because I considered five people enough to give me a clear idea of the usefulness of the theory to African context. The interviews were conducted only in South Africa because of limited time and resources. I will use the body of thinking from the literature along with the interviews as a means of reflecting on each of the two theories. In the first part of each chapter, I will outline what research has been done in the field. In the second part I will critically review the applicability and the usefulness of the theory to the African context. Finally, in the concluding chapter, I will review all the approaches together and state clearly what approach could be relevant to the African context.

It has to be acknowledged however, that this is not intended to be an empirical study but essentially a theoretical one. It is written as a theoretical analysis of two dominant approaches as well as their value to the African context. The limitations of this approach are readily conceded in terms of how this discussion's conclusions can be verified and generalized. This notwithstanding, hopefully, the conclusions drawn from this limited study will inform policy makers practices in African countries.

## CHAPTER TWO: SCHOOL EFFECTIVENESS

### 2.1 Introduction

School effectiveness is an academic field which has developed swiftly in the past thirty years (Creemers in Harris & Bennett, 2001). A number of research studies have been undertaken in many countries to investigate the impact that schools have on their learners' educational attainments (Harris & Bennett, 2001). As a research paradigm, school effectiveness is essentially premised on (1) the measurement of learner outcomes and (2) quantifying differences between schools (ibid). The school effectiveness paradigm is organizationally orientated rather than process based and is associated with what might be called a "means-end relationship" (Harris & Bennett, 2001: 8). In the school effectiveness paradigm, the main aim is to assess whether differences in resources, processes and organisational arrangements affect learner outcomes (Harris & Bennett, 2001).

In this chapter, I will first review the theory of school effectiveness, after which I will critically analyze the usefulness of that approach to African context drawing on the data from interviews in conjunction with insights from the views of Morley and Rassool, Riddell, and Gilmour. The analysis will be organized under four headings namely, the socio-economic factors, the redefinition and reevaluation of the paradigm, professionalism and accountability.

### 2.2 Research

According to Harris & Bennett (2001), historically, school effectiveness as a research field came in response to the pessimism of American researchers Coleman *et al.*, (1966) and Jencks *et al.*, (1972). The work of Coleman *et al.* and Jencks *et al.* stressed that socio-economic and family backgrounds played a role in promoting educational success (Harris & Bennett, 2001). Coleman *et al.*, and

Jencks *et al.*, argued that "a child's test scores or examination results could be predicted far more accurately from knowing the family background than from knowing which school they went to" (in Harris & Bennett, 2001: 8). The conclusion was that schools make little difference to learners' academic achievement (*ibid.*).

The research findings of Coleman and Jencks sparked a number of research studies focusing on measuring what has come to be called "the school effect" (Harris & Bennett, 2001) such as learner attitude, learner behaviour and school climate (*ibid.*). In examining early school effectiveness studies in the United States of America (USA), Firestone (in Harris & Bennett, 2001) observed that the effective schools movement believes that all children can learn and succeed in school. Similarly, in the United Kingdom (UK), the seminal research by Rutter *et al.*, (1979) revealed that "schools can do much to foster good behaviour and attainment, and that even in a disadvantaged area, schools can be a force for good" (Harris, 2001: 9). The research established that effective schools are characterized by "[a high] degree of academic emphasis, teacher actions in lessons, the availability of incentives and rewards, good conditions for pupils, and the extent to which children are able to take responsibility" (*ibid.*).

The above mentioned findings were subsequently supported by many studies, all reported by Harris & Bennett (2001) including School Matters (Mortimore *et al.*), a Study of International Local Education Authority (ILEA) primary schools, The School Effect (Smith and Tomlinson) and A study of multi-racial comprehensives (Harris & Bennett, 2001). These in turn were supported by the findings of Nuttal *et al.*, and Fitz-Gibbons who investigated both school and departmental effects (*ibid.*).

School effectiveness studies have also been undertaken in a number of countries including the USA, the Netherlands, Australia and the UK (Harris & Bennett, 2001) and are becoming common in Asia and the Third World (Riddell in Harris &

Bennett, 2001). There is as a consequence ample research evidence from the research field to substantiate the claim that schools matter and do have major effects on children's development (Reynolds and Creemers in Harris & Bennett, 2001).

It must, however, be underscored that school effectiveness is a disputed approach, which depends on time, outcome and learner group (Sammons in Harris & Bennett, 2001). Harris & Bennett noted "judgments about relative effectiveness require careful analysis and appropriately designed studies" (2001:10). This is further explained when Sammons (in Harris & Bennett, 2001:10) is quoted as saying "measures of stability in effectiveness are not perfect over time and the complexity of extracting the factors that influence school effectiveness should not be underestimated."

Teddlie and Reynolds (in Harris & Bennett, 2001) argue that school effectiveness research has some methodological limitations and deficiencies. This, notwithstanding, the field has made tremendous contributions to the educational research community. This is confirmed by Reynolds *et al.* (in Harris & Bennett, 2001: 10) who observed that the field "has emerged from virtual obscurity to a new central position in the educational discourse that is taking place within many countries".

The research has helped in demonstrating that schools do make a difference and has assisted in reducing the notion that schools can do little to change the society around them (Harris & Bennett, 2001). It must be mentioned that the central focus of the school effectiveness movement is to attack the notion of "sociological background" as the determining factor in achievement and to challenge individualistic theories about learning (ibid). This is apparent in the work of Hopkins (2001:11) who claimed that "the single most important contribution of the effective schools movement is that it helped push the dominant behavioral psychological model of learning off centre stage in schools

throughout the world". The argument is that all children can learn regardless of their socio-economic background (Harris & Bennett, 2001).

School effectiveness studies have also continuously established the understanding that effective schools are structurally, symbolically and culturally more closely integrated than less effective ones (Harris & Bennett, 2001). They function more as "an organic whole and less as a loose collection of disparate sub-systems" (Harris & Bennett, 2001:11). Consequently, many school improvement programmes concentrate on promoting structural and cultural change in schools (Harris & Bennett, 2001). Additionally, school effectiveness research (SER) has made clear that teachers are important determinants of children's educational and social achievements (Harris & Bennett, 2001).

Arguing along a different line of thought, Thrupp (2001) suggests that SER has created the view that there is a science of value-addedness, which can be used to exert pressure on schools. In support, Barber (in Thrupp, 2001: 453) also argued that:

The research on school effectiveness ... allows us to quantify just how much difference schools can make ... The effectiveness research requires teachers to face up to their own importance ... Where as under the old order there was a tendency to blame the system, society, the class structure - anyone other than schools themselves - for underperformance, now there is no escape.

Contrarily, Myers and Goldstein (in Thrupp, 2001: 453) stated that:

Ironically, contextualizing performance, by using adjusted league tables of test scores, for example, may actually strengthen the belief that blame resides in the school by encouraging the view that all other factors have been accounted for and that any residual variation must reside in the school.

Bell (in Thrupp, 2001: 454) also observed that SER:

Generates a level of spurious certainty amongst senior staff in school who see the way forward through professional leadership and shared vision, and a similar feeling of false security among teachers for whom

purposeful teaching is characterized solely by efficient organisation, clarity of purpose, structured lessons and adaptive practices.

Generally, however, the view of Teddlie and Reynolds (in Thrupp, 2001: 454) has wide support. The position they take is essentially that schools have a role to play:

We have convincingly helped to destroy the belief that schools can do nothing to change the society around them, and have also helped to destroy the myth that the influence family background is so strong on children's background that children are unable to be affected by school.

### **2.3 Characteristics of the Effective School**

According to Cheng (1996:7) a school is defined as "an organisation in a changing and complicated social context, bounded with limited resources and involving multiple constituencies such as education authorities, school administrators, teachers, students, parents, taxpayers, educators and the public". To understand school effectiveness in relation to the definition above, there is a need to discuss school functions. For example, some schools may be good in assisting learners' personal development, while some may be excellent in producing competent technicians to meet the needs of the community (Cheng, 1996).

Cheng (1996:8) also argued that the fundamental aim of school education is to "develop the potential of every child, so that our students become independent minded and socially aware adults, equipped with the knowledge, skills and attitudes, which help them to lead a full life as individuals and play a positive role in the life of the community". In view of the above, schools and their support services should endeavour to deliver the following services:

1. To the individual, every school should help all its students, whatever their ability, and include those with special educational needs to develop their potential as fully as possible in both academic and non-academic directions, including literacy, numeracy, learning skills, practical and technical skills, social, political

and civic awareness, personal growth, physical development and aesthetic and cultural development; and

2. To the community, school education should aim to meet the community's need for people who can contribute to the nation's social and economic development (Cheng, 1996:8).

Cheng et al, classify possible school functions into five areas, such as: "technical, economic, human/social, political, cultural, and educational" (1996:9).

A table is provided below to show the school functions at various levels:

University of Cape Town

School functions at multi-levels

|   | <b>Technical/Economic Functions</b>  | <b>Human/Social Functions</b>   | <b>Political Functions</b>   | <b>Cultural Functions</b>   | <b>Educational Functions</b>  |
|---|--|---|--|---|---|
| <b>Individual (students, staff, etc.)</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Knowledge and skills training</li> <li>• Career training</li> <li>• Job for staff</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Psychological developments</li> <li>• Social developments</li> <li>• Potential</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Development of civic attitudes and skills</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Acculturation</li> <li>• Socialization with values, norms, and beliefs</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learning how to learn and develop</li> <li>• Learning how to teach and help</li> <li>• Professional</li> </ul>   |
| <b>Institutional</b>                      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• As a life place</li> <li>• As a work place</li> <li>• As a service organization</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• As a social entity/system</li> <li>• As a human relationship</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• As a place for political socialization</li> <li>• As a political coalition</li> <li>• As a place for political discourse or criticism</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• As a center for cultural transmission and reproduction</li> <li>• As a place for cultural revitalization and integration</li> </ul>                          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• As a place for learning and teaching</li> <li>• As a center for disseminating knowledge</li> <li>• As a center for</li> </ul>  |
| <b>Community</b>                          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Serving the economic or instrumental needs of the community</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Serving the social needs of the community</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Serving the political needs of the community</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Serving the cultural needs of the community</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Serving the educational needs of the community</li> </ul>  |
| <b>Society</b>                            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provision of quality labor forces</li> <li>• Modification of economic behavior</li> <li>• Contribution to the manpower structure</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social integration</li> <li>• Social mobility/social class perpetuation</li> <li>• Social equality</li> <li>• Selection and allocation of human resources</li> <li>• Social development and</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Political legitimization</li> <li>• Political structure maintenance and continuity</li> <li>• Democracy promotion</li> <li>• Facilitating political developments and reforms</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cultural integration and continuity</li> <li>• Cultural reproduction</li> <li>• Production of cultural capital</li> <li>• Cultural revitalization</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Development of the education professions</li> <li>• Development of education structures</li> <li>• Dissemination of knowledge and information</li> <li>• Learning society</li> </ul> |
| <b>International</b>                      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• International competition</li> <li>• Economic cooperation</li> <li>• International trade</li> <li>• Technology exchange</li> <li>• Earth protection</li> <li>• Sharing information</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Global village</li> <li>• International friendship</li> <li>• Social cooperation</li> <li>• International exchanges</li> <li>• Elimination of national/regional/racial/gender biases</li> </ul>        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• International coalition</li> <li>• International understanding</li> <li>• Peace/against war</li> <li>• Common interests</li> <li>• Elimination of conflict</li> </ul>                   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Appreciation of cultural diversity</li> <li>• Cultural acceptance across countries/regions</li> <li>• Development of global culture</li> </ul>               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Development of global education</li> <li>• International education exchanges and cooperation</li> <li>• Education for the whole world</li> </ul>                                     |

Source: Cheng (1996: 10)

Having provided a conceptual perspective of school functions, Cheng (1996:13) defines school effectiveness as "the capacity of the school to maximize school functions, when given a fixed amount of school input". According to Cheng, (1996), the relationship between the output function and monetary inputs or processes such as: number of textbooks, classroom organisation, professional training of teachers, teaching strategy, learning arrangements and others is known as school effectiveness.

According to Hopkins (1987) for a school to be effective within a certain cultural context, means that the particular school should accomplish the best possible pupil outcomes as defined in both individual and societal terms. Additionally, the school should add value to the capacity of the learner. Within the cultural context, the school is expected to make efficient use of resources (ibid). In order to achieve maximum effectiveness, there must be changes in both learning conditions. Furthermore, there must also be an improvement in the school's organisational and pedagogical capacity (Hopkins, 1987).

In Cheng's (1996) thinking, the school is an organisation and therefore school effectiveness should be discussed in relation to organisational development literature. To be able to interpret school effectiveness Cheng (1996) draws attention to eight theoretical models as a guide. The models are: goals, resource inputs, process, satisfaction, legitimacy, organisational, ineffectiveness and total management (Cheng, 1996). A table is provided below to show how the models might be described as ways of understanding school effectiveness.

### Models of school effectiveness

|                                       | <b>Conception of School Effectiveness</b>   | <b>Conditions for Model Usefulness</b>  | <b>Evaluation Indicators/Key Areas</b>  |
|---------------------------------------|---|---|---|
| <b>Goal Model</b>                     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Achievement of stated goals</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Goals are clear, consensual, time-bound and measurable;</li> <li>Resources are sufficient</li> </ul>                 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Objectives listed in the school/program plans, e.g., achievements</li> </ul>   |
| <b>Resource-Input Model</b>           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Achievement of needed resources and inputs</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is a clear relationship between inputs and outputs;</li> <li>Resources are scarce</li> </ul>                   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Resources procured, e.g., quality of student intake, facilities, financial support, etc.</li> </ul>  |
| <b>Process Model</b>                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Smooth and 'healthy' internal process</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is a clear relationship between process and outcome</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Leadership, communication, participation, coordination, social interaction, etc.</li> </ul>  |
| <b>Satisfaction Model</b>             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Satisfaction of all powerful constituencies</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The demands of the constituencies are compatible and cannot be ignored</li> </ul>                                    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Satisfaction of Education Authorities, management board, administrators, teachers, parents, students, etc.</li> </ul>                                    |
| <b>Legitimacy Model</b>               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Successful legitimate or marketing activities for school survival</li> </ul>                       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The survival and demise among schools must be assessed</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Public relations, marketing, public image, reputation, status in the community, accountability, etc.</li> </ul>  |
| <b>Ineffectiveness Model</b>          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Absence of characteristics of ineffectiveness in school</li> </ul>                                 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is no consensual criteria of effectiveness; but strategies for school improvement are needed</li> </ul>        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Existing conflicts, dysfunctions, difficulties, defects, weaknesses, etc.</li> </ul>   |
| <b>Organizational Learning Model</b>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adaptation to environmental changes and internal barriers</li> </ul>                               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Schools are new or changing; the environmental changes cannot be ignored</li> </ul>                                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Awareness of external needs and changes, internal process monitoring, program evaluation, development planning</li> </ul>                                |
| <b>Total Quality Management Model</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Total management of internal people and process to meet strategic constituencies' needs</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The constituencies' needs are compatible; the technology and resources are available for total management</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Leadership, people management, strategic planning, process management, quality results, constituencies' satisfaction, impact on society, etc.</li> </ul> |

Source: Cheng (1996: 19)

It must be emphasized each of the models mentioned above, has its strengths and limitations. Each provides a way of understanding how school effectiveness might be understood. In each is apparent a particular conception of school effectiveness, the

characteristics that are focussed upon and the indicators to be used to assess improvement in the school. The virtue of this table is that it presents in summary form the range of approaches that might be found in the field. In the next section the discussion is pursued at a more general level.

## **2.4 The Managerialism and Characteristics of Schools**

### **Effectiveness Work**

According to Denny (in Carter, 1998) school effectiveness is part of a move towards the adoption of a performance management approach in schools. He refers to a statement made by the British government, which projected the view that the public sector could be improved and redefined through the introduction of private sector management techniques and clearly commercial objectives (Denny in Carter, 1998). Carter (1998) however, notes that because the public sector role is still expected to perform a social function, performance is unavoidably assessed in terms of economy, efficiency and effectiveness. Beare *et al.* (in Carter, 1998) also view effectiveness, efficiency, equity and excellence (Es) as the basis of school management. They argue that the effect of these performance management concepts on schools is to inject a change in the role and function of schools and by inference, teachers (*ibid*). Consequently, the teaching profession can no longer be seen to be exclusively concerned with the fundamentals of teaching and learning, but with the effective management and performance of its teachers and its schools (Carter, 1998).

Carter (1998) observed that in assessing the impact of educational reform on the teacher's role, it is evident that an attempt has been made by the British government to compliment the three Rs with Es as central concepts in school management and organisation. This has amounted to a new managerialism in schools which has brought about a paradigm shift in teachers' conceptions of their role (*ibid*). This argument is confirmed by Webb's research, which looks at the changing roles of teachers in primary schools (in Carter, 1998). The findings of this work indicated that:

The work of primary teachers has changed dramatically in recent years. Many of the changes have been in relation to responsibilities outside, and often only indirectly related to, the classroom. On the one hand, these have contributed to teachers' professional development; on the other hand, they have dissipated their energies, reducing the time and effort available for focusing on pupil learning (Webb in Carter, 1998:11).

Carter (1998) further argued that this new development of managerialism has placed enormous responsibility on teachers. Consequently, there is need for teachers of today to change their previous assumptions so that they can start seeing their role in a wider managerial perspective (ibid). The effect of this has been to give more explicit exposure “to whole school concerns associated with effectiveness, efficiency, economy equity and excellence, and a shift towards a new management paradigm which centrally encompasses the notion of classroom teachers as managers” (Carter, 1998:11).

Denny (in Carter, 1998:12), however, cautioned that:

Whilst the prime objective of the Education Reform Act 1998 (ERA) is to improve the quality of education ... one of the major assumptions embedded in it is that many of the same basic management processes such as planning, organizing, activating, monitoring and controlling are universal. However, there are some features, which deserve careful consideration and scrutiny before private sector management techniques and structures are adopted by schools. In particular, the emphasis placed on outputs.

Beare *et al.*, also sounded a warning about the school effectiveness movement namely that “[its] concerns have grown up, alongside concerns about productivity, efficiency and accountability... in consequence it could easily become another cult of the efficiency movement based upon economic rather than educational imperatives” (in Carter, 1998:12). This argument was taken further by Menter *et al.* (in Carter, 1998) when they conducted research on primary head teachers where they looked at the role of marketisation and managerialism in teachers’ work. They established that the establishment of a market economy in education has immense impact on enhancing teacher accountability and in transforming the perceptions about the role of teachers from that of professional to that of service provider. Carter (1998) expanded the points by quoting Menter *et al.*, as saying:

The initial phase of our project alerted us to the significance of marketisation in changing relationships, particularly in reducing professional autonomy and authority. The highly regulated market relationships embodied in recent and current policy...disempower professionals, redefining them as service providers accountable to government agencies, funding bodies and consumers.

Rogers and Badham (1992) observed that school-based evaluation is more likely to gain ground because schools have to give detailed information to parents, governors and the

local education authority (LEA). With the inception of the parents' charter, a greater responsibility has been placed on schools to address the E-factors of school management (Carter, 1998). Denny (in Carter, 1998:13) also pointed out strident demands which are made by the public and politicians for teachers to address the E-factors so that they are able to "provide better information about how education is organized; provide better information about the outcomes of education; measure value added and understand the context in which that occurs effectively; improve skills to interpret data and understand efficiency and productivity." Undoubtedly, efficiency and effectiveness have come to penetrate many areas of management, delivery and accountability, which has been markedly reinforced by an excess of school management initiatives (ibid). Carter (1998) further argues that many of the changes occurring in schools in the 1980s encompass a wider range of activity associated with this emphasis on managerialism.

A number of writers have cautioned against these developments. Day *et al.*, for example (in Carter, 1998) indicated that a performance and accountability perspective of education, which many teachers link to notions of school effectiveness, does not do much to support teacher development. The perspective described above has given teachers cause to feel uncomfortable with the philosophy underlining the effective schools movement and question why they should be forced into school improvement by people external to the school (ibid). Day *et al.*, expanded the argument when they observed that:

Professional development is severely hampered by this performance view of teaching. If professional competence and expertise are to be extended the needs to be a climate in which the intensely practical aspects of classroom work are seen as an essential part of any curriculum-development activity. This will not be achieved if teachers, like the pupils they work with day by day, constantly see themselves as being judged and graded. A judgmental climate is not an easy one in which to talk freely about how and why you teach as you do, or indeed to identify areas where you may need help and guidance (in Carter, 1998: 15).

Carter (1998) observed that teachers perceive school effectiveness as an initiative associated with the demand for the measurement of performance and standards in schools. This is demonstrated at an organisational level by demands for the introduction of attendance records and enhanced public access to school inspection reports. At the individual level, teacher appraisal, principle of performance related pay and the grading of lessons by school inspectors are introduced (ibid).

Fletcher's claim that teacher appraisal is not a panacea to school effectiveness in terms of measurement perspective is worth considering. Fletcher (in Carter, 1998) agrees with Denny (in Carter, 1998) that performance appraisal is "one of the seven deadly diseases of current management" (1998:16). He further explains that the "traditional assessment-oriented approach to appraisal, with its emphasis on comparing people and links with pay, fails to deliver on almost every count" (ibid). Fletcher, however, observes that to conclude that all appraisal schemes are deadly will fall short of accuracy (in Carter, 1998). He elaborated the argument by saying that:

The traditional assessment-oriented approach might well be regarded as a deadly disease, but it does not mean that other approaches to appraisal are equally lethal. Performance appraisal centred on performance improvement and development ...is likely to be more successful. There is, of course, still a need to assess within the framework of such an approach, but it is not assessment done for its own sake, or as a primary purpose, it is simply a means to an end. ...Performance appraisal does not have to be a deadly disease, but neither is it likely to be a panacea (in Carter, 1998).

Given this tendency in the discussion, Carter (1998) argues that many teachers view school effectiveness as an imposed philosophy, which consequently creates a potential barrier to their engagement with school effectiveness research findings. To help teachers overcome their misconceptions about the school effectiveness approach, Carter (1998) suggested that teachers must be educated to appreciate the point that the origin of school effectiveness research is not the brainchild of government educational reform but rather emanates from a substantial body of educational research.

## **2. 5 Criticism of the School Effectiveness Approach**

In this section, I will start with the general limitations of SER emanating from Europe and North America, then I will stress its limitations with regard to the African context drawing on the literature from Morley and Rassool and Riddel.

Reynolds and Teddie (in Harris & Bennett, 2001:12) acknowledged that school effectiveness research is always "politically controversial since it concerns the nature and purpose of schooling". They argue that school effectiveness by its nature has limitations and in spite of the immense contributions it has made, it has come under strong criticism. (Elliott, Slee *et al.*, Morley and Rassool in Harris & Bennett, 2001).

The criticism is essentially based on the contention that the research holds on to conservative values and encourages a view of school failure that blames the school and the teachers (Elliot in Harris & Bennett, 2001). For example, Morley and Rassol (in Harris & Bennett, 2001:11) noted that "schools and teachers are either good or bad, effective or failing. Educational success has been reduced to factors that can be measured".

Another criticism of this research is that it is based on an ideology of social control and takes a myopic and mechanistic view of education as a process (Harris & Bennett, 2001). The above point is substantiated by Hamilton (in Harris & Bennett, 2001:11) when he said that:

Effective schooling has become a global industry. Its activities embrace four processes: research, development, marketing and sales. Research entails the construction of new prototypes; development entails the commodification of these prototypes; marketing entails the promotion of these commodities; and sales entails efforts to ensure that market returns exceed financial investment. The school effectiveness industry, therefore, stands at the intersection of educational research and social engineering.

It is also suggested that school effectiveness research assumes that schools are rational, goal-inclined systems, that goals are clear and acceptable, that the goals are associated with learner achievement and that these achievements are measurable (Harris & Bennett, 2001). School effectiveness research basically concentrates on the structural and technical dimensions of the organisation at the expense of the process or cultural aspects (ibid).

What the statement above makes clear is that the approach considers culture as universal, which should not be the case. When applying the school effectiveness approach in the African context, the diversity of cultures must be taken into account. Emphasizing this point, Scheerens (2001:369) notes

Authors dealing with school effectiveness research have questioned the applicability of this model in the cultural setting and institutional structures of African countries. The diversity of institutional and cultural settings in developing countries and the broad range of problems in providing adequate educational provisions are as many imperatives to critically review the fundamentals of school effectiveness research.

Additionally, school effectiveness research views the school as it is at a particular moment in time instead of seeing it as an ongoing and dynamic process. This limitation is taken further by Teddlie and Reynolds (in Harris & Bennett, 2001:12) who said, "school effectiveness studies offer a snapshot of a school rather than a moving picture". In support, Gray *et al.* (in Harris & Bennett) also argued that given the dynamic and unfolding nature of schools as organisations "this snapshot approach has limited usefulness for informing school development or improvement" (2001:12). The approach tends to neglect conditions outside the school and conditions at other levels in the organisation, which contribute to overall effectiveness (Harris & Bennett, 2001). Harris (2001) also argued that school effectiveness research is often not comprehensive to give enough information on what is required for school improvement and often, therefore, has proved to be ineffective (*ibid.*).

West *et al.*, (1996) also argued that the approach in school effectiveness research does not explain cause and effect. Some correlates (linking factors and outcomes) occur because they are outcomes of effective schools, not determinants of them. They further explained that even though correlates inform policymakers as characteristics of effective schools, it is however inappropriate to view correlates as a panacea for schooling problems.

Another limitation of school effectiveness research noted by West and Hopkins (1996) is the narrow definition of school. This is supported by Mortimore (in West and Hopkins), when he noted that "an effective school is one in which pupils progress further than might be expected from consideration of its intake" (1996:4). Additionally, West and Hopkins (1996) noted that the interaction between school effectiveness research and marketisation of education has put pressure on schools to obtain good examination results within a short time. Consequently, the adoption of this approach causes short term thinking, restricted goals for the school and its learners, and promotes tension and conflict among teachers for fear of failure (*ibid.*). Again, learners who fall below average are usually excluded, as a result of too much emphasis on examination results (West and Hopkins, 1996).

Fidler (in Harris & Bennett, 2001) also takes the view that school effectiveness research focuses only on test results and neglects areas such as the broader curriculum, more sophisticated intellectual and cultural and behavioural skills. He argued that a holistic education should include a wider range of subjects than simply those of language and number. Holistic education to him will help to develop more sophisticated intellectual skills than basic skills as measured by multiple-choice tests (ibid). Another area of concern for Fidler (in Harris & Bennett, 2001) is that school effectiveness research sees all schools as homogenous organisations in terms of school effectiveness.

As a result of this intense emphasis on examination results, argued Fidler, teachers have come under pressure to only teach to the tests and so lowering their expectations of learner's long-term abilities. He noted that policymakers, politicians and practitioners who use school effectiveness research are ignorant about its theoretical, methodological and technical limitations. He further observed that politicians either use school effectiveness research findings to illuminate policymaking or they use them, retrospectively, to legitimate their actions.

Burgess (in Wrigley, 2004:227) also criticized the school effectiveness paradigm by observing that "My fear has been that managerial goals are being offered as a substitute for more fundamental debate about curriculum and pedagogy". Similarly, Francis (in Wrigley, 2004:227) argued that

It takes no account of the nature of the situation in which these variables are identified and measured ... what we really want to know is how these variables and the many others that we could think of, together with the ecological variables we could identify, are interrelated for a particular child, or for many, in a complex real-life....

## **2.6 Applicability to Africa**

It is worth noting that the critique highlighted above generally emanates from Europe and North America. With respect to their applicability to the African context, are there other limitations? This question will be addressed by looking at four areas, namely socio-economic factors, accountability, professionalism and the redefinition

and reevaluation of the school effectiveness paradigm drawing on the literature and interview data.

### **2.6.1 Socio-Economic Factors.**

There is a heated debate about the role that socio-economic factors play in school effectiveness research. On the one hand, some writers such as Riddell *et al.* (2004), Angus (Wrigley, 2004), and Thrupp (2001) argue that the school effectiveness paradigm cannot work in the African context because of the continent's low socio-economic development. On the other hand, other writers not only claim that it can work but also that they can show tangible evidence that it works. The section starts with those who claim that it cannot work.

Riddell *et al.* (Wrigley, 2004:235) claimed that:

Social class is reduced to a variable to be controlled for and thereafter ignored, rather than recognized as a vital element in terms of accounting for the level of measured effective and strategies for school improvement.

Similarly, Angus (Wrigley, 2004:235) indicated that:

Family background, social class, any notion of context are typically regarded as noise, as outside background factors which must be controlled for and then stripped away so that the researcher can concentrate on the important domain of school factors.

Pursuing the argument, Thrupp (2001) noted that school effectiveness research does not take serious recognition of social-economic status (SES). In line with the argument, Anyon (in Thrupp, 2001:448) also pointed out that school effectiveness research considers the class backgrounds of learners as "a given when they are not really given at all, they are socially constructed, and can be made worse or better through housing, health, employment and taxation policies, all of which will therefore affect levels of student achievement."

Concurring with the general argument, Wrigley stated that "social commitments have to be inscribed into the words and actions of the whole school community in cases of real improvement" (2001:241). He suggested that the school effectiveness paradigm places a premium on the hegemony of economics at the expense of social values. In

view of the above argument, Thrupp (2001) concluded that schools perform well because of high SES and that in low SES schools cannot perform well irrespective of the SE strategies they might apply.

Morley and Rassool (1999) observed that the current policy drive for school effectiveness in the developing world, such as in Africa, does not take cognizance of internal dynamics of development within different societies. This means that the range of factors which contribute to poverty and under-development, and the social conditions associated with economic growth in these societies have not been fully comprehended particularly the economic paradigm which has exerted such great influence over development policies since the 1960s (Randinellis in Morley and Rassool, 1999). Morley and Rassool (1999: 107) identify two issues emerging from the current policy drive for school effectiveness in the developing world. They observed that:

Linear school effectiveness taxonomies focusing on different aspects of performativity such as teaching, finance management, classroom control, leadership, resource management, etc, cannot and do not begin to address the multi-leveled problems created by the historical legacy of unequal development during the colonial period, and its consolidation within the processes of the SAP. Moreover, that everyday violence in school is a reality in many countries (including developed countries) is not to be denied.

Morley and Rassool (1999) argued that the perspectives in many school effectiveness studies, in trying to deal with real world situations, and in their aim to offer practical solutions appear to have a myopic view of historical processes and their intertextual relationship with contemporary social policy and politics in developing countries. Additionally, they indicated that generating internal organizational efficiency and functional effectiveness will appear to be of less importance with those contexts where most of the people cannot afford to send their children to school on sustainable level, where vast regions within countries still lack basic educational infrastructure, where the uncertainty of refugee status plagues people with uncertain futures and where parents are compelled to depend on child labour as a necessary means of survival (Morley and Rassool, 1999).

Morley and Rassool (1999) suggest that for school effectiveness to be useful in the African context, attention must be focused on creating relevant social, political and economic conditions for effective education defined in terms of private and social rate of returns. For example, school effectiveness in Apartheid South Africa strongly demonstrated the fact that the issue of quality in education goes beyond the measurable whilst schools might have been technically effective and efficient within that particular society, "the concept of quality in which these notions were embedded mainly served the interests of a predatory state. Teachers were subjected to regimentation and constant regulation to ensure that they conformed to the government's preferred ways of working" (Morley and Rassool, 1999: 108). They argue that school effectiveness cannot occur meaningfully, unless socio-political and economic processes and practices within certain societies are well understood.

With regard to the above-mentioned arguments and taking into account the features of socio economic background in African context, can it be still claimed that the SER paradigm is useful and applicable in the African context? Before concluding, let us examine the counter-argument.

Wrigley (2004) argued that some schools in high-poverty areas become more successful through efficient and effective engagement with the community. Hence the school's improvement may sometimes even contribute to an area's economic income generation. As one interviewee, a policy maker in the Western Cape Education Department observed,

African countries have inherited colonial problems and dysfunctional schools, and school effectiveness is the answer to address those problems to ensure quality education. However, school effectiveness is not only about getting 100 percent examination results, but it is about addressing issues like racism, disabilities, gender sensitivity. If all these things are addressed then one can say the school is effective.

From a study conducted in South Africa, Harber and Muthukrishna (2000) reported the following:

Mbilwi School is a rural school where some class-rooms are literally crumbling to the ground, water supplies are intermittent and pit toilets must be used, blackboards are falling off the walls, ceilings are rotting, there are too few teachers, there are no computers and textbooks, desk and stationery are scarce. Yet the school won the Liberty Life/ Sunday Times Award for Achievement in Education based on its outstanding

record of excellence against the odds. Since 1995, there has been a 100% pass rate at matriculation. A committed head teacher and staff with high expectation is how the success is explained.

This study challenges the claim that school effectiveness cannot be useful in a low socio-economic environment. Many interviewees also made similar comments. Two interviewees claimed that what is important is commitment and making effective use of limited resources. According to one interviewee, school effectiveness is "not about resources, it is about making effective use of the limited resources you have. It is about relationship between input and output." The interviewee argued that the few resources available be used effectively. In addition she maintained that "one other way is to get teachers to come to school regularly and punctually and it doesn't demand any resources" (ibid). Another interviewee also pointed out that every country can have some degree of school effectiveness irrespective of low socio-economic background. In his view "facilities do not teach". He stressed that irrespective of the problem, school effectiveness can be applied.

In a similar way, one other interviewee claimed that school effectiveness is about relationships between resource inputs and outputs. It therefore suggests that whether the school is under resourced or not is not the issue, "the point is about how the limited resources can be used efficiently to maximize high academic performance". For example, if it is a "relationship between time and task and performance or relationship between textbooks and performance, then a policy must be developed to meet this need" (ibid). In addition, according to another interviewee, poverty and low socio-economic status in Africa are also in Europe and America. The important thing to note is that teachers must acquire knowledge and skills and also be able to apply resources efficiently by "setting our priorities right". She continues to say that school effectiveness is about the maximization of learner performance. In support of this another interviewee argued, "even though we do have less resources, teachers must be resourceful, they have to improvise and make use of what they have efficiently".

Many other studies such as the International Association for the Evaluation of Education Achievement (IEA), Heyneman's study of the Ugandan primary schools in the 1970s, the Loxley study of Egyptian primary schools in 1980 (ibid), two early

studies of what were then Rhodesian primary schools (Zimbabwe), conducted in different parts of Africa, support the contention that, the socio-economic background of learners in relation to their educational achievement is insignificant (Riddell in Gilmour, 1997).

### **2.6.2 Accountability**

While in the previous section people's opinions diverged as to the role of socio-economic factors in the school effectiveness paradigm, in this section different writers as well as different interviewees all agree that if there is no accountability on the part of policy makers, teachers and other stakeholders, the school effectiveness approach cannot be useful.

For example, Rogers and Badham claimed that "accountability is a central thread running through most of the changes enshrined in the 1988 ERA" (in Carter, 1998:13). However, the question is how can European and North American notions of accountability as contained in the school effectiveness literature work in an African context? I am asking this question because the African context is very different from the European and North American context. For this reason, applying the imported notion of accountability in Africa will not be appropriate. For Morrow (1990:96) this practice spells out "what kind of 'beast accountability' would become were we to transplant it into the dominant tradition in Africa".

It is for this reason that Riddell (1998) argued that to improve on quality education, a new form of accountability must be introduced to signal new values and monitor progress in order to reinforce desired changes in the school. She suggested that different performance indicators be introduced in the school. For Riddell, strategies for improving quality of education, focusing on school effectiveness and school improvement approaches, and the teacher/learner interface, which have also been focused on the development and use of performance indicators to promote accountability, are necessary for ensuring quality improvement. In addition, she suggested that African countries should have computerized educational management information systems. She explained that the implementation of the educational reform in African countries encounters difficulties because of the way new measures are developed. One interviewee underlined this point. He observed:

Accountability is a bit of a problem in our schools now because the teachers are not having that sense of accountability; they are only interested in just getting a salary. For me, social responsibility is more than just getting a salary.

In support of Riddell's argument I wish to mention that accountability in an African context should not make teachers feel reduced to mere service providers as implied by the school effectiveness approach. One interviewee also acknowledged this by saying: "teachers' autonomy has been eroded by policy-makers because they are not doing their work very well." Another interviewee claimed that policy makers should give teachers autonomy; teachers must feel free to do their own professional work so that they become accountable to their employers and other stakeholders. Morrow (1990) shows that when accountability loses its connection with autonomy, it becomes something very different. He notes,

It becomes merely satisfying others, in terms of their definition of one's task, that one is performing one's task satisfactory. This degenerated notion of accountability is likely to be the only one that could take root in South Africa, and were it to flourish, it is likely that it would simply increase the already massive power of central institutions (...) to control teachers' activities. The status of teachers as civil servants would become entrenched, and, because of the tighter control central institutions would be able to have over teachers and schools, these would become even more obviously nothing other than parts of the ideological state apparatus.

In line with this, I believe that accountability should be an element, which will instill in teachers a high sense of responsibility, which will ensure effective applicability of school effectiveness in African context.

Gilmour (1997:22) argued that to have a major breakthrough in the face of a severely constrained educational environment, what is needed is an administration which has the capacity to: "respond to local needs, match resources to policies and needs, promote greater accountability, increase efficiency and cost effectiveness (the role of incentives) and allow schools to develop their own provision." Gilmour argued further that a system of supervision, flexible leadership with constant and permanent monitoring sensitive to local needs, the credibility of the reforms, and fulfillment of promises, the promotion of organizational effects at the second level to formulate specific projects and the importance of goal setting and realistic time tables", are crucial conditions for school change.

In my opinion, to ensure effective applicability of the school effectiveness approach in Africa, policy makers and other key role players in education should exhibit a high sense of accountability in order to promote effective teaching and learning. This accountability will be developed by participating and monitoring educational activities in schools.

The research conducted by Taylor *et al.* (2003) established that policy-makers must put mechanisms in place to ensure that the curriculum is well taught. Additionally, explicit, regular and systematic evaluation, together with an appropriate administrative and management climate, which values and monitors high achievement for all, are some of the elements around which high quality education evolves. Their research placed premiums on coordination of all the variables in the school, as a collective tool for school improvement. Conceptually and philosophically, school improvers are required to effectively use mechanisms of monitoring and accountability to improve quality education in Africa.

In response to the above argument, another interviewee points out that accountability in our schooling system is not satisfactory. If there is poor accountability in schools, teachers will not have a sense of accountability and, this remains quite challenging. For another interviewee, accountability depends on the school. One of the indicators of accountability is performance. For him if a school attains high academic performance, then there is accountability.

### **2.6.3 Professionalism**

For a teacher to be competent and professional, he or she must be well trained. Riddell (1998) highlighted this point by placing a premium on the quality training of teachers as a means to ensuring quality education. Confirming this argument, Avalos (in Riddell, 1998:8), said that “narrowly based skills approaches to training have been detrimental in that they have led to the mechanisms of forms of teaching and learning observed in many classrooms around the world”. Avalos (in Riddell, 1998) further suggested that an interactionist approach must be used to enhance discovery learning and the practice of skills for specific purposes. This approach will stimulate

the conceptual understanding on the part of both learners and teachers, as well as support teaching practices aiming at how learners learn rather than at how they perform specific objectives (ibid). However, one interviewee claimed that, professionalism is not taking the appropriate route yet, but she added, "We are in progress." The respondent mentioned that one cannot talk about professionalism when some teachers come to school drunk and late. He therefore indicated that school inspectors should put mechanisms in place to ensure professionalism in schools. Teachers should live according to their code of discipline.

Another interviewee also said that professionalism was not working in schools and therefore the policy makers needed to inculcate that principle in teachers. Morrow (1990) attributes the lack of professionalism in African schools to the notion of 'higher authority' characteristic of hierarchical organisations and powerful central institutions. He argues that such a theory of authority has no logical space for the idea of a profession. For the dominant tradition in Africa, a member of a profession is simply another employee, albeit employees with 'higher' status because the tasks he is employed to perform touch the interests of the central authority very closely.

Beside the training of teachers, Lockheed and Levin's study (in Gilmour, 1997:10) in developing countries such as Brazil, Burundi, Colombia, Thailand and Sri Lanka also revealed that for quality education to be achieved, educational reformers ought to consider among other things: "a well developed curriculum (scope and sequence), instructional materials (textbooks and supporting materials), time for learning (more time on task), teaching practices (increased learner participation), community and parental involvement and lastly teacher professionalism (leadership, collegiality and motivation). The study further established that, in order to sustain school change, schools should have clear philosophies or missions and strategies for carrying the above-mentioned elements out within the expected framework of taking responsibility for actions.

In line with this argument one interviewee claimed that "professionalism is about teachers themselves taking decisions and deciding how to teach and do their work well." According to Morrow (1990), professionals are themselves a source of authority, independent of the authority of the state. The professionals have the general role of contributing to and maintaining the quality of life in the society as a whole and, in this tradition, they

cannot perform this role adequately, unless they have the autonomy to do that.

However, in the African context this is not the case. Members of the profession are considered to be civil servants and their professional standing is dependant on the whims of politicians and their employers. This is confirmed by Beardall (1995) 'findings about South African education when he noted,

... because teachers have had their decision-making rights appropriated by a 'higher authority' with regard learning theory, child development, curriculum and assessment, it seems teachers have not needed to be highly informed in these spheres. If this continues, teachers will continue to occupy the same level in society as they do at the present: as civil servants who are expected to 'toe the party line' because the 'party' pays them.

For another interviewee "a professional teacher is someone who independently engages himself in research in order to improve his teaching."

In the context of Africa where many teachers are not trained as mentioned in Chapter One, for school effectiveness to be useful and valuable in Africa, policy makers should develop quality-training programs for teachers in order to enhance their professional skills and knowledge of subject content. This will therefore ensure effective applicability and usefulness of the school effectiveness approach in African context, by raising the falling standards of education.

#### **2.6.4 Redefinition and Reevaluation of the SER paradigm**

Other schools of thoughts believe that for the school effectiveness approach to be useful in the African context, the approach must be redefined to suit this context. For instance, according to Riddell (1998), for school effectiveness to be useful in the African context, the use of the single model must be examined. She observed that the single model of school effectiveness research does not have the capacity to explain fully the total variance of school effectiveness. Consequently, she advocated the use of a multilevel model. For her, a multilevel model has the potential for and also benefits from natural clustering which takes place in educational system. The multilevel model provides room for the assumption that the proportion of variance and its effects differ from class to class rather than assuming that for example, the

proportion of working class children would have the same effect in each school class.

Riddell further explained that the multilevel model reanalysis of data sets, previously analyzed using single-level models, has produced much more conservative estimates of differential effectiveness. According to her, this might be due to the fact that a multilevel model has greater control over the sources of variation (ibid). In her thinking, to have a reliable resource of school effectiveness research, school researchers should use a multilevel regression model. This is because the multilevel model explicitly reflects the hierarchy of the educational system it describes (ibid).

Morley and Rassool (1999) argued that the universal solutions implied by the school effectiveness paradigm with its inherent economist motivation towards the cost benefits of educational rates of return, loses sight of the opportunity to identify the real problems that submerge schools and education in developing countries including Africa. For them, universal solutions cannot address the contextual educational problems in Africa.

Riddell (1998) also observed that the developments of new measures are usually left in the hands of the central ministry officials together with donor counterparts. The approach described above, does not take cognizance of local ownership in terms of data collection and planning. Consequently, indicators of this nature are usually not used to good effect. In the same vein, Harber and Muthukrishna (2000:429) cautioned that

... universal checklist characteristics of an effective school may well be of some referential value in South African contexts in stimulating thinking but they would have to be carefully interpreted, selectively ignored and significantly changed and added to in the light of often radically different needs and priorities. School effectiveness texts and their proponents need to tread very carefully and look, listen and learn in South Africa and other developing countries before making any firm recommendations for school improvement.

In line with this argument, one interviewee, a policy maker from the National Department of Education in South Africa observed: "one solution fits all approach cannot be useful. The application of the approach should be adapted to suit the context". The reason for the adaptation is that schools are located in different cultural

settings. He further argued that the school effectiveness paradigm must be directed towards learner outcome in order to achieve quality.

In terms of these comments, the SE approach must be redefined in its applicability in the African context so as to be able to address the challenges that African countries are currently facing. Similarly, Morley and Rassool (1999) argued that given the differential social economic background of Africa. These countries must be allowed to champion their own development and to redefine education in terms of the specific needs of the people living within these societies. They observed that schools are places of cultural transmission or experiences.

Fuller and Clark (in Gilmour, 1997:11), also observed that quality education is related to "setting clear learning objectives and high performance standards for core subjects, learner readiness (the importance of nutritional and pre-school programmes), teacher's subjects knowledge, time spent on learning and instructional materials (textbooks and supporting materials including libraries)". In support of the argument, Govinda and Varghese's study (in Gilmour, 1997:11), identified variables such as "strengthening external supervision (the role of the inspectorate), teacher deployment (rural and marginalized areas tend to get the worst teachers), strengthening learner evaluation (reliable and credible assessment procedures) and regional variation" as mechanisms to ensuring quality education in developing countries.

One interviewee, another policy maker from the Western Cape Department of Education, made a similar comment. According to her, school effectiveness is not about examination results only, rather it is about "combining the variables in the school to enhance teaching, to support learners to become life long learners." For her, if the school effectiveness paradigm is applied in that way, then and only then, can it be considered as useful.

Riddell (1998) further noted that educational systems in developing countries have the difficulty of running crash programmes, the absence of supervision of work and unappraised programmes of teacher training. For the school effectiveness approach to be applicable in this context, Riddell suggested that educational reformers should

design educational reforms based on learner-centred teaching in schools and the development of new teaching repertoires, instructional aids, management support and further staff development. Additionally, she suggested that school improvers should encourage problem-solving learning, critical thinking and developing new ways of approaching subjects to be part of any educational reform programme (ibid).

Some interviewees (three from the Western Cape Department of Education and one from the National Department of Education in Pretoria) made similar arguments. In response to the question about the usefulness of SER paradigm in the African context, one responded that the concept of school effectiveness is crucial to schools and it depends on how one defines it. He pointed out that school effectiveness is "about preparing individuals or producing that quality to be responsible, to see his fellow human being as a brother or sister, to be entrepreneurial, to be responsible."

Having critically reviewed the literature on school effectiveness and the responses from the interviews, it is evident that the school effectiveness approach can be useful in the African context provided the context in which the approach is being applied is given due consideration.

## CHAPTER THREE: SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

### 3.1 Introduction

In the 1990s, the educational agenda in many countries was increasingly dominated by a concern about implementing the educational radical reform agenda of the 1980s (Ainscow *et al.*, 1994). It is against this background that Ainscow *et al.*, (1994) writing in the United Kingdom, began to work with schools within the framework of the British national reform agenda. Their focus was on student achievement, the school's achievement and the school's ability to cope with the change which they refer to as school improvement. For them, school improvement is a distinct approach to educational change that enhances learner's outcomes and strengthens the school's capacity for managing change. They regard school improvement as an approach which raises learner's achievement through focusing on the teaching and learning process and the conditions which support it (ibid).

Ainscow *et al.*, (1994) explained that school improvement is not about how to implement centralized reforms in a more effective way, but rather about how schools can use the impetus of external reform to improve and develop themselves (ibid). According to Teddie (in Gilmour, 1997), the school improvement paradigm, to a large extent, is a response to school effectiveness research. School improvement in contrast to school effectiveness favors qualitative rather than quantitative methodologies. It is a field that demonstrates a shift from the equity ideal which features prominently in school effectiveness research to one of efficiency irrespective of all backgrounds (ibid).

In this chapter, I will state where the idea comes from, mention the main contributors of the idea, and further state its main features. I will then move into a full discussion of the idea drawing on the literature. I will also draw attention to a number of studies conducted in the field which exemplify this particular approach. Finally I will critically

analyze the usefulness of that approach to the African context, drawing on the school improvement literature and the interviews.

### **3.2 Definition**

Velzen *et al.*, (in, 1993:117) define school improvement as “a systematic, sustained effect that aims at change in learning conditions and other related internal conditions in one or more schools with the ultimate aim of accomplishing educational goals more effectively.”

### **3.3 Models of Accountability**

The argument has often been made that under the school improvement approach, teachers are accountable. Parents, governors, educational authorities and other stakeholders have the responsibility to ensure improvement in the school. In line with the above thoughts, Muller and Roberts (2000) argue that accountability refers to the incentive, reward and sanction mechanisms for achieving the standards. They add that accountability defines who is responsible for what in improving learner performance. Muller and Roberts (2000) further mention that under public accountability principals, teachers are to be held responsible for professional development and support. Cohen and Fuhrman (in Muller and Roberts, 2000) argue that internal accountability is the tool to ensure school improvement.

Gilmour (1997) argued that the quality assurance field was developed as a response to accountability in education by parents and politicians. As a result of public auditing and parental choice approaches becoming the order of the day in the 1990s, quality assurance has become an illustration of performance indicators and league tables (Gilmour, 1997). According to Gilmour, there are different forms of accountability. A table is provided below to show the different models of accountability.

## Models of Accountability

|   |
|---|
| 1. Public or state control<br>Managerial or bureaucratic hierarchy to whom teachers are accountable for externally imposed standards  |
| 2. Professional Accountability<br>Protection of schools from product-oriented outcomes although there is accountability to the schools' direct clientele, i.e. parents and pupils |
| 3. Professional Accountability and Self-Reporting<br>An extension of (2) with little external validation. Preferred on grounds that the developmental process may be hampered.    |
| 4. Consumerist - control - Partnership<br>Parents and schools as parents share a consensus on objectives, information and dialogue to evaluate what has been done.                |
| 5. Consumer control – free market.<br>Parental power of choice. A negative relationship between the schools and clients, but not political or bureaucratic control                |

From Kogan (in Gilmour, 1997:6).

It must be pointed out that for Gilmour, accountability is the mechanism to ensure high academic performance..

Robinson (in Hargreaves and Hopkins, 1993) identified three models of accountability. The first mode of accountability he noted is bureaucratic democracy which recognizes the right of the state to hold teachers and schools accountable for implementing the policy of elected officials. The second model considers the whole-school community as the main point of accountability. Finally, the professional model views teachers and schools as accountable to a bigger autonomous professional association. Robinson (in Hargreaves and Hopkins, 1993) added that if teachers and principals compromise issues of accountability when dealing directly with professional colleagues, programmes of staff and school development and evaluation are not going to be as efficient and effective as expected. In agreement with the above argument, Louis and Miles (1990) argued that individuals and groups should be held accountable for performance. They added that a sense of

responsibility and accountability must be owned by individuals of the organisation. They further claimed that professional learning and improvement can only take place when there is critical assessment of both collegial and group members.

### **3.4 Characteristics of School Improvement**

School Improvement is associated with an inside-out approach, which focuses on the 'holistic organic view of the school' (Muller and Roberts, 2000:6). According to Muller and Roberts (2000), school improvement researchers and implementers were concerned with internal processes, 'such as communication, in-school hierarchies and decision-making' (ibid). It is argued that these internal processes would have an effect on school quality (ibid). In sum the inside-out reformers have shifted their attention from organizational culture of schools, which involves shared values, vision and teamwork, to an explicit focus on improving classroom instructions (Taylor *et al.*, 2003:4) as a condition for improving learner performance.

Morley and Rassool (1999) explained that the school improvement paradigm deals with whole school policies, management strategies, staff training, monitoring, evaluation and target setting in school development plans. They explained that whole school policies constitute an essential aspect of the management of planned change within schools during the early 1980s (ibid). They further added that in the period of 1981-1988, whole-school policies were integrally connected on both formal and informal levels (ibid). Morley and Rassool indicated that the influences from research stressing the importance of building links between home and school have contributed immensely to removing the barriers between schools and communities that they serve. They noted that in some schools the developments mentioned above have had a significant impact on changing curriculum organisation, the teaching approach and the general ethos in which teaching and learning take place (ibid). They further explained that whole-school policies promote the aim of identifying a common approach to teaching and learning in the school (ibid). Morley and Rassool (1999) maintained the argument that whole school policies generally show a shared vision of development, which brings teachers together in a particular school around a common identity.

In support of the above argument, Dean (1999) noted that a shared vision is a means of quality improvement of education. Many writers and researchers place a premium on shared vision in schools (ibid). For these researchers, school vision is defined as “a vivid picture of a challenging yet desirable future state that strongly meets the needs of the students and is widely seen as a significant improvement on the current state” (Dean, 1999:14). The researchers further note that every individual involved in running the school should be encouraged to articulate the meaning of the vision once it has been developed (ibid). They suggested that the vision of the school should become the basis for encouraging, enabling, empowering and developing the staff of the school. They maintained that the school’s vision should be considered as a cornerstone of the school (Dean, 1999). For Clegg and Billington (in Dean, 1999:14), the school’s vision should embrace the “nature and purpose of education, the nature of the school’s curriculum, the working relationships within schools and the way the school relates to its community.”

Hargreaves and Hopkins (1993) also mentioned that school improvement aims at developing strategies for educational change, which enhances the school’s organization and implementing curriculum reforms. In line with this trend of thought Hopkins (1987) stated that school improvement deals with curriculum development, enhancing school organization, changes in the teaching-learning process, and teaching styles. Hopkins (1989), maintained that school improvement deals with a developmental approach to evaluation. It concentrates on classroom and school situations and it is content and process orientated. Hopkins (1987) further claimed that in the school improvement approach the teacher is given more priority in the change process.

Hopkins *et al.*, (in Myers, 1996) defined school improvement as an approach to educational change, which has the dual purpose of enhancing learner’s achievement and strengthening the school’s capacity for managing change. Myers (1996) claimed that recent school improvement efforts have focused on increasing attainment. She argued that with open enrolment and the publication of examination league tables, there is an increasing danger of defining achievement only in terms of improved examination results (ibid).

To ensure successful school improvement programmes, Myers (1996) suggested that schools require resources to initiate and support change. She retained the argument that “change, by definition cannot be managed through the status quo level of resources. It makes new demands, creates unsolved problems, and is resource hungry” (Louis and Miles in Myers, 1996: 14). Stoll (in Myers, 1996:15) made the statement that “all improvement is change, but not all change is improvement.”

Hopkins (1987) explained school improvement from three perspectives. In the first place, he noted that achieving change has more to do with implementation of new practices at the school level. Secondly, school improvement is a carefully planned and managed process, which occurs over a period of many years and is a process, not an event. Finally, he said that for a change to occur in education, and in a classroom for that matter, the entire organization must be changed. Additionally, teachers' cooperation is a necessary instrument for a change to take place in the organization (Hopkins, 1987). For Hopkins (1987), school improvement goes beyond a mere classroom change. He observed that school improvement also pays attention to other related internal arrangements such as “the curriculum, the school organizational structure, local policy, school climate, relations with parents and so on” (Hopkins, 1987: 2).

Hopkins (1987: 2) defined change as “any alteration of learning conditions, or related internal conditions in the school.” Huberman (in Fullan, 1993:8) also indicated that change is about “designing programmes or projects, which find their way easily into school environments”. Hopkins (1987), explained that learning conditions in the school refer to organized activities of the school, managed by teachers, which focus on achieving educational goals. He further explained that related internal conditions refer to all angles of the school, which are linked with learning conditions aimed at achieving pupils' goals.

Muller and Roberts (2000) also argued that school improvement interventions deal with internal conditions of the school, mainly through the means of consensual goals, vision and team building. They maintained that internal processes such as communication, in-school hierarchies and decision have a significant impact on

school improvement. According to Hopkins (1987), every school is expected to achieve educational goals set up for its students and society as a whole. He mentioned that educational goals for students among other things include: “increase in knowledge, basic skills, social skills, self concept, and vocational competence” (1987: 2). For social functions of the educational system, he identified “equity, filling labour market needs, reducing delinquency, responsible citizenship .” (ibid).

The school improvement approach also focuses on the process of enhancing the school's capacity to deal with change. The ultimate aim of the approach is to make the best of the school's staff and resources, raising flexibility and the adaptation of the school to ensure the learners' better future (Hopkins, 1987). He stated that differential treatment of schools, and more school-focused improvement efforts will be the main characteristics of the improvement strategy.

Hopkins (1994) mentioned that curriculum must provide for introduction to changes within subject areas. Finally, he suggested that teachers must be organized to develop teaching skills and strategies. This, he called instructional alternatives. In his view, the above-mentioned factors can change the culture of the school significantly (ibid).

Taylor *et al.* (2003) affirmed the argument made above by stating that the school improvement approach, which they refer to as inside-out, basically concentrates on issues of the organizational culture of schools, shared values, vision and teamwork. The bottom-up programs are extended to the classroom in order to improve teaching and learning so as to enhance learner's performance. For Taylor *et al.* (2003), the school improvement programs require the following assumptions: firstly, the child is the centre of all learning and as a result individual attention must be placed on the child so as to direct learning towards her or his specific needs, interests and capacities.

Secondly, the teacher is the focus of the school improvement program rather than the whole school. Thus, by this assumption the teacher is a facilitator of learning rather than claiming to know it all and that change at the school and the classroom levels depends essentially on the motivation and initiative of the individual teacher.

Taylor *et al.*, (2003) stressed that improvement programs place a premium on teaching methods, which are child-centred, rather than on subject knowledge. They argued that customized worksheets that help teachers to promote pupils' activities in the classroom should be a core of school improvement programs. Moreover, Taylor *et al.*, (2003) claimed that curriculum development must be relevant to the real world.

Hopkins, (1994) however argued that school improvement programs must focus on the whole school. He added that school improvement programs must include the following assumptions. He claimed that the school is a centre of change and that external reforms need to focus on situations in individual schools rather than assuming that all schools are the same. He recommended that school improvement programs be carefully planned over a period of years by mounting a systematic approach to achieve a change. Hopkins, (1994) maintained that school improvement programs should focus on the internal conditions of schools since they are fundamental for change. Thus, there must be delegations of powers to all teachers and availability of resources, which will support the teacher-learning process (*ibid*).

School improvement programs must aim at helping schools to effectively achieve educational goals for its students and society (*ibid*). Again, Hopkins pointed out that, for the school to achieve the expected quality and desired goal, it must work in collaboration with all stakeholders such as “teachers, heads, governors, parents, advisors, higher education, consultants and...”(1994:79).

Another assumption that Hopkins (1994) identified is that of developing integrative implementation strategies. This, he said, involves both top-down and bottom-up approaches. He explained that both approaches can be applied at different levels in educational systems. Hopkins (1994) indicated that a top-down approach provides policy aims, an overall strategy and operational plans, while a bottom-up approach provides diagnosis, priority goal setting and implementation. Hopkins (1994) pointed out that school improvement programs must be such that teachers who are the implementing agents can claim ownership of them and be committed to the programs. For them this will ensure successful change.

Fullan (1993) also said that in initiating school improvement programs such as school curricula to bring out change, it is necessary to seek teachers' views in relation to proposed new changes before embarking on programs. In addition, school improvement processes must mobilize all teachers from the very beginning so that by the time the curriculum is approved there is commitment to the implementation of the curriculum. Again, the philosophy of the school improvement process is to recognize and motivate teachers at all stages of the process (ibid). These, according to Fullan, (1993) will promote the process of change in the school.

The school improvement approach is believed to concentrate on the culture of the school to improve quality education. Beare et al (in Dean 1999) argued that school culture deals with the philosophy and/or ideology espoused by the staff members. Furthermore, it deals with the ways in which that philosophy is translated into an operational mission or purpose. They retained the argument that the school culture encompasses the respective value sets of leaders and others both within the organisation as a school and those directly affected by its operation. Another aspect of school culture that they noted is the quality of personal and interpersonal actions and interactions. Beare et al (in Dean 1999) continued to state that school culture encompasses many tangible and intangible manifestations which otherwise have been considered insignificant but have potential and power in the organisation.

In support of the argument, Nias et al's study in a number of schools in Britain, revealed factors such as school buildings, organisational arrangements, the people who worked there, their histories and that of the school (Dean, 1999). According to the study, the above-mentioned factors make up the cultures of the schools in question. Dean (1999) noted that each of the factors affected the school culture by determining the nature and the level of interaction between staff members. Interaction, he noted, was influenced by institutional and personal factors within each school. Additionally, buildings and organisational arrangements affected interaction by determining individual opportunities for interaction, whereas personal histories, particularly past experiences in the school, affected personal inclination to interact (Dean, 1999).

Another element of school culture that Dean (1999) identified is expectation. He argued that expectation is an important element of school culture. In his view, the head teacher's expectation of teachers influences their work. Furthermore, the expectation of children in the classroom influences their performance. In view of this argument, he indicated that teachers ought to create a climate in which learners are expected to work hard to attain high academic performance (*ibid.*). Mortimore *et al.* (in Dean 1999:17) also supported the argument by stating that,

... where the head, by example, has high expectations and sets a tone which is positive about learning and positive about pupils, it is much more likely that teachers and, indeed pupils will also exhibit such traits. If the school is positive, and has an atmosphere in which it is expected that all pupils will succeed (even if not at the same level or at the same time), then pupils will feel valued; so will staff.

Barth (1991) also observed that the relationship is another element of school culture. He indicated that there are a number of relationships that prevail within a particular school. For example, "child-child relationship, teacher-teacher relationship, child-teacher relationship, parent-teacher relationship, parent-principal relationship and parent-parent relationship" (1990:19). He claimed that besides the above-mentioned relationships, the most outstanding relationship is the teacher-principal relationship. For him, for a school to have a positive culture, there must be a healthy relationship between the teacher and the principal. He maintained that if the relationship between the teacher and the principal is characterized "by helpfulness, supportive, trusting, revealing of craft knowledge", then the entire school will have the appropriate school culture for improvement (*ibid.*).

Barth, however, noted that if the interactions between the teacher and the principal are "suspicious, guarded, distant, adversarial, acrimonious or judgmental", the school culture is likely to be negative (*ibid.*). He strongly argued that the relationship between the teacher and the principal is a fundamental element for school improvement. For him, this particular type of relationship models all types of relationship in the school (*ibid.*).

Hopkins' examination of various North American approaches to restructuring and school improvement revealed that when having the school improvement approach, the following fundamental factors must be considered (1994). For him, collegiality is

a key to school improvement. He explained that collegiality ensures professional relations within the school and links teachers and schools more closely to their surrounding neighborhoods. Additionally, he identified research as a tool to promote school improvement. Thus research informs teachers about effective school practices or instructional alternatives.

### **3.5 Research**

For the purpose of this study, five research projects that have appeared in this field are worth drawing attention to. Three projects were conducted by Louis and Miles (1990) respectively at Chester Central High School, Agassiz High School, and Alameda High School. The fourth research project known as Improving the Quality of Education for All (IQEA) was conducted by Ainscow *et al.* (1994) The fifth project known as the International School Improvement Project was conducted by West and Hopkins (1996).

According to Miles (in Louis and Miles, 1990), research conducted at Chester Central High School indicated that a programme for school improvement was top-down where goals and activities were chosen by outsiders and were not clearly understood by the teachers. Consequently, the implementation of this imposed improvement project failed. This is because teachers did not claim ownership of the projects and there was a lack of initiative at school level. The research further establishes that the programs were technical and did not meet the organizational goals which were specified for them (ibid). According to the study, there was a complete absence of collaborative work and no one had a clear vision of what kind of change process would be needed for effective implementation.

Another study conducted at Agassiz High School, however, revealed a successful story about school improvement (Louis *et al.*, in Louis and Miles, 1990). According to the study, all stakeholders including teachers were involved in the school improvement programs. The principal of the school ensured safety and climate improvement. The principal also endeavored to put a monitoring mechanism in place such as inviting parents where children were absent in school and gave feedback to teachers. The study also stated that the principal instituted disciplinary measures to

curb the negative behavior of the learners in order to ensure school improvement (Louis *et al.*, in Louis and Miles, 1990). The study further revealed that teachers were involved in developing a number of school improvement programs. This effort helped to rebuild the internal and external image of the school and to improve community and parent involvement (Louis *et al.*, in Louis and Miles, 1990). It is also mentioned that the principal instituted professional development programs, which stressed self-esteem, motivation and personal goal setting. Consequently, teachers' lukewarm attitude towards work was transformed.

The study also indicated that the principal later embarked on a bottom-up approach by involving all teachers to improve curriculum development and their supervisory skills (Louis *et al.*, in Louis and Miles, 1990). This approach instills in teachers the skill of curriculum planning at departmental level and self-evaluation strategies. The study established that the principal's bottom-up approach made teachers put more energy into the implementation of the curriculum they planned themselves and also helped to make them more accountable to the state.

Another study conducted at Alameda High School also revealed a similar successful story of school improvement. The research indicated that the principal applied a bottom-up approach by involving all teachers in school improvement initiated in the school. Furthermore, he was a strong and visionary leader who focused on higher expectations for students and members of staff. Additionally, the principal instituted staff development programs which were placed under the responsibility of a well-structured team of teachers (Louis *et al.*, in Louis and Miles, 1990). The study further indicated that the principal put a lot of energy into instructional supervision, peer coaching and subject specialized programme. This is confirmed when a teacher said, "It has become a school again" (Louis *et al.*, in Louis and Miles, 1990:79). Louis *et al.*, (in Louis and Miles) observed that "there is excitement about teaching and learning, and freedom from worry about social control. Vandalism and gangs are no longer a major issue; absenteeism has come down sharply and achievement scores are strikingly up" (1990:79).

Both studies in Agassiz and Alameda High Schools revealed that with school-improvement programs, teachers became more accountable to their teaching, the

school's climate and functioning were stronger which in turn, had an acute impact on student learning, behaviour, attitudes and attendance (Louis *et al.*, in Louis and Miles, 1990).

The school improvement programs also ensured availability of resources, and teacher empowerment was encouraged. Again, the programs instilled in the teachers' new curriculum ideas and new instructional strategies (*ibid*).

Ainscow *et al.* (1994) also conducted a study with some 40 schools in East Anglia, North London and Yorkshire, on a school improvement or development project known as Improving the Quality of Education for All (IQEA). This project operated on the assumptions that schools are likely to provide enhanced outcomes for all learners when they adopt ways of working which are consistent with their own aspirations and current reform agenda (*ibid*). The IQEA project had five principles which included the vision of the school. Thus, the vision of the school should be one to which all members of the school community have an opportunity to contribute. Additionally, the school will view external pressures as an opportunity to secure its internal priorities. It is also said that the school ought to create and maintain conditions in which all members of the school's community can learn successfully. Again, the school should adopt and develop structures which encourage collaboration and lead to the empowerment of individuals and groups. Finally, the school should promote the notion that monitoring and evaluation of quality is a responsibility in which all members of staff share. Ainscow *et al* believed that the above-mentioned principles promote a holistic approach to school improvement and the principles also inform the thinking and actions of teachers during school improvement efforts.

West and Hopkins (1996) described the main assumptions of the International School Improvement Project (ISIP) such as: that the school should be seen as the centre of change activity, that change should be planned and managed over a period of time, that the support of partners needs to be encouraged, and that both implementation and institutionalization strategies are required (West and Hopkins, 1996). They also claimed that the International School of Improvement Project stressed that school improvement endeavors are characterized by a dual emphasis

on strengthening the school's capacity for change and implementing specific reforms, which result in increasing student achievement.

Additionally, Louis and Miles' assumptions that school improvement should focus on the nature of school-system relationships, the importance of shared images, the need for evolutionary planning and adequate resourcing and problem-solving arrangements, have proved to be helpful to the players of the school improvement approach (in West and Hopkins, 1996).

### **3.6 Implementation**

This section looks at different projects undertaken in different countries in Europe and North America. It also examines the implementation project known as the "Thousand Schools Project" conducted in South Africa.

Fullan (1993) observed that the implementation of reform projects is "an ongoing negotiation process about many new different tasks". Farrar (1980) likewise explains that it is "a continuing process of policy making in which various actors press their varied definitions of policy" (in Gilmour *et al.* (1997).

According to Velzen (in Hopkins, 1987) previous work on change in schools took place during a period of sustained economic and social development. Since the middle of the 1970s, however, the majority of Western educational systems have been experiencing a contraction of their populations and somewhat less consistent rates of growth (*ibid*). Consequently, the role and functions of the schools have been going through a number of challenges posed by new demands from individuals, groups and society at large (*ibid*). At this time, schools were expected to strengthen their links with communities around them and to be more accountable. Velzen (in Hopkins, 1987) observes that around the late 1970s, the knowledge base on change in schools began to reflect two particular developments. The first development was an increase in the evidence coming from a large number of national and international studies and research projects on effective innovation strategies. The second, somewhat contradictory, the outcomes of the above-mentioned studies, was that the evidence was not subjected to a test on a large scale.

It was recognized at the time that the following were the problems confronting the implementation of educational policies.

- The first problem was about the difficulty in granting schools autonomy in elaborating and implementing change.
- Secondly, there was a lack of internal capacity at school level associated with internal functions and trained staff.
- Thirdly, there was a problem with the difference in attitude among policy makers, practitioners and researchers about the design and implementation of policies.
- Additionally, there was difficulty in harmonizing the differences in starting points, philosophies and needs among the aforementioned groups.
- Finally, there was also a problem of availability of external support structures and procedures (Velzen in Hopkins, 1987).

Hopkins (1987) also identified the fact that educational systems as a whole were facing not only retrenchment but also pressure for change. He further noted that there was a need at that time for a project that concentrated on school improvement. A change at the meso-level, in terms of strategies for enhancing the school's capacity for problem solving, and making the school more responsive to change and sustaining the quality of education was crucial (ibid). In the light of the above argument, Velzen (in Hopkins, 1987) also suggested that the adaptation of schools to new societal and individual demands had to be based on a sound and coherent school improvement policy which took into account the needs and limits of the school. It is against this background that the International School Improvement Project (ISIP) which consisted of members from Western countries started its work in October 1982 in Palm Beach, USA to find answers to the question of school improvement.

According to Velzen (in Hopkins, 1987) the general aim of ISIP was "to facilitate improved knowledge of and insights into the functioning of the school improvement processes both on a small and a large scale and to contribute to the development of skills within various levels of educational administration, decision-making and

support". It is in the light of this, that he called upon research and support agencies, educational departments, ministries of education and educational bodies to be involved in a collaborative effort to search for answers.

According to Hopkins (1987), the two most important features of ISIP-work, taken as a whole, were the emphasis on the school as the centre of change and on the qualitative factors consisting of the internal conditions of the school. He said that the school, being the centre of change, is itself self-conscious and adopts a school-wide focus towards improvement efforts. Thus, the school also learns about how to change and raise its capacity to change (ibid). He further referred to qualitative factors such as an emphasis in the teaching and learning process, an agreement on goals, a conducive learning climate and high expectations. Hopkins (1987) explained that ISIP and other related studies on school improvement such as those of Cutter *et al.*, and Mortimore *et al.*, (in Hopkins, 1987) indicate that it is the above mentioned qualitative factors that result in enhanced student outcomes.

Hopkins (1987) argued that the aforementioned features, which are related to the school as a social system can be changed by the conscious effort of the school staff. He, however, admitted that the qualitative factors such as facilities, finance and personnel were equally important, but noted that schools found it difficult to control them (ibid). Having discussed the two main features of school improvement proposed by ISIP, Hopkins (1987) expressed his reservations about the applicability of the features at local level (school level). He expressed this concern against the background of what was occurring in education in the United Kingdom (UK). He further claimed that "in secondary education in UK, emphasis is laid on a teaching and learning style in many of the curriculum innovations, specific grant related support, the GRIST arrangements schemes for teachers appraisal, student profiling and school evaluation" (Hopkins, 1987:193). These changes, he noted, could be conceptualized within a school improvement framework (ibid). He, however, pointed out that these initiatives did not necessarily by themselves contribute to school improvement. Hopkins (1987) admitted that school evaluation, when practiced within the GRIDS framework, could become a powerful instrument for school improvement. He, however, argued that when school evaluation is conceptualized within an accountability framework, it produces limited evidence of school improvement.

Another contentious point which Hopkins (1987) raised in his argument has to do with ISIP's school-based review strategy (SBR). SBR is defined as "a systematic inspection by a school, a sub-system or an individual of the actual functioning of the school" (Bollan in Hopkins, 1987:121). The school-based review strategy has the responsibility of evaluating processes of improvement in schools. Hopkins (1987), stated that a review should precede development in order to know one's situation before embarking on the next plan for improvement. Similarly, he questioned the over emphasis that SBR lays on organizational processes and curriculum substance at the expense of allowing people at the local level to learn how to bring change themselves.

SBR also provides a basis for systematic planning for school improvement (Hopkins, 1987). Hopkins, (1987) disregarded this approach. For him, planning must be realistic and reliable to bring about the desired change. In his thinking, the kind of planning in the SBR proposal is unreliable and bureaucratic in nature which will fail to achieve the desired change. According to ISIP's philosophy, when the characteristics of SBR mentioned above are harmonized it can create a favourable social climate of the school by making it ultimately more conducive to improvement and promoting quality.

Another bone of contention that Hopkins (1987) addressed deals with ISIP's suggestion about the leadership role in school improvement. Hopkins (1987), in his argument, recognized the fact that the leadership role is crucial in school improvement. He, however, disputed the notion of ISIP putting a premium on development at the expense of training. For him, school leaders must be given adequate training to prepare them towards school improvement. Additionally, he stressed that principals should be involved in various activities suggested by a particular improvement effort. Again, Hopkins (1987), argued that a school leader has to plan and act within the context of policy. He added that long term planning and the creation of policy at the school and local level are important activities for the school leader. In contrast to the point made above, he noted that the school leader's role is not the panacea for school improvement, but suggested that policy and

planning determine the context and direction within which the school leader displays his or her creativity and intuition and through which he or she develops.

Another disagreement that Hopkins (1987) had with ISIP was their proposal of external support. He admitted that though external support had been there for years that being proposed by ISIP was in the context of schools in the UK. The problem he identified with this new proposal was the fact that institutions such as the inspection service, teacher centres, the institutes of education and university and college departments had not conceptualized their role within a framework of external support (ibid). For clarification, he pointed out that the contribution of external support to school improvement had to be realized and the role that the institutions had to play redefined.

Additionally, Hopkins (1987), argued that schools should also reconceptualise external support. Thus, schools had to consider school improvement as a collaborative attempt to define their needs more clearly and become more proactive in the use of outside assistance (ibid). It is against this background that Hopkins (1987) stressed that external support should match the needs of the school (ibid). He concluded on this point by saying that if the matching does not occur, the end result would be that schools would either get the incorrect support or they would request inappropriate assistance. The top-down (national level) oriented policy suggested by ISIP was also a point of concern for Hopkins (1987). According to Tangerud (in Hopkins, 1987), formulating a common policy for a pluralistic system causes problems. Hopkins (1987) added that regardless of the quality of the policy, teachers and learners were usually suspicious of it. In view of the above, Hopkins (1987) recommended that policy should be formulated at the local level to ensure successful implementation. He finally argued that central policy did not create awareness at the local level.

The above argument is further substantiated by a study conducted on school improvement known as Improving the Quality of Education for All (IQEA) in 40 schools in East Anglia, North London and Yorkshire. The study revealed that the schools in question adapted their internal conditions to meet the demands of the change which make them successful (Ainscow *et al.*, 1994). In view of this, Ainscow

et al. (1994) encouraged schools to diagnose their internal conditions regarding their own chosen change before they started their development work.

Reviewing all the implications of ISIP's proposals on school improvement as mentioned above, Hopkins (1987) noted that to ensure successful implementation of school improvement, educational planners should depart from the traditional training of teachers. He stressed that the type of training required for school improvement should be quality-oriented rather than quantity of in-service training. In support of the argument, Fullan (in Hopkins, 1987:196), stated that

... the evidence continues to accumulate, and is as convincing as we need, to make the general point that a new task focused, continuous professional development, combining a variety of trainers and other support personnel, is ever living and is effective in bringing about a change in practice. While these examples are based on much more intensive and systematic interaction than are traditional forms of in-service, there is some evidence to show that a small amount of time, used under the right conditions over a period of several months alternating between practice and training, can go a long way. Still, there are many unresolved issues, most of which pertain to management questions of how to initiate, design and follow on what amounts to a sophisticated, highly integrated approach to professional development.

Hopkins further illustrated his argument by saying that "if we are to make school improvement work for us in our school, our college or jurisdiction, we must engage ourselves and others, systematically in a dialectic between the knowledge base, the local situation and our own experience" (1987:196). For him, school improvement is about a group of individuals using what they know intelligently, being accountable within collective efforts and working very hard towards a common goal. Notwithstanding the importance of this collective ideal, Hopkins (1987) emphasized the fact that change stems from individual commitment and understanding. Whitman (in Hopkins, 1987:197) also claimed that "you shall no longer take things at second or third hand...not look through the eyes of the dead...nor feed on the specters in books, you shall not look through my eyes either, nor take things from me, you shall listen to all sides and filter them from yourself."

Another project which was undertaken by the University of Cambridge Institute of Education is known as Improving the Quality of Education for All (IQEA) (Morley and Rassool, 1999). The project worked with about 40 schools in East Anglia and

Yorkshire in Britain. The ultimate goal of the project was to improve the processes of teaching and learning and to engage the services of six tutor-consultants in directing schools in developing their capacity to improve (ibid). In examining the management conditions necessary for school improvement in 1990s, the IQEA project pointed out some specific areas for development. They included: staff development, learners, parents and governor involvement, leadership, co-ordination and communication and collaborative planning (Hopkins et al. in Morley and Rassool, 1999). Morley and Rassool (1999) however, observed that besides the emphasis on managerial leadership, Improving the Quality of Education for All approach did not show a significant change from what had been considered to be good educational practice in the period of the previous 30 years.

### **3.6.1 The Thousand School Project**

A School Improvement project was also implemented in South Africa through the Thousand Schools Project (TSP). According to Graham-Jolly & Peacock (2000), the Thousand Schools Project was established by the Independent Development Trust (IDT) in 1993 with the purpose of identifying a thousand disadvantaged primary and secondary schools across the country whose educational needs would be met by the delivery of services and materials by NGO's within the context of Whole School Development. According to Gilmour *et al.*(1997), the Thousand Schools Project was developed within the framework of Whole School Development (WSD). While Whole School Development is a pivot around which the Thousand School's Project evolved, the project however focused mostly on teachers and principals. It concentrated on the role of the teacher in attaining the fundamental requirements for changing the school (ibid). It was assumed that "the teacher would play a coordinating role on occasion, a management on another, that of a facilitator and often that of an initiator" (Gilmour *et al.* 1997:42).

In the project, the school based professional was seen as central to the conceptualization and management of the process of change. It must be underscored that even though Whole School Development, as a process, recognized students, parents and the community as role players in terms of the project, it (the project) however directed its resources towards the upgrading of teacher skills (ibid).

For the Thousand Schools Project, improving the schools meant improving the skill levels of the teacher and the management capacity of the school leadership (ibid). The project put maximum effort into the in-service training in management and governance since, according to the philosophy of the project, the stabilization of school management structures was a necessary platform for facilitating the development of a culture of professionalism in the schools (ibid).

The Thousand Schools Project also stressed the involvement of language, mathematics and science in its programme. Central for the Project, was the need to change the teacher's rote learning and teacher-centred methodologies to more child-centred and constructivist approaches (Gilmour *et al.*, 1997). Provisions were made for school management training, exposure of teachers to new methodologies and skills, getting teachers to use resources and teaching aids to enhance the teaching of their lessons as well as exposing teachers to new content areas in the curriculum as a way of making them pupil-centred and critical professionals (ibid).

While the conceptualization of the strategy adopted by the Thousand Schools Project reflected contemporary thinking on improving the quality of schooling, the period of implementation encountered a number of difficulties. For example, the evaluation of the project indicated that the NGOs had conflicts of interests in the schools. Thus, there were difficulties about the ability and willingness of NGOs, to integrate their services, and their capacity to provide for the needs of the schools within the project. Additionally, both teachers and NGOs in some cases were not sufficiently committed to the implementation of the project (Gilmour *et al.*, 1997).

Other problems that undermined the successful implementation of the Thousand Schools Project included: the inability of the project to respond creatively to local initiatives seriously undermined both the credibility of the project and its potential as a successful model of development. Thus, the project failed to respond sufficiently to the contextual realities in areas where the implementation occurred. The realities included socio-cultural factors, the history and politics of educational development in South Africa (Graham-Jolly & Peacock, 2000).

This is clear evidence of the type of problems that could arise when transferring a borrowed idea to a different context as mentioned earlier in Chapter One. In view of this, when implementing any school improvement project in Africa, school improvers should draw on Fullan's argument that

...there is an overwhelming amount of evidence that educational change is inherently, endemically and ineluctably non linear, that the rational trap is in seeking to establish greater coherence in the system and only when greater clarity and coherence are achieved in the minds of the majority of teachers will we have any chance of success... clarity must be achieved on the receiving end more than on the delivery end (Fullan in Graham-Jolly & Peacock, 2000:404-405).

### **3.7 Usefulness of School Improvement in African Context**

This section starts by presenting the limitations of the school improvement paradigm emanating from Europe and America, and moves on to discuss its usefulness in the African context drawing on the literature and the interviews. In the debate, contradictions, tensions and differences of opinions are pointed out.

#### **3.7.1 General Limitations**

West and Hopkins (1996) criticized the school improvement approach. They claimed that school improvement initiatives mostly focus on staff development. This is confirmed when Myers, Stoll and Mortimore (in West and Hopkins, 1996) contended that school improvement initiatives concentrate on high levels of planning, networking and training at the expense of strategies for change in the school with limited or no monitoring of student outcomes.

According to West and Hopkins, (1996), Stigfield's evaluation of school improvement initiatives in the USA showed that the approach focused on reduction of class size, increasing the frequency and quality of staff development programs and increased availability of books and materials. West and Hopkins, (1996) admitted the fact that the aforementioned approach responds to the needs of the

staff and students, which enhance high levels of ownership. They, however, noted that the approach has limitations. For West and Hopkins, (1996), the approach tends to be insufficiently demanding on the staff. In their thinking, school improvement to a large extent should have positive effects on the students' learning. They however, stated that many school improvement efforts ignore this crucial element.

Another limitation of the school improvement approach identified by West and Hopkins, (1996) is the fact that school improvement strategies have often adopted a rational and technical approach, which is difficult to sustain within the dynamics of school communities. Collaborative school management is one example of the rational technical approaches. Hargreaves *et al.*, (in West and Hopkins, 1996) argue that even with collaborative school management, social development planning has often been implemented without a connection to the daily lives and concerns of schools and teachers.

West and Hopkins (1996) claimed that there are also some management problems which hamper school improvement efforts, thus, it is difficult to implement policies in many schools. Again, they mentioned that with the introduction of self-management in the schools, teachers do not have the structure, the experience, or the strategies needed to move the school systematically in a proper direction. They further stated that policy implementation is not possible in such disconnected school structures. For Fullan (in West and Hopkins) "increasing clarity at the top, may contribute to more clutter at the bottom" (1996:9).

Other areas of concern are the values, which inform school improvement models and practices (West and Hopkins, 1996). West and Hopkins (1996) further stressed that because school improvers often spend significant amounts of time with teachers, they tend to understand school improvement models as being about teaching values. According to Goldenberg (2003), for teaching and learning to be improved in schools, an environment must be created where teachers come together over extended periods of time, to concentrate on goals for pupil learning, plan instruction and assess the effects of instruction on pupil learning. He added that this approach should be a continuous process so as to achieve the desired goal. Furthermore, he argued that structured and explicit curriculum and instruction which

create room for both teachers and learners to know and appreciate the desired goals and outcomes and work together in order to accomplish them are more effective ways to ensuring quality education (ibid). West and Hopkins (1996), argue that clear strategies for seeking other stakeholders' views and ensuring ongoing dialogue among all interested parties ought to be given greater attention by the school improvers.

West and Hopkins (1996) also observed that transferring recipes from one school to another is a limitation of the school improvement effort. According to Hopkins *et al.* (in West and Hopkins, 1996), for school improvement to be successful, it is important to go beyond a series of recipes, which generate responses to established problems and barriers to development. For West and Hopkins (1996), school improvement strategies have to be related to the particular context and circumstances of the particular school. They, however, pointed out that school improvement models adopt standardized approaches, which concentrate on the development of abstract recipes and ambiguous notions such as strong leadership or staff development. They further added that the school improvement models limit classroom impact and encourage an over emphasis on staff development. They suggested that if educators want to impact on learners' progress, then, the school improvement strategy ought to be based on data about learners' performance. According to Hopkins (in West and Hopkins, 1996), school improvers require profound knowledge of the nature of the school and the specificity of their strategies if their work is to achieve their desired goal.

In support, Brown (in West and Hopkins, 1996: 9) observed, "it also, helps bring to life for the teacher the improvement process, in ways that may not be accessible where external models from effectiveness research are imposed."

The limitations highlighted above are drawn from the literature emanating from Europe and North America. What other difficulties might there be in terms of the applicability of these ideas in the African context?

As argued in Chapter One, education in Africa is facing many challenges such as the low socio-economic situation of schools, limited access to schools for many,

particularly girls, poor retention and performance below expectations, poorly trained teachers, insufficient supply of good quality books, inadequate supervision of schools and little participation of parents in the education of their children just to mention a few. The imposed reforms from donors, the adoption of systems conceived by colonial countries, the political instabilities and civil wars common in many countries as well as the AIDS pandemic, contribute also to the deterioration of the quality of education in Africa.

With this background, one will then ask: can the school improvement approach work in an African context? I will respond to this question by discussing the difficulties that the school improvement might have in terms of its applicability to this context. It is suggested below that there are a number of difficulties in transposing the theory onto the African context. Two categories of difficulty are suggested, namely that which relates to the theory or approach itself, and this may be called "theoretical difficulties", and that which relates to theory in application difficulties. Some of these difficulties are: the whole school approach, the policy implementation, the accountability and the school culture. The section now proceeds by analyzing its applicability to the African context.

### **3.7.2 Some Theoretical Difficulties**

This section looks at the difficulties of the school improvement approach highlighted above in conjunction with the responses gathered from the interviews. Theoretical difficulties include the whole school approach. Implementation and accountability are issues that are addressed under the theory in application heading. The section concludes by discussing the need to merge the school effectiveness and the school improvement approaches.

#### **3.7.2.1 The "Whole School" Approach**

There is a disagreement among the advocates of the school improvement paradigm as to its focus. Some writers such as Joyce (in Hopkins) and Hopkins (1994) argue that school improvement programmes must focus on the whole school. In their view, the school is a centre of change and that external reforms need to focus on situations in individual schools rather than assuming that all schools are the same.

By way of contrast, other writers such as Taylor *et al.* (2003) argue that the teacher is the focus of the school improvement program rather than the whole school. This is because the teacher is a facilitator of learning rather than claiming to know everything and that change at the school and the classroom levels depends essentially on the motivation and initiative of the individual teacher. For them "the inside-out reformers have shifted their attention from the organizational culture of schools, which involves shared values, vision and teamwork to an explicit focus on improving classroom instructions as a condition for improving learner performance."

The theoretical confusion discussed above is evident in the field. According to Chinsamy (2002), the school improvement approach, which emanates from Europe and America, has been applied in the South African schools to rescue the deteriorating nature of public education, yet it has not had a significant impact on teaching and learning and subsequent learners' performance despite the increased financial resources. For him, for school improvement to be applicable and useful in an African context, school improvers must adopt a holistic approach. He argues for a "holistic look at the whole school, its structure, its peoples, its processes, its values and culture". He notes:

International research on school improvement is increasingly showing that individual, one-off initiatives directed at a particular aspect of the school's work or a particular constituent grouping in the school, with the intention of bringing about meaningful and sustainable innovation and change, will not work.

He showed that one of the main reasons for the relative failure of many projects in South Africa, despite their good intentions and excellent content in many cases, was the implementation of single change programmes or the lack of integration of many programmes initiated in the school. For him, if the school improvement paradigm is applied in an African context as it is at the moment, it will be unlikely to produce expected results. Bearing this in mind, he recommended the following:

For successful school development and school improvement, there is a need for multiple innovations at the level of the school at the same time, managed in a coordinated and coherent way.

The Thousand Schools Project, reviewed by Gilmour *et al.*, adopted a general frame of Whole School Development. Among the key elements of the project were:

1. A school focused approach premised on the assumption that various education bureaucracies would have minimal impacts on change at this level.
2. A conception of change that perceived the whole school rather than individual teachers as the focus for intervention.

However, Morley and Rassool (1999) have a different opinion. For them, the whole – school policy as a characteristic of school improvement does not form part of a coherent national approach that creates the conditions for evaluation and change. The locus of power or influence, they argue, is one level above the school. The nature of change and development that occur in individual schools highly depends on the views and development priorities of Local Education Authorities, head teachers and other senior members of staff. The school hierarchy remains dependent on the district. The problem with the theory is not, therefore, its ambiguity so much as its understanding of its focus.

A policy maker at the National Department of Education who was interviewed, had a similar view. According to him, school improvement “should not be a broad concept, but should be specific and concentrate in a specific area to solve a specific problem.” It should be a project having a clear vision and time frame.

As for West and Hopkins (1996:10), they maintained that “claiming a whole school approach and working within the realities of teachers may be necessary, but is far from being a sufficient condition for school improvement.”

In my view, the school improvement paradigm concentrating on the whole school approach is worth considering for the African context. This approach takes a holistic view of improving both the classroom and outside activities. However, the whole school approach must not be applied universally. The unique nature of each school must be considered when applying the whole school approach. Given the African context where both teachers and learners need critical attention and training and where schools find themselves in complex relationship with the authorities, when the whole school approach is applied, it will go a long way to address those issues.

Whether the school improvement paradigm focuses on the whole school or on teachers, it needs to be implemented and applied. How should it be implemented? The following section answers that question.

### **3.7.3 Theory in Practice**

This section discusses implementation and accountability.

#### **3.7.3.1 Implementation**

Chinsamy (2002) argued for more intervention of the district as an intermediary between the central education office and the schools in implementing new policies.

He notes:

The gap between policy formulation and implementation - the vacuum in the structures necessary to translate policy into practice - that has been regarded as the primary reason for the failure of transformation in education. Between the provincial department of education and the school stands the district office. This is where the answer seems to be pointing to.

To support the argument, Huberman, (in West and Hopkins, 1996: 9) observed that "...if changes in organizational and instructional practices are not followed down to the level of efforts on pupils, we will have to admit more openly that we are essentially investing in staff development rather than in the improvement of pupils' abilities."

This view was confirmed by findings from Taylor and his colleagues (2003). Their research conducted in some South African schools, established that non-functional districts hinder classroom teaching due to non-delivery of clear curriculum guidelines and poorly distributed textbooks and stationery. At this level, Taylor et al. called on school improvers to give attention to evaluation and monitoring systems as well as school management. At the classroom level, they stress that there must be clarity of classroom rules, efficient organization, teacher collaboration, regular homework set and checked (ibid). Above all, they observed that performance expectations must be clear in respect to pedagogy. In support of the argument, Hoffman et al. (in Taylor *et al.*, 2003), called for a combination of all the variables in the school, such as school and classroom management to optimize learning outcomes. They further argued that a positive educational climate, parents' educational involvement, and effective

school-based management are prerequisite mechanisms for an effective schooling process in countries all over the world. To improve on quality education in schools in Africa, schools ought to develop a favorable educational climate, instructional processes making sure that teachers know how to deal with each and every learner and to ensure frequent monitoring of the educational growth (ibid).

It can be argued that the failure in education or even in different public sector departments is not at the level of policy formulation, rather at the level of policy implementation. This stems from different factors such as: implementing agents interpreting the same message differently, agents misunderstanding new ideas as familiar, hindering change, understanding and focusing on superficial features missing deeper relationships (Spillane *et al.*, 2002).

Chinsamy (2002:2) attributes the failure of school development in South Africa to the top-down approach which he calls "supply-push". He notes:

Many of these early projects, aside from having single change programs, tended to be 'supply-push' interventions, either focusing on inputs or on improved schools processes and that was natural; they generally did not focus on 'demand side' and on accountability for final results.

To remedy that problem, it is necessary to consider a bottom-up perspective. One interviewee who is a policy maker in the Western Cape Provincial Department, links the usefulness of the school improvement paradigm to that approach. He said:

School improvement is useful in the sense that the teachers, learners, and principals come out with their own plan to develop the school; people not coming from outside to support them. By and large they do their own internal activities. According to this interviewee, the outside person comes in to do evaluation and guide them.

Among the advocates of the bottom-up perspective are David Aspin and Judith Chapman (1994). They argue that teachers could be extremely effective curriculum and program designers because they know what will work pedagogically speaking and what will not. These authors argued that the only reason why teachers are, more generally speaking, ineffective program and curriculum designers is that they do not normally have enough opportunities to develop expertise in those areas. There is a world - wide agreement that at present, there is not much done or much direction offered in pre-service training as regard program and curriculum design. Moreover,

given the teachers' workload, there appears to be little support available within school time. However, this cannot work in African schools where we have under prepared teachers.

Hopkins (1987) adds that regardless of the quality of the policy, teachers and learners are usually suspicious of it. In view of the above, he recommends that policy must be formulated at the local level to ensure successful implementation. He notes:

Central policies do not create awareness at the local level. Thus, school improvement programs must be such that teachers who are the implementing agents can claim ownership of them and be committed to the programs. This will ensure successful change.

Considering the kind of knowledge and skills this approach is demanding, can it be easily applied in an African context where teachers do not seem to have expertise due to poor training and in some cases many are not even trained as demonstrated in Chapter One and at the outset of this section? That is why Riddell (1998) placed a premium on the quality training of teachers as a means to ensuring quality education. In order to apply effectively the bottom-up approach of the school improvement paradigm in African context, policy makers must give due attention to quality training of teachers so as to rise to the occasion of developing internal strategies of ensuring quality education. In this way, the school improvement paradigm will be useful to schools in Africa.

I believe that if teachers were given some training in such matters, they would be capable of designing curriculum and programs and effecting necessary changes. In order to ensure effective implementation of the school improvement paradigm in schools in Africa, all stakeholders must be responsible and accountable to learners. The next section explains the kind of accountability which should be adopted in the African context.

### **3.7.3.2 Accountability**

Hargreaves and Hopkins (1993) stated that in terms of the school improvement approach, teachers are accountable. Parents, governors, educational authorities and other stakeholders also have the responsibility to ensure improvement in the school (ibid). In line with the above thoughts, Muller and Roberts (2000) also argued that

accountability refers to the incentive, reward and sanction mechanisms for achieving the standards. They added that accountability defines who is responsible for what in improving learner performance. Muller and Roberts (2000) further mentioned that under public accountability, principals and teachers are to be held responsible for professional development and support. Cohen and Fuhrman (in Muller and Roberts, 2000) argued that internal accountability is the tool to ensure school improvement.

In line with the argument, Gilmour (1997) argued that the quality assurance field was developed as a response to accountability in education by parents and politicians. As a result of public auditing and parental choice approaches becoming the order of the day in the 1990s, quality assurance has become an illustration of performance indicators and league tables.

Taking into consideration the above-mentioned arguments, how can European and North American notions of accountability as contained in the school improvement literature work in an African context? This question was answered by Morrow (2001:91) as he argued:

It is, of course, possible to take hold of a word like 'accountability' and, as it were, to transplant it from one tradition to another. But in this process the word is transformed, it becomes a very different beast. Of course the extent to which this is the case depends upon the extent to which the two traditions differ. My view is that if we imported accountability into African schooling, we would find that the dominant tradition would turn it into a beast, which would swallow up any vestiges there might remain of the idea of a teaching profession.

Riddell (1998:8) argued that accountability as mentioned in the school improvement literature cannot be applicable in the African context unless it is redefined. She suggested: "judging teacher effectiveness, however, has been as fraught as judging school improvement, unless, ultimately it is brought down to judgments of progress in achieving desired goals of student learning." In Riddell's thinking, accountability should not focus directly on teachers' effectiveness; rather, it should concentrate on the process of teaching and learning. This for her, will ensure effective accountability in schools in Africa and reinforce desired changes in Africa.

To support Riddell's argument, Morrow (2001) raises an objection about accountability from Europe and North America, which is being applied in schools in Africa particularly the kind of accountability seeking to make teachers/ schools accountable for the results they achieve. He argued that this type of accountability implicitly assumes that an action and its justification are separable. For Morrow, what a teacher is doing in his or her professional activities as a teacher is not a question that can be easily answered by simple empirical observation. In an African context, teachers' work is judged and evaluated by mere observations. To make them accountable for their work, teachers should be given autonomy and control. A person can be held accountable only for something that was within her or his control, and that to be held accountable is to be under an obligation to provide a justification for what one does.

For Morrow, the notion of accountability as conceived in Europe and North America has to be avoided in African schools if one thinks that there is something valuable about the idea of teaching as a profession.

There is no doubt that accountability is an important factor in the school improvement paradigm. The school improvement approach can be useful in African context if it involves all stakeholders to be accountable which in turn enhances quality education.

Accountability is a crucial element of the school context, which can also be referred to as the school culture. The school culture creates a platform for effective application of the school improvement paradigm. The following section discusses the role that the school culture plays in the implementation of the school improvement paradigm in an African context.

### **3.7.3.3 Merging the two Paradigms**

Considering the limitations of the school improvement paradigm highlighted above and those of the school effectiveness discussed in Chapter Two, there are many who advocate a merging of the two paradigms based on collaboration between the two traditions. As argued by one interviewee, merging the two approaches is the

best thing to do since the merger will help to address the weaknesses both paradigms have with respect to quality education in Africa.

In 1996, West and Hopkins, Gilmour (1997: 14) recognizing the shortcomings of the two paradigms, put forward an alternative approach to school effectiveness which was markedly different in its reconceptualisation. They suggested that this could be the beginning of a new paradigm shift in school change. Gilmour suggested that the reason for this paradigm shift had to do with both methodological and conceptual flaws in the two paradigms.

Riddell (1997) suggests that a marriage between the two traditions has the potential for answering some of the communication problems connected to the decentralized educational management movement worldwide. Thus, lessons from reform efforts concentrating on the national policies and those based on classroom-level changes ought to be united so as to enhance the overall understanding between central managers and the school or district-level administrators. This will help bridge the gap between the two groups so as to improve the quality of education (ibid). Riddell further notes that such integrated projects have the potential for producing reliable measures of effectiveness, which can be followed over time. She argues that the integrated project should not only interest policymakers but also classroom teachers and school administrators. This is because changes in 'effectiveness' and 'improvement' can be associated with contexts and practices that have been validated locally and emanate from classroom practice as much as from central policy directions (ibid). Riddell (1998) further argues that in the process of merging school effectiveness and school improvement paradigms one might see a much closer focus on the classroom and specifically the teacher or the learner interface. This approach is also giving clear direction as to what works and what to put into practice. Additionally, there is a focus on what should be taking place within the classrooms in respect to both content and pedagogy (ibid).

All interviewees also acknowledged the need for a merger of school effectiveness and school improvement paradigms. According to one interviewee, school effectiveness and school improvement should go together to get a comprehensive approach to school effectiveness: "[we must] look at the school in its entirety." In her

opinion the two paradigms "should be married." This interviewee suggested that school improvement ought to be leading to school effectiveness. Another interviewee supports this view by saying that "school effectiveness and school improvement must be married so as to have [an] all-round approach to teaching and learning."

Reynolds, Hopkins and Stoll (in Gilmour, 1997) also observed that school effectiveness and school improvement must be brought together in order to create some form of synergy. This stems from the fact that advocates of the two paradigms are finding it very difficult to convince teachers that working on a particular aspect of the school or models would result in actual improvement. One of the interviewees also claimed that school improvement is a component of school effectiveness. The two cannot be separated, rather they must be put together to present a holistic approach to quality education in order to address the dysfunctional educational system inherited from colonial masters. The interviewee explained that school improvement is a "project, which covers governance, management, teaching and learning in order to improve upon the quality education in Africa." Another interviewee mentioned, "school effectiveness and school improvement paradigms are philosophically and conceptually different and putting them together will be logically incoherent, but pragmatically it is a good thing since the merger takes the positive side of both approaches."

Like other writers as well as the interviewees, I also wish to propose that there should be a merger between the school effectiveness and school improvement approaches in order to develop a holistic approach for school change. The merger will help to address weaknesses that both paradigms have and could present itself as a relevant approach to the African context.

## CHAPTER 4: CONCLUSION

### 4.1 School Effectiveness and School Improvement: An Alternative Approach for Africa

Having reviewed the literature on school effectiveness and school improvement and analyzed the interviews, I will now proceed to consolidate the findings of this investigation and propose a way forward for Africa. The question I will ask is as follows: considering the socio-economic context and the poor quality of education in Africa, what might be an alternative approach which is relevant to the African context in terms of improving the poor quality of education in Africa? I will respond to this question by taking further the proposition for a merger between the traditions of school effectiveness and school improvement.

The school improvement approach concentrates on the culture of the school to improve quality education. Hopkins (1994) emphasizes that if innovations fail to take care of the culture of the school, their impact will be insignificant. For a policy maker from the National Department of Education who was interviewed, the school improvement paradigm concentrates on the culture of democratization and can "prepare learners and instill in them a sense of democracy in Africa." As this interviewee mentions, school is a place of culture and the school improvement concept can transmit that culture of African concept into learners so that "we can have our own sense of democracy not coming from the western countries." The interviewee maintains that school improvement has the potential to return our learners back to African ways of doing things in terms of their social and cultural background.

Other characteristics of the school improvement approach in relation to the school culture identified in the literature are relationships and collaboration. One interviewee, a policy maker from the Western Cape Provincial Department of Education acknowledged this. He stated: "School improvement deals with the culture of the school by concentrating on teacher collegiality, positive relationship between teachers and learners, and having a vision in the school." For him, school improvement is about "creating [a] favorable environment for high performance."

Another interviewee, also a policy maker from the Western Cape Provincial Department of Education, claimed that school improvement is a useful approach because it "ensures quality education, enhances efficiency and academic outcomes." He further added that school improvement does not demand so many resources, rather it demands "developing plans to improve whatever thing is in the school to enhance effectiveness."

Hopkins (1994) had a similar view. He argued that the school improvement approach enhances learners' performance through strengthening the teaching and learning process and the conditions that support it. For him, that approach ensures the school's capacity for providing quality education.

This argument was also supported by Ainscow *et al.* (1994). They considered school improvement as a distinct approach to educational change, which enhances learners' outcomes and strengthens the school's capacity for managing change. For them, school improvement is about enhancing learners' achievement through focusing on the teaching/learning process and conditions that support it.

Fuller and Clarke (1994) also argued that more attention should be given to cultural contingencies when studying school improvement in developing countries. Such contingencies, they note, "might help in explaining why schools and classroom level variables 'work' in one country but not in the next."

Considering the above discussion, the school improvement paradigm could be useful in the African context if it takes cognizance of the cultural settings where the school is situated. This is because culture (school or community) is at the centre of school change. According to Bruce Fuller (Fuller and Clarke 1994), culture impedes school reforms. The impediments come in different forms such as family demands on schools, the foreign character of school knowledge, the kind of traditional demands on teachers inside their classrooms, the meaning of different pedagogical behaviours from the point of view of teachers and learners, and similarly, how basic teachings tools are assigned cultural variable meanings. The school improvement paradigm

should also enhance teachers' collegiality and collaboration, important ingredients to attain high quality of education in Africa.

The findings of this study have clearly indicated that the two paradigms of school effectiveness and school improvement need to be simultaneously applied to the project of reforming the quality of education in Africa. Attempting to apply school effectiveness measures on their own introduces a whole set of problems (Hopkins and West, 1971). It obscures cause and effect relationships, where it becomes unclear if it is school effectiveness measures that lead to improved quality, or the improvement of other variables that promote quality, which lead to greater school effectiveness. Indeed what is precisely called school effectiveness is itself called into question by Gilmour (1997:15) who points out that the perception of what constitutes school effectiveness, "tends to become tautologically defined by the measures that are available to define it."

The school improvement paradigm in a similar vein has also its own limitations. It concentrates mainly on staff development, hence focuses on high levels of planning, networking and training at the expense of strategies for change within school themselves and the monitoring of students performance. For those reasons, school improvement interventions have been criticized for lacking a pedagogical vision and focus. Additionally, school improvement measures often adopt rational and technical measures that are difficult to sustain within the dynamics of school community (West and Hopkins, 1996).

I believe that the limitations pointed out in both school effectiveness and school improvement paradigms, create enough grounds for an alternative approach to improvement studies: An approach based on the marriage between the two traditions. Echoing this view, Riddell (1997) suggests that marrying the two traditions has the potential to answer some of the communication problems typically found in decentralized educational systems worldwide. Thus, reform efforts that concentrate on national policies should be made to work in tandem with efforts focusing on classroom level practices. Coordinating school effectiveness efforts with school improvement measures can bridge the gaps between school administrators and regional/national educational administrators (Riddell 1997).

Another advantage of the merging approach will be to create a synergy, which is also referred to as a combination of a top-down and bottom-up approach. Synergising efforts at the two different levels will help to convince teachers that measures adopted at national level, for example, will translate into actual improvements within the classroom. Moreover, the top-down approach provides policy aims, an overall strategy and operational plans, while the bottom-up approach provides diagnosis, priority goal setting and implementation (Raynolds and Stoll 1997). Spillane and his colleagues also identified the advantages of both approaches. Concerning the top-down approach, they note,

The top-down perspective is important because the policy message and the manner in which policy documents represent the message are influential in implementing agents' understanding of them. The intent of policy makers' proposals serves as a gauge for analyzing implementing agents' understanding of the policy message.

But as the implementing agents do not have the skills and ability to design policies, the top-down approach becomes necessary. The bottom-up approach also presents numerous advantages. Spillane et al (2002:420) note, "The bottom-up perspective is also central in that the implementing agents' script or schemata, coupled with their situation, are fundamental constituting elements in the sense making process." They explain their argument as follow:

In our scheme, the ideas about changing behaviour that implementing agents construct from policy are a function of the interaction of the policy signal, the implementing agent's knowledge, beliefs, and experience, and the circumstances in which the local actor attempts to make sense of the policy.

It is with the advantages of both models in mind that I opted for a hybrid model. Policy makers must work closely with the implementing agents, make sure that they fully understand the program and give them needed support. The adopted approach will instill in teachers a sense of ownership and accountability of initiatives in the school. The marriage of the two approaches promises to integrate efforts applied at different levels of the education system and to ensure that all sectors of the system work in tandem.

Apart from recommending the integrated model described above as a way forward in ensuring the positive transformation of education in Africa, I would also like to suggest that the integrated approach could become part of what Riddell (1998) describes as the multi-level approach. This approach not only combines school improvement with school effectiveness efforts, it also seeks to establish modalities by which efforts emanating from different spheres and levels of the schooling system can be synchronized into one cohesive operation. Thus, efforts at national level should coordinate with efforts at regional and school levels and the whole operation should link smoothly with realities in the home backgrounds and schooling environments of pupils. The multi-level approach thus seeks to coordinate policies formulated at the highest levels of educational systems with school and classroom practices and at the same time, take cognizance of individual learners' home and environmental backgrounds in order to factor in that additional dimension into school reform practices.

It should also be noted, that the multi-level approach advocated by Riddell entails meeting a number of challenges head-on. It entails individuals working at various levels of the education system to locate their efforts within a broader and unified matrix. For example, staff development programs need to be learner-centred in order to forge links between teacher training and classroom realities. There is also an urgent need to infuse critical thinking and problem solving skills in teacher training programs to ensure that future classroom practitioners are well equipped to deal effectively with the situational challenges that they will meet in real classrooms. As Riddell (1998:8) stresses, African teacher training programs should be carefully appraised if the quality of education is to improve: "[n]arrowly based skills approaches have been detrimental in that they have led to mechanistic forms of teaching and learning observed in many classrooms around the world." Simmonds and Alexander (in Gilmour 1997) shift attention to practicing teachers and argue that teacher motivation should be guaranteed to ensure effective delivery in African classrooms. The multilevel approach therefore entails setting in motion a comprehensive process where activities carried out at different levels of the educational system are coordinated so that they work to achieve unified goals and visions.

Another implication of adopting the multi-level approach in Africa is that systematic ways have to be found to ensure accountability for work done at different levels of the education system. Effective performance, which follows up the progress of individual schools and the progress of teachers and learners, needs to be designed. These assessment instruments should be homegrown. They should develop from local school environments so that they establish assessment criteria that reflect the realities of those local environments. At the same time, they should be clear and open about the specification of monitoring roles and responsibilities, with administrators at district or national levels fitting into the system and playing clearly defined roles within it.

Yet another key demand of the multi-level approach is that resources need to be judiciously distributed between school, district and national levels. Supporting school structures while not attending to district or national structures will undermine the effectiveness of the whole system (Taylor *et al.*, 2003). The focus, when pursuing the goal of school reform in Africa should therefore be on both micro (school) levels and macro (district/ national) levels. Educational administrators at district level need to ensure that learning materials such as curriculum guidelines, textbooks and stationery are distributed efficiently to all schools under their management, a point echoed by Fuller and Clark (in Gilmour 1997). Riddell (1997) goes further to suggest that developing countries should move towards the acquisition of computerized information systems, to enhance the efficiency of management practices. However, many interviewees pointed out that what is needed is rather making effective use of limited resources.

A comprehensive approach to educational reform in Africa also entails attending to the language competence and literacy skills of pupils. Attention to this dimension of the African learner addresses issues of empowerment and equity (Taylor *et al.* 2003). It ensures that learners engaging with curricula taught in second or third languages are developed to access the knowledge transmitted in the medium of those languages. The multi-level approach argues that such dimensions of the learner's background also need to be addressed by the system and to be addressed as part of a broader strategy that tries to attend to all levels.

In applying the multi-level approach, the cultural setting must be taken into consideration. It must be noted that culture differs from one place to another and should not be considered as universal. I wish to state at this juncture that school is a place of transmitting culture. In view of this, it therefore means that when pursuing the integrated approach in the African context, the approach must meet the local needs of the cultural setting in which the school is situated. When the integrated approach is effectively applied, it can lead to cultural change in schools through modifications to their internal conditions. It is the cultural change that supports the teaching and learning process, which leads to enhanced outcomes for students. The types of school culture most supportive of successful school improvement efforts appear to be those that are collaborative, have high expectations for both students and staff and exhibit a consensus on values, support and orderly and secure environment, and encourage teachers to assume a variety of leadership roles (Harris and Bennett, 2001).

The mobilization of parental support in the education of their children is also included in the package of strategies that constitute the multi-level approach. The willingness of parents to enroll children in pre-school programs makes children more prepared for engagement with the primary school curriculum. At the same time, home background, which reinforces language and literacy skills, promotes successful learning at school (Hoffman *et al.*, 2003). In a general summary of what the multi-level approach should do to promote the improvement of quality in education, Gilmour (1997: 22) writes: "The multi-level approach must respond to local needs, match resources to policies and needs, promote greater accountability, increase efficiency and cost effectiveness and allow schools to develop their own position."

It should be noted however, that the multi-level approach is not just a marriage of school improvement and school effectiveness efforts. It is actually a principled decision to treat any effort applied at any level of the education system as part of a whole. It is the refusal to overlook any aspect of the system since it recognizes that all parts work for the overall improvement of the whole. The multi-level approach places pupils' home backgrounds, school environments, district-level structures and national structures into one integrated and coordinated system. Such a broad based

comprehensive and coordinated approach promises to achieve positive results in the effort to improve the quality of education in African schools.

I also wish to mention that both school effectiveness and school improvement approaches have common characteristics of involving all stakeholders to ensure quality education in terms of high level performance. In line with this characteristic, I wish to recommend to school improvers a model I refer to as "a collaborative model". This model should embrace the full participation of teachers, school management, learners, parents, policy makers, NGOs, SGBs, and the greater community in which the school is situated, in the school improvement process. The collaborative model should seek to integrate all efforts of the above mentioned stakeholders in order to improve whole school development programs for effective work.

The collaborative model should not only stress staff development programs, but should also emphasize classroom practices in terms of learner performance. The model should institute learning programs for learners of low socio-economic backgrounds in order to enhance their academic performance. It has to be acknowledged however, that this model cannot be applied universally. The context in which the suggested model ought to be applied needs to be taken into consideration. This is because schools are different in nature and they are situated in different cultural settings. It for this reason that Jolly and Peacock (2000) argued that "...the most important lesson is not about project implementation and about the introduction and management of change in schools, but about ways in which approaches to change can draw effectively upon local experience to build capacity through strategies for change that are more flexible and more responsive to contextual realities." Hence, prescription of universal solutions for all schools will not be useful. This model when effectively applied, could help to give a holistic approach to quality education in Africa.

Having analyzed the response from policymakers I interviewed and having reviewed the alternative thoughts of school effectiveness and school improvement paradigms by writers such as Riddell, Taylor et al., Gilmour, Taylor & Vinjevoid, just to mention a few, it is evident that school effectiveness and school improvement approaches are useful and applicable in African context. It must be observed that the two paradigms

in question aim at increasing the standard of education irrespective of where they are applied. As indicated by one of the interviewees, every school wants quality education whether in the developing countries or developed countries.

Notwithstanding the usefulness of the two traditions, I however wish to address some few concerns. Teachers must be encouraged to be accountable to learners and their employers and display a high sense of professionalism in their work. It must be emphasized that a teacher as a professional is accountable to his or her professional associates for his or her professional activities. He or she is obliged to justify his or her actions and activities in the light of the ideals and principles which are constitutive to his or her profession. Teacher Unions must hold teachers accountable and require teachers to live up to professional ethics by being punctual to work and being responsible. This will ensure quality education in Africa.

In light of the reasons advanced above, I wish to propose that future researchers should pursue the merger between the school effectiveness and the school improvement paradigms as the way forward to ensure quality education in Africa.

## LIST OF REFERENCES

- Ainscow, M., Hopkins, D., Southworth, G., and West, M. (1994) *Creating the conditions for school improvement: a handbook of staff development activities*. London: David Fulton Press.
- Angus, I. (1993) The sociology of school effectiveness. *British Journal of Sociology of Education* Vol.14 No. 3 pp.333-345.
- Aspin, D. N. and Chapman, J. D. (1994) *Quality schooling: A pragmatic approach to some current problems, topics and issues*. New York: Cassell.
- Barth, R. S. (1991) *Improving schools from within: teachers, parents and principals can make the difference*. San Francisco: Jossey Bass.
- Beardall, J. (1995) Teacher Appraisal and Professional Accountability in South African Education. *Perspective in Education* Vol. 16, No. 2, pp. 365 - 372.
- Bennett, N. and Harris, A. (1999) Hearing truth from power? Organisation theory. *School Effectiveness and School Improvement* Vol. 10, No. 4, pp. 533 - 550.
- Beare, H, Caldwell, D. and Millikan, R.H. (1989) *Creating an Excellent School Some New Management Techniques*. London: Routledge.
- Broster, P (2005) *Conditions of success and failure in quality improvement programmes*. Pretoria: HSRC.
- Brown, S. Duffield, J. and Riddell, S. (1995) School effectiveness research: the policy makers' tool for school improvement. *The European Educational Research Association Bulletin*. pp6-5.
- Carter, K. (1998) *Teacher Research and School Improvement. Opening doors from the inside. School Effectiveness and School Improvement: Meanings and Traditions*. London: Open University Press.
- Cheng, Y.C. (1996) *School Effectiveness and School- based Management. A Mechanism for Development*. London: Falmer Press.
- Chinsamy, B. (2002) *Successful School Improvement and the Educational District Office in South Africa: Some Emerging Propositions*. RTI International, USAID.
- Coleman, J.S, Campbell, E.Q, Hobson, C.J. et al. (eds) (1996) *Equality of Educational Opportunity (the Coleman Report)*. Washington, DC: Government and Printing Office.
- Dean, J. (1999) *Improving the Primary School*. London: Routledge.

Dunne, M. and Leach, F. (2005) Gendered School Experiences: The Impact on Retention and Achievement in Botswana and Ghana. DFID Educational paper, no 56.

Fullan, M. (1993) *Change Forces*. London: Falmer Press.

Fuller, B. and Clarke, P. (1994) Raising school effects while ignoring culture? Local conditions and the influence of classroom tools, rules and pedagogy. *Review of Educational Research* Vol. 64 No. 1 pp. 119 - 157.

Gilmour, J. D. (1997) *School Performance Indicators in Developing Countries*. National workshop on the use of indicators to monitor and evaluate school performance, Johannesburg, 25-26 November 1997.

Gilmour, J. D., Soudien, C., Ashley, C. (1997) The Thousand Schools Project: improving South African schooling in time of national transition. Core evaluation study, Western Cape, report no 1.

Goldenberg, C. (2003) Setting for school improvement. *International Journal of Disability, Development and Education* Vol. 50, No 1, pp.7-17.

Govinda, R. and Varghese, N. V. (1993) Quality of primary schooling in India. A case study of Madhya. In Gilmour, J. D. (1997) *School performance indicators in Developing countries*. National workshop on the use of indicators to monitor and evaluate school performance, Johannesburg, 25-26 November 1997.

Harber, C. and Muthufrishna, M. (2000) School effectiveness and school improvement in context: The case of South Africa. *School Effectiveness and School Improvement* Vol. 11, No. 4, pp. 421 - 434.

Hargreaves, D. and Hopkins, D. (1993) School Effectiveness, School Improvement and Development Planning. In M. Preedy (ed.) *Managing the Effective School*. London: Paul Chapman Publishing.

Harris, A. and Bennett, N. (2001) *School Effectiveness and School Improvement. Alternative Perspectives: Contemporary Perspectives on School Effectiveness and School Improvement*. London: Continuum.

Harris, A. (2003) Teacher leadership and school improvement. *Education Review* Vol. 16 No. 2 pp. 39 - 42.

Harris, A. and Muijs, D. (2003) Teacher leadership and school improvement. *Education Review Journal* Vol. 16, No 2 pp. 39-43.

Hopkins, D. (1987) *Improving the Quality of Schooling. Lessons from OECD International School Improvement Project*. London: Falmer Press.

Hopkins, D. (1994) *Schools Make a Difference: Practical Strategies for School Improvement*. London: Resource Base/LWT.

- Hopkins, D. (2001) *School Improvement for Real*. London: Routledge/Falmer.
- Howie, S. (2001) *Third International Mathematics and Science Study Repeat (TIMSS-R)*. Executive summary, HSRC.
- Jencks, C., Smith, M., Acland, H., Barie, M.J, Cohen, D., Gintis, H., Heyns, B. and Michelson, S. (1972) *Inequality: A Reassessment of the Effect of Family and Schooling in America*. New York: Basic Books.
- Lockheed, M. E and Levin, H. M. (Eds) (1993) Effective schools in developing countries. In Gilmour, J. D. (1997) *School Performance Indicators in Developing Countries*. National workshop on the use of indicators to monitor and evaluate school performance, Johannesburg, 25-26 November 1997.
- Louis, K.S. and Miles, M.B. (1990) *Improving The Urban High School. What Works and Why*. London:Cassell.
- Moloi, M. and Strauss, J. 2005. *The SACMEQ II Project in South Africa: A Study of the Conditions of Schooling and the Quality of Education*. SACMEQ: Harare. <http://62.23.27.65/links.htm>.
- Morley, L. and Rassool, N. (1999) *School Effectiveness: Fracturing the discourse*. London: Falmer Press.
- Morrow, W. (1990) Accountability and the idea of a profession. *Perspectives in Education* Vol. 4, No. 2 pp. 90-100.
- Myers, K. (1996) *School Improvement in Practice: Prologue Research in Practice*. London: Falmer Press.
- Muller, J. and Roberts, J (2000) The sound and fury of international school reform: a critical review. Report prepared for the Joint Educational Trust.
- Nekhwevha, F. (2000). Education transformation and the African renaissance in a globalising world. *Perspectives in Education* Vol. 18, No.3 pp. 34-49.
- Reynolds, D. (2001) *School Effectiveness and School Improvement Alternative Perspectives: Beyond School Effectiveness and school Improvement*. London: Falmer Press.
- Reynolds, D. and Cuttance, P. (1991) *School effectiveness*. Falmer Press, Lewes.
- Reynolds, D, Hopkins, D. and Stoll, L. (1993) "Linking School Effectiveness, Knowledge and School Improvement practice; towards a synergy", *School Effectiveness and School Improvement: An International Journal of Research, Policy and Practice*, Vol. 4, No. 1 pp. 35-52.
- Reynolds, C., and Teddlie, C. (1995) World class schools: a preliminary analysis of data from the international school effectiveness research project. In Harris, A., and Bennett. N.

(2001) *School Effectiveness and School Improvement: An Alternative Perspective*. London: Continuum.

Riddell, A. R. (1997) Assessing designs for school improvement in developing countries. *Comparative Education Review Journal* Vol. 41, No. 2, pp 178- 204.

Riddell, A. R. (1998) Reforms of educational efficiency and quality in developing countries: an overview. *Compare: a Journal of Comparative Education* Vol. 28, No. 3, pp. 61-78.

Riddell, A. R. (1999) Focus on challenge to prevailing theories: an alternative approach to the study of school effectiveness in Third World countries. *Comparative Education Review* Vol. 33, No. 4, pp.112-141.

Riddell, S., Brown, S. and Duffield, J. (1998) The utility of qualitative research for influencing policy and practice on school effectiveness, in: R. Slee and G. Weines (Eds), *School Effectiveness for Whom?* London: Falmer Press.

Rogers, G. and Badham, L. (1992) *Evaluation in Schools*. London: Routledge.

Rondinelli, D. A. (1993) Development projects as policy experiments: an adaptive approach to development administration. In Morley, L. and Rassool, N. (1999) *School Effectiveness: Fracturing the Discourse*. London: Falmer Press.

Rutter, M., Maughan, B., Mortimore, P. and Ouston, J. (1979) *Fifteen Thousand Hours: Secondary School and their Effects in Children*. London: Open Books.

Scheerens, J. (2001) Monitoring school effectiveness in developing countries. *School Effectiveness and School Improvement* Vol. 12, No. 4, pp. 359 - 384.

Spillane, J., Reiser, B., and Reimer, T. (2002) Policy implementation and cognition: Reframing and refocusing implementation research. *Review of Educational Research* Vol. 72, No. 3 pp. 387 - 431.

Stoll, L. and Fink, D. (1996) *Changing our Schools*. Buckingham: Open University Press.

Streicher, R. (1998) *Education System Reform in Ghana: A Systemic Approach to its Possible Limitations*. Oldenburg.

Taylor, N, Taylor, N., J. Muller & P. Vinjevold (2003) *Getting Schools Working*. Research and Systemic School Reform in South Africa. Cape Town.

Taylor, N. and Vinjevold, P. (1999) *Getting Learning Right: Report of the Presidents' Education Initiative Research Project*. Johannesburg: The Joint Education Trust.

Teddlie, C. (1994) The study of school context in school effects research: history, Methods, results and theoretical implications. In Gilmour, J. D. (1997) *School Performance Indicators in Developing Countries*. National workshop on the use of indicators to monitor and evaluate school performance, Johannesburg, 25-26 November 1997.

Thrupp, M. (2001) Recent school effectiveness counter-critiques: Problems and possibilities. *British Educational Research Journal* Vol. 27, No.4 pp 124-148.

UNESCO, (2002) Report of the Conference of Ministers of Education of African Members States (MINEDAF) Dar-es-Salaam.

Van Velzen, W., Miles, M., Eckholm, M., Hameyer, U. and Robin, D. (1985) *Making School Improvement Work*. Lueven: ACCO.

West, M., Hopkins, D. and Ainscow, M. (1994) *School Improvement in an Era of Change*. London: Cassell.

Whatford, C. (1996) *School Improvement in Practice*. London: Falmer Press.

Wrigley, T. (2004) School effectiveness: the problem of reductionism. *British Educational Research Journal*, Vol. 30, No.2 pp 325-348.

University of Cape Town

## **APPENDIX: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE**

How useful do you think the school effectiveness approach is to schools in Africa?

What about school improvement?

Given the African background in terms of socio-economic and colonialism problems, is school effectiveness applicable in our context?

How do accountability and professionalism work in schools in Africa?

Some writers proposed a merger of school effectiveness and school improvement. What do you think about it?

University of Cape Town