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Partners for Possibility: Experiences of cross-sectoral partnerships designed to improve school leadership in South Africa

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DECLARATION

I declare that this thesis is my own unaided work. It is submitted for the Degree of Master in Development Studies at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before for any other degree at any other university.

Maureen Kirori

15th of March, 2017

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ABSTRACT

This study explores a partnership model designed by Partners for Possibility (PfP), a South African non-profit organization (NPO) attempting to reform the country's education system. Through its partnerships, PfP aims to address the identified problem of weak school leadership in order to improve the educational outcomes in schools. In this model, school principals of underperforming schools are paired up with business people with leadership experience for a period of one year to address the challenges facing their schools. The model includes a 12-month structured training programme which seeks to capacitate and support the paired principal and business leader in their partnership-building process.

This study provides an in-depth investigation of the experiences of the partnerships and of the influence of the structured programme on these partnerships from the perspectives of the principals and of the business leaders. The effect of social differences on the partnerships was also considered. Among the theories used in this study are critical action learning and common ingroup identity. A qualitative research design was employed and data was collected from 10 school principals of "no fee" schools and from 12 business leaders.

The results of the study reveal that the functionality of these partnerships is determined by their focus, which can be long-term and transformative or short-term and tending towards resolving the school's immediate material needs. Further, these partnerships were found to be capable of improving school performance if the partners engaged in activities that promoted teaching and learning. Despite this potential, there was little monitoring of school performance. The results also indicate that the group-learning aspects included in the structured programme could encourage the partnership to focus on short-term goals which tend not to lead to long-term sustainable change in the school. The social tensions attributed to race and class divisions were found to have a minimal effect on the partnerships studied since the partners' common vision, namely, to improve schools, allows them to maintain their unique identity either as principals or as business leaders. Because education reform is a complex and long-term project, the recommendations following this study point to the need for a more integrative approach in the PfP process, and a greater awareness of the need for a longer time scale in order to bring about the desired transformation in schools and consequently to South Africa's education system.

Key words: Partners for Possibility, School leadership, Education reform, Social differences, School improvement, Partnership development, Cross-sectoral social partnership, Education, South Africa.

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ABBREVIATIONS

BF	Black Female
BM	Black Male
CAL	Critical Action Learning
CIIM	Common Ingroup Identity Model
CoP	Community of Practice
DBE	Department of Basic Education
GDE	Gauteng Department of Education
LPF	Learning Process Facilitator
PfP	Partners for Possibility
WF	White Female
WM	White Male

CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

1. BACKGROUND

Education is understood to be positively related to social, economic and political development. Nevertheless, education can be used negatively as South Africa's historical legacies of colonialism and apartheid demonstrate, since it was employed to further political and economic ends which served to protect White power and privilege and to subordinate the Black[1] population (Msila 2007; Taylor 2008). This led to the development of an inferior education sector mainly serving the Black African population, and despite the efforts by the country's democratic government to transform the educational system, inequalities and inefficiencies continue to persist (Maringe *et al.* 2015; Ngcobo and Tikly 2010).

Unlike most countries with two systems of education—one private and one public—, South Africa is said to have one private school system and two public school systems. In 2013, 513 804 learners were enrolled in private or independent schools while 11 975 844 were enrolled in public schools (Department of Basic Education 2015: 5). Public schools are however divided into two: those which perform well academically but which serve only the wealthiest 20%-25% of all learners in public schools; and those which perform poorly and which cater for the vast majority of South Africa's students (75%-80% of all learners in public schools) who come from poor backgrounds (Spaull 2013b). South Africa's education system is thus held to be in crisis and some of its key challenges include inadequate infrastructure, ineffective school leadership, teaching incompetency, and poor learning attitudes (Spaull 2013a; 2013b; Taylor 2008; NDP 2011).

This study seeks to explore a partnership model that is attempting to address one of the challenges affecting South Africa's education system, namely, the problem of school leadership. This partnership model is an initiative of a non-profit organization (NPO) known as Partners for Possibility (PfP) which is briefly outlined in the section below.

[1] 'Black' is a generic term that was applied by South Africa's apartheid government to refer to 'Africans', 'Indians' and 'Coloureds' and which the current government continues to employ (see Department of Labour's Employment Equity of 1998 accessed at http://www.labour.gov.za/DOL/downloads/legislation/acts/employment-equity/eegazette2015.pdf). The use of this classification is preferred in this study in order to safeguard the participants' confidentiality.

2. BRIEF OVERVIEW OF PARTNERS FOR POSSIBILITY (PFP) PARTNERSHIP MODEL

This research explores a partnership model whereby a school principal of an underperforming school is paired up with a business person with leadership experience (henceforth referred to as business leader) in order to improve school leadership. Underperforming schools are characterized by poor academic performance as well as high grade repetition, high school dropout and low teacher morale (Chisholm 2011; Spaull 2013a; 2013b). The partnership relationship formed is known as a cross-sectoral partnership since it involves persons from three different sectors (Seitanidi 2008): the principals who, as heads of government schools, belong to the public sector; the business leaders who belong to the private sector; and PfP which forms part of civil society and which convenes and facilitates these partnerships.

This partnership model is an initiative of PfP which was established in 2010 by Symphonia for South Africa (SSA), a non-profit organization (NPO) whose vision is to strengthen the fabric of South African society (Collins 2015).[2] SSA is an example of a social enterprise, that is, an organization whose main goal is to address social issues by applying business practices (Collins 2015). SSA was founded in 2008 by Dr Louise van Rhyn, an expert in the field of large-scale change in complex social systems (Collins 2015). The PfP initiative is grounded on a theory of change informed by complexity science which views South Africa's education system as a complex social system. According to this theory, attempts to change the education system all at once are unlikely to succeed given its complex nature (Collins 2015: 77-87) Consequently, the theory holds that change in a complex social system is brought about when the largest unit of practical change in the system is identified and works are carried out in order to bring about change in these individual units.

Applying the above theory of change to South Africa's education system, PfP identifies the school as the largest unit of change. This theory proposes that bringing about change in individual schools, one school at a time, will eventually have an impact on the entire education system, resulting in improved quality of education in South Africa. The partnership between the principal and the business leader is expected to

[2] This section relies heavily on Mandy Collins' book on this organization which was published in 2015. The title of the book is *Partners for Possibility. How business leaders and principals are igniting radical change in South African Schools.* Collins' book is pertinent to this research as it provides an official account of PfP which will be measured against the practice, the latter being the subject of this study.

capacitate the principal as leader, and the improved leadership is in turn expected to give rise to changes in the school. The agent of change in individual schools is thus the principal.

Other than education reform, PfP is also a leadership development process that targets business leaders in corporate South Africa. In order to capacitate the school principals and the business leaders to bring about the desired social change in schools and also to develop "*conscious* leaders with the knowledge and skills on how to collaborate effectively for the benefit of their organisations and communities" (Collins 2015: 89, *italics* in the original), PfP has established a structured training programme in partnership and leadership development to achieve this end. This structured programme is made up of various components, and among them is action learning which refers to the aims and activities of the partnerships, since in action learning, "[the] business leader and principal spend time together to grapple with practical issues at the school and then figure out how to deal with them" (Collins 2015: 104). For purposes of this report, the term "PfP process" is used to refer to the partnerships between principals and business leaders, as well as to the structured programme. The partnerships are thus distinguished from the structured programme since the other elements in this programme are in function of supporting the partners (that is, the principals and the business leaders) in their partnership journey. A detailed discussion on the elements of the structured programme can be found in the fourth chapter of this report (see IV, 1.2). This study is interested in the social change aspect of PfP as it attempts to reform South Africa's education sector.

The PfP process is illustrated in the figure below:

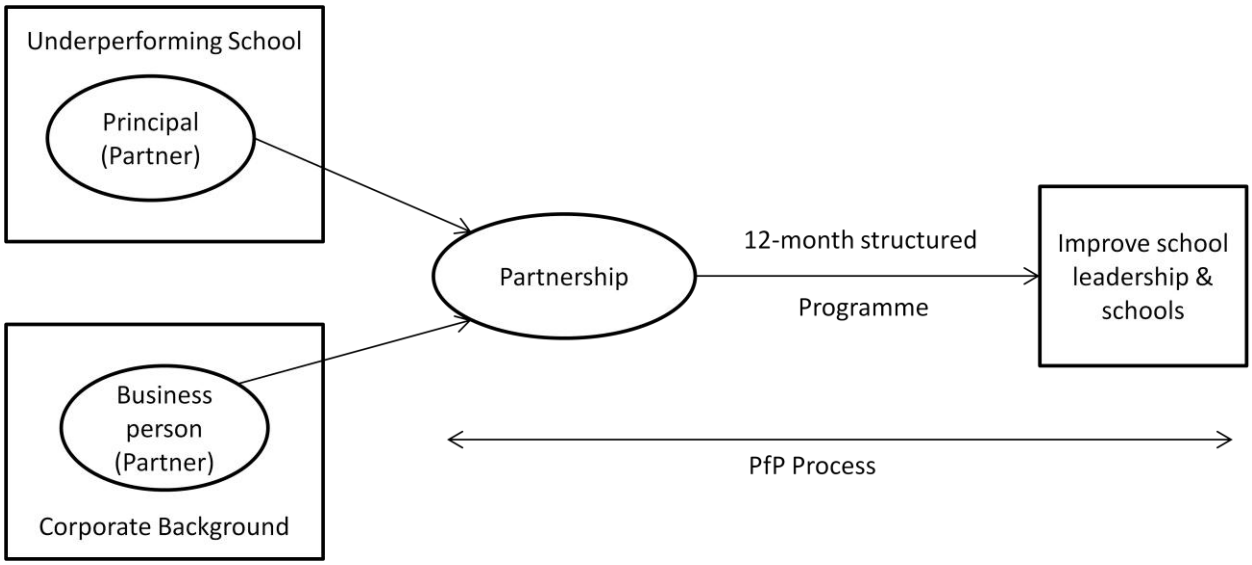

Figure 1: Diagram Illustrating the PfP Process
(Based on Collins 2015)

Although PfP invites school principals and business leaders to take part in the PfP process by engaging in a partnership for a period of one year, the organization hopes that the partners will continue with their partnership beyond this duration. During this one-year period, the partners take part in the structured training programme to enable them to form strong partnerships that are capable of bringing about the desired social change, that is, to strengthen the school leadership and eventually lead to improving schools.

This study sought to gain an in-depth understanding of the workings of the partnerships between the school principals and the business leaders as they go about the task of improving school leadership. In particular, this research investigated the experiences of the partners by exploring the nature and impact of these partnerships. It also looked at the impact of the structured programme on the partnerships, as well as the influence of the social differences between the partners on their interactions. The common ingroup identity model (CIIM) has been used as the theoretical framework which gives meaning to some of the findings of this study.

3. RESEARCH RATIONALE AND SIGNIFICANCE

Efforts to improve South Africa's education system are deemed vital since quality education is generally perceived as a path out of the poverty and inequality that is experienced by a greater part of the country's population (NDP 2011). This appears to be the reason why education is the social sector that receives most funding from the government as well as from the private sector (Ngcobo and Tikly 2010 referring to SAInfo 2007; Besharati 2015 referring to Trialogue 2012, 2005-2012). Nevertheless, despite the investments made to improve education since the democratic elections in 1994, this sector is said to be in crisis. This report presents the findings of a study of a partnership model that is attempting to address the problem of school leadership and which, the findings suggest, has helped school principals become better leaders (see Chapter IV). Despite some limitations in the model, the results of this study indicate that this partnership model can lead to improved performance in schools.

Further, the configuration of the partnership model under study distinguishes it from other school-business partnerships, known to the author, making it unique in South Africa (Collins 2015: 234). This is because in PfP's partnership model, the leadership development component in the PfP process is provided to both the school principal and the business leader. This is unlike other school-business partnership models, as these are found to provide leadership training programmes to school principals only, while the individuals from the private sector participate in these programmes either as sponsors, facilitators and/or as mentors to the principals. This is what occurred in the University of Cape Town's public/private partnership model through which the former Department of Education's (DOE)[3] school leadership induction programme was delivered (Bush *et al*. 2009: 85), and it is also what occurs in the General Motors South Africa Foundation's leadership development programme in primary schools (GMSAF ND; Westraad 2011: 26). A look at the partnership model under study reveals a private sector that is more engaged in the task of improving schools. Further, the relationship between the school principals and the business leaders in the PfP partnerships is unlike the mentor-protégé relationships that are found in other school-business partnerships. This research contributes to literature on the workings of this particular partnership model.

This research also contributes to the literature on the influence of social differences on developmental interactions that are aimed at improving school leadership. This is because Moorosi's (2012) study on

[3] In 2010, the Department of Education (DOE) was split into two departments: the Department of Basic Education (DBE) and the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET).

the mentoring aspect of the Department of Basic Education's (DBE) leadership programme suggests that there is need to conduct further studies in order to determine the significance of social differences between persons involved in this mentoring relationship. Although the partnership model under study differs from DBE's mentoring model, both models are types of developmental interactions since both aim to improve school leadership (D'Abate *et al.* 2003). The PfP process further differs from the DBE programmes as it involves business persons and not experts in education in the effort to improve school leadership. Through the application of the common ingroup identity model (CIIM) as its main theoretical framework, this research addresses the influence of the social differences between the partners in the partnerships and thus contributes towards filling the existing literature gap on developmental interactions.

4. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: COMMON INGROUP IDENTITY MODEL (CIIM)

This section discusses the study's main theoretical framework, the common ingroup identity model (CIIM). CIIM is a theoretical model from the field of social psychology that explains the reduction of intergroup bias and draws on the theoretical foundations of social identity theory as well as the self-categorization theory (Dovidio *et al.* 2007: 299 referring to Tajfel and Turner 1979 and Turner *et al.* 1987 respectively).

According to Dovidio *et al.* (2007), members of two distinct groups can modify the way the self and the others are categorized by altering the perception of intergroup boundaries. This, these authors maintain, can lead to the reduction of bias in both attitude and behaviour. The altered view of intergroup boundaries can lead to the formation of a superordinate group which occurs when members of distinct groups adopt a common identity (Gaertner *et al.* 1994). By sharing a common identity, these members stop perceiving themselves as being different and start to consider themselves as "we" instead of "them" and "us" (Gaertner *et al.* 1994). CIIM makes use of the four conditions set out by Allport in his contact hypothesis (Allport 1954) since these conditions can lead to reduced prejudice and encourage the formation of a common identity (Dovidio *et al.* 2007; Gaertner *et al.* 1994). According to Allport (1954: 281), intergroup contact may reduce prejudice under the following four conditions: if the individuals perceive themselves to be of equal status; if they share common goals; if there is intergroup cooperation rather than competition; and lastly, if the individuals feel supported by authorities.

Further development to CIIM shows that the common identity of the superordinate group is compatible with a dual identity (Dovidio *et al.* 2007). This implies that the members of the different groups that belong to the superordinate group do not have to renounce their particular and distinct group membership in order to embrace the common identity of the larger group. With a dual identity, what differentiates one group from another is maintained, allowing for group distinctiveness while maintaining the superordinate identity (Dovidio *et al.* 2007). This duality has been found to further encourage intergroup relations and the reduction of bias (Dovidio *et al.* 2007).

This study sought to understand the experiences of the partnership relationships and the influence of the structured programme on these partnerships from the perspective of the school principals and the business leaders who have taken part in this initiative. It was found that although most of the partnerships taking part in the PfP process were asymmetric in terms of race, class, and gender, these social differences between the partners appeared to have an insignificant effect on the partnerships. Given the inequality in South Africa and the society's division along racial and economic lines (Seekings 2008a; IJR 2015), this finding is quite striking. CIIM is found to account for this result as follows: although the school principals and the business leaders belong to two distinct groups that also usually differ in terms of race and class which form the basis of social divisions in South Africa's society, these two groups have been brought together into the PfP process by the desire to achieve a common vision which is to improve schools and in particular, one school to which they are committed. Studies on intergroup relations show that bias is reduced when the superordinate categorization is less directly relevant to the subgroup identities, as this makes it difficult for the two groups to compare themselves (Hall and Crisp 2005). In other words, the shared goal (that is, to improve schools) does not interfere with the unique identity held by the school principals and the business leaders and in addition, it shifts their attention away from race and class which are likely to bring about division and accentuate their differences.

Further, the proponents of this model also maintain that a common goal can promote a positive shared identity and favourable relations between differing groups (Dovidio *et al.* 2007: 316 referring to Dovidio, Gaertner, Niemann, and Snider, 2001). This appears to be the case in this study since all the partners in the nine partnerships assessed in this research were found to have good relationships, although some appeared to work better than others. The findings also suggest that the support that the participants attributed to the structured programme relate to the conditions that contribute to the reduction of intergroup bias as formulated by Allport (1954) and which can lead to the formation of a common

identity as maintained by Gaertner *et al.* (1994) and Dovidio *et al.* (2007). For example, the participants maintained that they had learnt to build open and trustful partnerships from the workshops which form part of the structured programme as well as from engaging with the learning process facilitators (LPFs) who support the partners with coaching. Note is however made here that although the structured programme's influence was found to be generally positive, some dynamics arising from this programme were found to affect the partnerships negatively (see IV, 2.2.3).

The findings of this study are presented in four themes which correspond to the research questions which are presented in the following section.

5. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This study responds to the following research questions:

i. What are the partners' experiences of the partnership relationship?
ii. What is the impact of PfP's structured partnership development programme on the partnerships?
iii. How do the social differences between the partners affect these partnerships?

The responses to the above questions have been presented in four themes. The first three themes relate to different aspects of the partnership relationship. The fourth theme relates more directly to the focus and impact of the PfP process which in turn informs the activities of the partnerships.

6. CHAPTER ORGANIZATION

This research report is divided into five chapters. Chapter One is the *Introduction* and it provides an overview of the partnership model under study. It also sets out the research rationale, the theoretical framework and the research questions. Chapter Two is the *Literature Review* which presents the literature that is relevant to the study. The chapter begins by discussing the challenges affecting South Africa's education system, including the challenges faced by school principals, in order to contextualize this study. It also includes a discussion on educational reform, social partnerships, and the influence of social differences and trust on partnerships. Chapter Three is on the *Method* applied in this study and it explains the rationale for the qualitative research design used. It explains the project researched and the participants, as well as the process followed for data collection and analysis, in addition to reflexivity.

Chapter Four presents this study's *Findings* which are discussed in four related themes. The PfP process and elements of the structured programme are briefly discussed prior to presenting the themes which helps to situate the findings. The themes provide a deeper insight into the experiences of the partnership relationship as the school principals and the business leaders interact with each other. They also help to understand how the partners experience the impact of the structured programme on their interactions. Chapter Five is the *Conclusion* based on the findings as presented in Chapter Four. The chapter includes recommendations for the partnerships as well as for PfP as an organization.

CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW

1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the literature relevant to this study. The research sought to understand the experiences of the partners as they engage in partnership in the Partners for Possibility (PfP) process, and how the structured partnership development programme which is also part of this process affects their partnerships. The partners consist of school principals and business leaders who are paired up to engage in a partnership for a period of one year. During this time, the partners are expected to participate in the structured programme which is intended to capacitate and support the partners in their efforts to build strong partnerships that can improve leadership in schools.

The literature in this chapter is discussed in four sections and it serves to contextualize the findings. The first section discusses the challenges faced in the education system in South Africa. It provides a brief historical background about the country's education sector as well as a discussion on the state of school leadership in South Africa. The second section presents the various approaches that have been proposed to reform education systems. Despite differing positions, a focus on teaching and learning occupy a central place in reform efforts. Following the centrality of teaching and learning, the second section concludes with a brief discussion on the state of teaching in South Africa. The third section explores social partnerships. Collaboration in partnerships is discussed as well as the advantages and disadvantages associated with social partnerships. The fourth section looks at social differences and trust and the possible influence of these on partnerships.

2. CHALLENGES AFFECTING SOUTH AFRICA'S EDUCATION SYSTEM

2.1. Background: Overview of South Africa's Education System

South Africa's education system is said to be performing poorly both in terms of the quality of education that it provides to its learners, as well as the quantity or number of students graduating with a secondary education. The educational system's performance in national and international tests indicates that most schools are failing in their central task of teaching and learning (Christie *et al.* 2007; Taylor 2008). In his 2013 study on the country's education system 17 years after the fall of apartheid, Spaull (2013a) shows that out of 100 children who start school, only 50 of them will make it to the final year of

secondary (that is, Grade 12), and although 40 of them will pass the final exam, only 12 of them will score the mark necessary to proceed to university.

Colonial and apartheid legacies have been cited as a major factor underlying many of society's challenges, including education which was used negatively to serve political ends (Msila 2007; Taylor 2008). Education under British colonial rule was used for social control while under apartheid rule, it was used as a tool to divide society along racial lines and to create a subservient Black (African, Coloured and Indian) population through the provision of an inferior quality of education which served to protect White power and privilege (Msila 2007). Education for Black children suffered from poor infrastructure, learning materials, leadership, teaching, and lack of discipline (Spaull 2013b; Ngcobo and Tikly 2010). Badat and Sayed (2014 referring to the Education Rights Project website) refer to a study conducted by South Africa's Department of Education in 1996 which exposed some of the infrastructural needs of the post-apartheid schooling system such as electricity (lacking in 60% of the schools), potable water (lacking in 35% of the schools) and toilets (lacking in 12% of the schools).

South Africa's democratic government set out to correct the inequalities resulting from apartheid by establishing for itself key goals of access, quality and equity in the education system, as well as by pursuing educational policies that have led to great investments in the education sector (Christie *et al.* 2007; Badat and Sayed 2014; Spaull 2013b). Despite the above efforts, the structure and systems of apartheid's legacy continue to persist (Christie *et al.* 2007; Badat and Sayed 2014; Spaull 2013b). Consequently, South Africa is said to have a 'Two nation' educational structure: one is an under-resourced public educational sector which serves the poor population consisting mainly of Blacks, particularly Africans who constitute some 80 percent of the population, while the other is an educational sector akin to that in the developed world made up of private and semi-private public schools serving the multi-racial middle class and elites and to which the majority of the White South African population belongs (Spaull 2013b; Badat and Sayed 2014). The education system in South Africa has thus contributed to the reproduction of inequality as Black African learners continue to bear the brunt of the poor education system (Beall *et al.* 2005; NPC 2011; Besharati 2015; Spaull 2013a; Ngcobo and Tikly 2010 referring to Soudien (2004 and 2007) and Chisholm 2004; Seekings 2008a). The country's public education system continues to suffer from the lack of adequate infrastructure, effective school leadership, teaching competencies, and poor learning attitudes (Spaull 2013a; Ngcobo and Tikly 2010; NDP 2011; Bush and Heystek 2006; Bush *et al.* 2011). The problem of ineffective school leadership is

what the partnership model under study attempts to address. This background explanation serves to contextualize the challenges encountered by the partnerships and subsequently by the PfP process in the endeavour to enhance South Africa's education system.

2.2. School Principals: Role and Challenges

Effective leadership and management are said to be vital to the success of any school (Leithwood *et al.* 2006; Bush *et al.* 2011; Bush and Heystek 2006; Ngcobo and Tikly 2010). It is argued that empowering the principal with leadership abilities will lead to change in the school since the school principal—as a fundamental agent of transformation—plays a vital role in changing the school (Ngcobo and Tikly 2010; Botha 2010). The Partners for Possibility (PfP) theory of change is based on this same premise (Collins 2015).

Because the central task of schools is teaching and learning, the management of teaching and learning ought to be the most important task of the school principal (Bush *et al.* 2010; Taylor 2008). Nevertheless, most studies show that the vast majority of principals—particularly of underperforming schools—are consumed by administrative tasks following the decision by the post-apartheid government to have authority decentralized to schools and communities to allow for school self-management (Bush and Heystek 2006; Christie *et al.* 2007; Ngcobo and Tikly 2010). The self-management of schools, also referred to as school-based management, has led to an increase in the scope of work of the principal (Christie 2010). Principals of underperforming schools which are commonly found in townships and rural areas tend to spend most of their time and effort in collecting fees and fundraising in order to secure the basic resources required for learning (Ngcobo and Tikly 2010). The principal is also expected to look for ways to involve the parents and the wider community in security and discipline concerns, and this is so especially in townships where parental and community support tends to be lacking (Ngcobo and Tikly 2010; Christie *et al.* 2007).

Another of the principal's task is that he/she is expected to ensure that the learners and teachers are present in class, and a good principal will try to motivate the two, thus attending to issues of discipline in the case of the learners and human resource management and policy issues in the case of the educators (Ngcobo and Tikly 2010; Bush 2007; Taylor 2008). Moreover, they are expected to address the complex issues that affect schools such as students living in difficult circumstances and/or from low income families, students engaged in drug abuse, teenage pregnancy, gang rivalry, and language barriers

(Ngcobo and Tikly 2010; Christie *et al.* 2007). These issues affect the learners directly as they negatively affect their academic performance as well as their general wellbeing.

It is argued that the reason why school principals encounter difficulties in fulfilling their tasks is due to the lack of adequate training (Bush and Heystek 2006). This is because teachers are promoted to principalship based on their successful teaching records which, it is assumed, implies that they possess the ability to lead (Bush *et al.* 2011 citing Bush and Oduro 2006). Yet, experience shows that this is not always the case. Further, schools and subsequently the principals lack the support that they require from governmental structures for the effective running of schools as these structures are said to be ineffective and incapacitated. Taylor (2008: 22) argues that the offices of the provincial and district-level educational structures:

> [A]re ineffective, largely flaccid organisations, unwilling for political reasons, or unable for technical reasons, to intervene decisively in schools; the majority lack educational authority, based on expertise, and most are in the same dysfunctional state as the failing schools they purport to administer.

Despite the lack of adequate support, principals are found to endure great pressure from the government to provide quality education in their schools. Heystek (2007: 497) expresses this as follows:

> The government wants high-quality education, but they do not have sufficient funding, structures, and mechanisms to ensure the achievement of the quality criteria. Hence, it becomes the responsibility of the school leader as government representative to ensure quality and improvement (Department of Education, 2007, clause 7) in spite of the reductions in State support resulting from neoliberal financial constraints.

The above discussion on the school principals' roles and challenges serves to contextualize the problem of school leadership in South Africa's education system. The discussion also helps us gain a better understanding of the objective of the partnership model investigated in this study which is to improve school leadership.

3. APPROACHES TO REFORMING THE EDUCATION SECTOR

Following the end of apartheid, South Africa's government engaged in wide-ranging initiatives to reform the educational sector (Ngcobo and Tikly 2010; Christie *et al.* 2007). Nevertheless, these efforts to transform the country's educational system have failed to raise the performance of historically disadvantaged learners in line with expectations (Christie *et al.* 2007).

Literature on education reform indicates that there are different approaches to implementing reform. Harris (2010) advocates for a systemic approach to reforming an education system which would require changes at all levels in the system, that is, at the school, district, and national levels. She maintains that reform efforts that focus on changing schools are disadvantaged by the slow pace of change and the large-scale nature of the desired change. Mason (2008) supports Harris's position as he also argues that considerable interventions are required at all levels in society in which the education system is embedded in order to rid the system of inequalities and inefficiencies.

The above systemic approach to reform appears to be appropriate for the South African education system given that every level of the system, namely, in the classroom, school, and administrative structure is said to be weak (Taylor 2008). Nevertheless, reform policies that aim at effecting large-scale changes in education practices oftentimes fail to change the educational practices at the local level (Elmore 1996). This appears to be the case of the educational reform through curriculum changes in South Africa, as it is argued that the policies formulated at the national level have not led to the intended changes in the way that schools function and perform (Maringe *et al.* 2015; Ngcobo and Tikly 2010). This has led Maringe *et al.* (2015) to suggest school-based reform rather than attempting to change the educational system *per se* so as to effectively address the particular challenges encountered in South African schools.

Whether the reform efforts should aim at changing schools or changing the education system in itself, it is commonly agreed that the focus of reform should be teaching and learning since this is what schools are about (Christie *et al.* 2007; Taylor 2008; Bush *et al.* 2010; Harris 2010). The argument for this assertion is that learning is directly determined by the quality of teachers in the school (Taylor 2008; Christie *et al.* 2007). In other words, for an education system to produce good academic results, it must have well-trained teachers. This is especially important in South Africa where the teaching profession is said to be in crisis (Christie *et al.* 2007). Teachers are said to suffer from low self-esteem and low work motivation due to factors including the poor returns and status attached to the teaching profession; the lack of adequate teaching resources and support from government as well as from the parents and the local community; and, indiscipline among the learners which contribute to the difficult classroom conditions (Christie *et al.* 2007; Taylor 2008).

The low ranking of South Africa's educational system in international tests is attributed to the very low levels of teacher subject knowledge which points to poor teacher training (Bush *et al.* 2010; Taylor 2008). *The Global Competitiveness Report 2016-2017* that was recently published by World Economic Forum ranks South Africa's quality of education at 134 out of 138 countries, while the country is positioned last for its quality of math and science education (138 out of 138) (Schwab 2016: 325). In addition to the problem of teacher training, high levels of teacher absenteeism and late coming are said to prevail in underperforming schools partly due to a union militancy where learners' interests are placed second to those of teachers (Taylor 2008; Christie *et al.* 2007). Moreover, actions against underperforming teachers are unintentionally prevented by the unwritten social and political contract that teachers have with the government which further undermines the efforts to improve the country's quality of education (Heystek 2007: 499).

Although most of South Africa's public schools are underperforming, township schools are said to perform poorly in comparison with rural schools and this is attributed to historical reasons (Ngcobo and Tikly 2010). Ngcobo and Tikly refer to studies on township schools which show how in the mid-1970s to early 1990s, these schools became sites of political contestation against apartheid and which led to a breakdown of teaching and learning in these schools (Ngcobo and Tikly 2010: 209 referring to Christie 2001 and Jansen 2001). Bush and Heystek (2006) maintain that this breakdown continues to persist since greater attention has been paid to improving facilities or addressing violence and absenteeism, instead of focusing on curriculum content and teaching methodology. The above observation regarding the state of education in township schools is pertinent to this study since six of the ten school principals involved in this investigation are heads of township schools.

This research looks at a social enterprise that is attempting to carry out an educational reform by bringing about change in individual schools (Collins 2015: 125). Social entrepreneurship is an emerging field in the academic and social arena and is seen as a tool for addressing social needs through the application of business-management models (Malunga *et al.* 2014). Social enterprises are characterized by the creation of social wealth that is generated through the innovative way in which resources are combined in order to address a social problem and thereby change existing social structures (Malunga *et al.* 2014; Zahra *et al.* 2009). Nevertheless, the scope of the problem being addressed may lead to the creation of large and complex organizations with considerable financing and staffing needs (Zahra *et al.* 2009). The problem of sustainability is therefore one of the key challenges of such enterprises which

could divert attention away from the organization's primary social mission (Zahra *et al.* 2009; Malunga *et al.* 2014). The question of sustainability is a central concern of this research.

4. PARTNERSHIPS FOR SOCIAL INITIATIVES

The term 'partnership' is difficult to define as it applies to diverse contexts since "there are many 'shades' of partnering, with each variation having a different application" (Thompson and Sanders 1988: 74). For this reason, these authors refer to a partnership continuum as the term can refer to competition, cooperation, collaboration and coalescence (Thompson and Sanders 1988).

This research investigates a partnership model whose basis is said to be collaboration. This is because the partnerships between school principals and business leaders in this model are referred to as co-learning and co-action partnerships (Collins 2015). For purposes of this research, the notions of 'co-learning' and 'co-action' are taken to signify collaboration. In this study, collaboration is understood as:

> [A] recursive process where people or organizations work together in an intersection of common goals by sharing knowledge, learning, and building consensus. In collaboration processes, individuals or organizations create relationships. The nature of a relationship may vary depending on its strength. Relationships in which organizations operate in truly collaborative mode to achieve a common goal or gain mutual benefits are also called embedded relations and are generally characterized by trust and commitment (Dietrich *et al.* 2010: 60 (drawing on Granovetter, 1973 and Uzzi, 1997)).

The above definition of collaboration highlights aspects that depict, in the researcher's view, the notions of 'co-learning' and 'co-action' such as the sharing of knowledge and learning, as well as the need to work together to achieve common goals. The definition also captures the element of mutual gain expressed by the partners in this partnership model. Further, the fact that the school principals and the business leaders engaged in these partnerships use this term to refer to their relationship attests to the suitability of using this adjective to describe this partnership model (see for example Collins 2015: 111; 125).

The partnership model used in the PfP process is an example of a trisector, cross-sectoral social partnership (CSSP) as it involves the three societal sectors: business, government, and civil society (Seitanidi 2008). Trisector CSSPs are said to respond to the complex nature of social issues such as poverty, healthcare, education, environmental degradation, and public safety, which require multi-sector solutions (Selsky and Parker 2005; Googins and Rochlin 2000; Seitanidi 2008). Behind the

formation of CSSPs is the idea of collaborative advantage (Huxham cited in Wilson and Charlton 1996, in Googins and Rochin 2000), where value-creating relationships are formed. Googins and Rochin (2005) argue that trisector CSSPs have the potential to succeed because all the stakeholders are affected by the social challenges, and it is therefore to everyone's advantage to have these problems resolved. These authors maintain that once the foregoing is grasped, the "relationships among the sectors will change fundamentally into a cooperative, trusting, and mutually dependent and beneficial interaction" (Googins and Rochin 2005: 133).

The involvement of business in CSSPs differs from school-business partnerships which often occur through one-way relationships. In South Africa, the private sector's engagement in education tends to occur in the form of bursaries and scholarships to poor learners, infrastructure and facilities upgrading in schools, text book provision, and other donations (Besharati 2015). Although useful, this kind of support has been criticized for having little impact on the overall quality of education in the country and can encourage a 'handout mentality' (Googins and Rochlin 2000; Collins 2015).

Partnerships can be classified as being transformative or transactional in nature, depending on the manner in which the parties to the partnership establish their working relationship (Butcher *et al.* 2011). In transformational partnerships, partners are said to come together to pursue a shared vision by combining their knowledge and resources in activities that lead to changes in the thinking and practices of people and organizations (Lasker *et al.* 2001; Butcher *et al.* 2011; McClellan 2010). Transformational partnerships are distinguished from transactional partnerships which are usually established to meet individual purposes and goals without effecting fundamental changes in the parties involved in the relationship (Butcher *et al.* 2011). Some of the characteristics of transformational partnerships include a shared understanding of the purpose of the partnership; shared leadership among the partners; open and trustful relationships; a willingness to learn and to change; and lastly, the readiness to pool resources together by all the partners so as to make the partnership work (Butcher *et al.* 2011: 36-38).

The partnership concept is appealing as it is associated with efficiency which is said to characterize the private sector, in addition to yielding synergistic outcomes arising from combining capabilities and resources which would otherwise be out of reach for a sector acting in isolation (Angerer and Hammerschmid 2005 referring to Kouwenhoven 1993 and Hood 2003; Googins and Rochlin 2000; Thompson and Sanders 1988). Synergy refers to the partners' ability to combine their knowledge,

resources, and perspectives, leading them to accomplish more as a team than they would in their individual capacities (Saltiel 1988; Lasker *et al.* 2001; McClellan 2010).

Partnerships however suffer from certain disadvantages. They can have destructive potential for weaker partners in an unequal relationship since partnerships tend to favour the stronger partner—the one with greater resources—at the expense of the other (Lasker *et al.* 2001 referring to Mayo 1997; Rein and Stott 2009). With regard to social partnerships, it is argued that despite their high appeal, empirical and academic research on partnerships designed to resolve social issues show little outcome (Roussos and Fawcett 2000; Angerer and Hammerschmid 2005; Mukherjee Reed and Reed 2009). Social partnerships involving business concerns also face the problem of legitimacy which exerts pressure on these entities to justify their involvement by displaying the results of their activities (van Tulder *et al.* 2015; Waddock 1988). Further, CSSPs are said to give legitimacy to the neo-liberal global economic order which in actual fact inhibits rather than fosters development (Mukherjee Reed and Reed 2009). Moreover, the different primary concerns of the three sectors in CSSPs imply divergent interests which can negatively affect the workings of the partnership (Waddell 2000; Selsky and Parker 2005; Rein and Stott 2009; Mukherjee Reed and Reed 2009).

The above discussion on the nature and type of partnerships as well as their advantages and disadvantages aids our understanding of the partnership model under investigation.

5. SOCIAL DIFFERENCES AND TRUST IN PARTNERSHIP RELATIONSHIPS

Trust is essential in collaborative partnerships. Trust enables effective communication and coordination between the partners, their mutual support, and the alignment of efforts and interests: factors that are necessary for a strong partnership (Dietrich *et al.* 2010). If trust is missing, it can replaced by conflict if none of the partners can subdue the other, or by control whereby the stronger partner—the one with more resources—wields power over the other (Tomlinson 2005; Lasker *et al.* 2001). According to Alesina and La Ferrarab (2002), traumatic past experiences, including discrimination, reduced incomes due to poor education and racial tensions tend to affect trust negatively. These factors highlighted by Alesina and La Ferrarab 2002) are applicable to South Africa since, as Roberts (2014) explains, the colonial and apartheid legacies worked in favour of White South Africans but led to the deprivation and marginalization of Black Africans.

Despite the end of apartheid, the structures of poverty and privilege that characterized this regime persist, hence the increased income inequality in post-apartheid South Africa despite the improved economic growth registered in the last 22 years: the beneficiaries of this growth have been the educated and the highly skilled (Netshitenzhe 2014; Roberts 2014 referring to Leibbrandt *et al.* 2010, 2011). In addition, anti-discriminatory post-apartheid policies of affirmative action have led to the growth of an African elite and middle class which have deepened class divisions and income inequality within the Black African population (Seekings 2008b; Beall *et al.* 2005). South Africa has thus been described economically as 'Three nations' (Seekings 2008b). The first 'nation' refers to the poor and the working classes of which 90% of the persons in this group are Black Africans (Spaull 2013b referring to Leibbrandt *et al.* 2011). The second 'nation' refers to the multi-racial middle classes, while the third 'nation' consists of the elites and most of the White South Africans belong to this class (Seekings 2008a). The importance of poverty and income inequality in South Africa is reflected by the presence of deep class and race divisions in the country (IJR 2015).

The influence of the social differences of class, gender, and race on the workings of the PfP partnerships is one of the questions addressed by this research. This is because there are those who argue that there is less inclination to trust those who are perceived to be different (Alesina and La Ferrarab 2002; IJR 2015; Moorosi 2012). Racial and class differences are expected among the partners in PfP's partnership model given that the majority of the business leaders are White South Africans who grew up in the suburbs while majority of the school principals grew up in the townships. The recently published *16th Commission for Employment Equity Annual Report 2015-2016* shows that of the total number of South Africans in management positions in the private sector: 39% are White men; 19% are White women; 14% are Black African men; and 8% are Black African women (Department of Labour 2016). This means that 58% of the business leaders are White; 22% are African; and 20% are Coloureds and Indians. Given that Black Africans form a majority of the poor (Spaull 2013b referring to Leibbrandt *et al.* 2011) and that most underperforming schools serve this particular population, it is not surprising that a majority of the principals in these schools are Black African.

The partnership model by PfP raises particular questions with regard to trust and power relations which may pose serious obstacles to collaboration (Lister 2000; Parker and Selsky 2004; Dietrich *et al.* 2010; Saltiel 1988). This helps to explain the interest in this study about the influence of social differences on the partnerships.

This study makes use of the common ingroup identity model (CIIM) (see I, 4 for description on theory) to interpret the findings of this research concerning the impact of social differences on the partners and the partnerships. In addition to CIIM, the use of critical action learning (CAL) helps us to understand the findings concerning the relational aspect in the PfP process. CAL is a development of action learning (Vince 2011; 2012), and action learning is a type of developmental interaction aimed at enhancing skills for professional development purposes (D'Abate *et al.* 2003). CAL helps us to understand how power relations arising from the differences or inequalities in an action learning team support or inhibit the learning process (Vince 2011). As Rigg and Trehan (2004: 150) put it:

> If action learning (though broadly interpreted and open to contestation) is to do with collaborative enquiry, problem-solving and self-development, the potential for criticality in action learning derives from the tensions, contradictions, emotions and power dynamics that inevitably exist both within a group and in individual managers' lives.

Since action learning is one of the components of the structured programme applied in the PfP process (Collins 2015: 104), the use of CAL has been found to aid our understanding of the partnership experience from the perspective of the principals and the business leaders involved in this process as partners.

6. CONCLUSION

This chapter has been informed by the questions that emerged in the course of this study. This research sought to understand the partners' experiences of the PfP partnerships by considering the nature and impact of these partnerships, the influence of the structured programme on the partnership relationship, and the impact of the partners' social differences on their partnerships.

The literature points to the complex nature of the problems affecting South Africa's education system. Whereas education is generally associated with development, the country's history illustrates how education can be used to thwart development of certain sections of the population. The multi-faceted and complex challenges of education systems explain the distinct approaches proposed for reforming the sector. A one-size-fits-all reform approach therefore does not exist. Nevertheless, there appears to be a consensus about the need for schools to meet their primary task which is to provide its learners with a good education.

The literature presented in this chapter helps us to appreciate the intricate nature of the task undertaken by the partnerships in PfP, namely, to improve educational outcomes in schools and subsequently reform education in South Africa. Although partnerships are generally perceived to be beneficial as the term connotes collaboration, the literature highlights the difficulties involved in establishing these relationships. The workings of the partnership model under study could be impeded by the social tensions due to race and class divisions that characterize South Africa's society and which are largely attributed to the country's history.

The topics discussed in this chapter inform and guide the efforts to interpret and make sense of the data gathered in this research. The following section sets out the design and method applied in this study.

CHAPTER III: METHOD

1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides a discussion of the research conducted. It begins by looking at the study's qualitative research design which is followed by a consideration of the research's aim and questions. To contextualize this investigation, an extensive account of the project researched and the sample group of 22 participants who participated in this study is given. This is followed by a description of the data collection process conducted through semi-structured interviews, and after this section follows an account of the data analysis. Consideration is then made of ethical matters arising in the course of the study. The chapter concludes by addressing issues of trustworthiness as well as the researcher's biases and assumptions which may have affected the study.

2. RESEARCH DESIGN

This study applied a qualitative research approach in order to explore and describe the manner in which the partnerships in PfP's partnership model are understood and experienced by the partners taking part in the PfP process. Qualitative design takes into account the complexity of social interactions and varied meanings that individuals attribute to these interactions (Marshall and Rossman 2011). This design defies positivism's emphasis on numerical data and scientific methods as the basis of truth in favour of interpretivism since the social world, and particularly human behaviour, is not governed by law-like regularities as are physical and material things (Snape and Pencer 2003).

The qualitative design is most suited to this study on these partnerships for several reasons. These reasons are derived from Creswell (2014) and Greenstein (2003). Firstly, it is ideal for studying attitudes and behaviours in their natural setting since the interviews were conducted where the participants felt most comfortable. Secondly, it provides an in-depth understanding of the partnership experience by concentrating on a small number of partnerships, thus favouring depth over breadth. This is unlike surveys in quantitative research which yield relatively superficial information due to the value placed on breadth. Thirdly, it provides a holistic understanding of the partnership experience by taking into account the specific context in which the partnerships are formed and evolve. Fourthly, it acknowledges the researcher's influence on the study through her biases, assumptions, as well as her experiences—both professional and personal.

3. RESEARCH AIM

The focus of this study is a partnership model designed by Partners for Possibility (PfP), a local social initiative. In this model, a school principal of an underperforming school is paired up with a business person with leadership experience to form a collaborative partnership for one year. During this time, the partners go through a structured partnership development programme to capacitate them in order to enable them to form strong partnerships. The aim of these partnerships is to strengthen the school leadership. Improved school leadership is expected to lead to greater parental and community involvement in the school which, it is hoped, will translate to improved learning outcomes.

This investigation has a wider focus than was envisaged in the research proposal due to a change in the research focus which occurred in the course of the study. The initial research objective was to acquire an in-depth understanding of these partnerships by considering the challenges that the partners encountered in the course of their working, as well as the factors affecting the quality of these interactions. A pilot study was carried out at the start of this investigation through which it became apparent that an in-depth understanding of the dynamics of the partners' interactions could only be achieved in light of the wider PfP process. This was because the participants in the pilot study were found to reflect on their partnerships in relation to the PfP process, particularly the structured programme. The interview schedule was thus revised to include the perceptions of the principals and of the business leaders about the value of this programme on the partnerships. The following questions emerged from the data collection and analysis process which are the focus of this study:

i. What are the partners' experiences of the partnership relationship?
ii. What is the impact of PfP's structured partnership development programme on the partnerships?
iii. How do the social differences between the partners affect these partnerships?

The four themes presented in this report are in response to the above questions.

The desire to obtain an in-depth understanding of this partnership model developed in the researcher after attending a PfP event in March 2016 where members of six partnerships were celebrating the end of their partnership year and were showcasing their activities. Interactions between the partners during this event appeared to be warm and friendly despite the fact that only one of the six partnerships was between persons of the same race. This led the researcher to question the influence of social

differences on the partnerships given the tensions experienced in South Africa due to social inequalities (IJR 2015; Seekings 2008a). Moreover, although business involvement in schools is known to take place in many forms such as through the provision of scholarships, infrastructure, etc., it was the first time that the researcher had come across such a model of school-business partnership which was not based on a mentor-protégé type of relationship, hence the keenness to understand the workings of this partnership model. The following section describes the process through which the sample group that was involved in this study was composed.

4. PROJECT RESEARCHED AND PARTICIPANTS

The researcher approached PfP to seek permission to carry out this investigation on its partnership model and the request was granted (Appendix 1: Permission from PfP). The research was limited to partnerships in the Gauteng Province. Purposive and quota sampling methods were used to select those who would participate in this study. At the time of deciding on an appropriate sample, a total of 193 partnerships had been registered in Gauteng – a number that was too big for this study. In order to arrive at an appropriate sample, a decision was reached, after discussions with the researcher's point of contact with PfP—a senior person in the organization's leadership in Gauteng—, to invite some of the learning process facilitators (LPFs) attending to partnerships in Johannesburg and Pretoria to each suggest six partnerships that could be invited to participate in this study. The LPFs are a key component in PfP's structured programme as they are the ones who coach the PfP partners participating in this process (see IV, 1.2 for a discussion on the programme).

A total of eight LPFs were approached and each was asked to suggest at least two strong, two moderate, and two weak partnerships. This categorization was thought feasible since the organization applies a similar approach to evaluate its partnerships. As part of its monitoring and evaluation processes, PfP requires its LPFs to submit monthly reports on the partnerships in their groups and to evaluate these partnerships according to an established criteria. A sample of these monthly reports was made available to the researcher. In these reports, each partnership is evaluated on a scale of one (weak) to five (optimal) on aspects such as the quality of their relationship, attendance to the various components forming part of the structured programme, accomplishments in the school, among others (PfP 2016b).

The researcher also decided to limit the sample group to partnerships that had already completed the structured programme for two reasons: firstly, it would be easier for them to make time for this study

unlike those who were engaged in the programme, since the programme is time-intensive; and secondly—and more importantly—, it was thought that such a sample group would be more objective about their partnership experience. This was because the researcher was concerned that the organization's support of this investigation could unduly influence the research participants.

A total of 43 partnerships were suggested by five LPFs out of the eight who had been approached to suggest possible participants for this study. Of the 43 partnerships, 15 were categorized as strong, another 15 as moderate, and 13 were classified as weak. A letter of introduction about this study was sent by the organization to these 43 partnerships, and this was subsequently followed by a letter of invitation to participate in this study which was sent by the researcher (Appendix 2: Participant Information Sheet). Five business leaders (4 White and 1 Black[4]) replied immediately in the affirmative and the researcher contacted their partner principals to see if they too would be interested in the study. This is because interviewing the two persons engaged in partnership was expected to yield better results by providing a multi-dimensional overview of the partnership experience. Further, interviewing both partners would allow for triangulation which could aid to give a deeper understanding of the partnerships as well as to ensure both the coherence and validation of data (Creswell 2014; Marshall and Rossman 2011). Of the five business leaders who responded, three were from the 'strong partnership' category while two were from the 'moderate partnership' category.

Quota sampling was used in order to ensure some representation from the three categories of partnerships, in addition to ensuring that the partners interviewed varied in terms of race and gender. In the end, a total of 22 school principals and business leaders took part in this study: 18 of them were paired up in nine partnerships while the other four were unpaired since their partners did not participate in this study: two expressly declined to take part—the business partner to the school principal as well as a principal partner to one of the three business leaders (the two were in partnerships that were classified as weak)—while the other two (both principals in a weak and in a strong partnership) were noncommittal. None of the nine complete partnerships fell in the weak category despite the efforts made to secure the participation of partnerships that were classified in this group. Note is therefore made of a possible bias in the data due to the degree of self-selection in the sample group as the data is biased towards partnerships in the strong category.

[4] Unless otherwise specified, Black in this study refers to Africans, Indians and Coloureds. This is to maintain confidentiality of information obtained from the participants (See Footnote 1).

The breakdown of the 22 participants in terms of strength of their partnerships, occupation, race and gender are given in the two tables below:

Category / Description	Strong	Moderate	Weak	Total number of Persons
Number of complete partnerships involved in this study	5*	4*	0	18
Number of individual School principals involved in this study	0	0	1	1
Number of individual Business Leaders involved in this study	1	0	2	3
Total number of Persons	11	8	3	22

(*): Each partnership consists of a school principal and a business leader, that is, two people in each partnership.

Table 1: Breakdown of Participants in Terms of Partnership Strength

Occupation	**School Principals**		**Business Leaders**		**Total**
Gender / Race	*Female*	*Male*	*Female*	*Male*	
Black	4	5	2	2	13
White	1	0	2	6	9
Sub-Total (Gender)	*5*	*5*	*4*	*8*	
Total (Occupation)	**10**		**12**		**22**

Table 2: Breakdown of Participants in Terms of Occupation, Gender and Race

With regard to when the partnerships were launched, six of the nine complete partnerships that took part in this study were started in 2015: five at the start of the year and one in mid-year. These partnerships had thus recently completed the structured programme with regard to this study. The other three partnerships had been launched earlier: one in 2012 while the other two began in mid-2014.

Another interesting aspect about the sample group is with regard to the similarities and differences that were noted among the school principals and the business leaders who participated in this study. A similarity among the principals was that they all headed “no fee” schools, that is, schools that are

exempted to charge school fees since they are situated in poor communities (Department of Education 2006; Taylor 2011). Six of these schools are located in townships, three in poor suburbs and one in an informal settlement. Although the schools are in poor socio-economic areas, the calibre of some principals can be considered quite high. For example, two principals held master's degrees in law and business respectively, while another had a doctorate in theology. Further, one of the persons interviewed among the principals had been promoted to the district office to work as an Institutional Development Support Officer (IDSO) and was overseeing the development and support of 15 schools.

Considering the business leaders, although all 12 of them had leadership experience, this was also varied in that:

- seven held executive positions in large multinationals or large domestic financial institutions;
- three were entrepreneurs: one with close to 400 permanent employees and another with 18;
- one was a former school principal with over 40 years of experience as principal (12 in a private school) and had been a mentor to 30 school principals—mostly from rural areas—in the South Africa's Department of Education's Advanced Certificate in Education (ACE) Programme;[5]
- one was a former employee of PfP who had worked as Head of Stakeholder Engagement in the Gauteng Province and had recruited over 100 business leaders who have taken part in the PfP process. Just before her resignation, Jane[6] had assumed the role of a business leader, stepping in for a business person who had been willing to contribute to the PfP process but could not commit to support the school principal in a partnership. Jane had worked in PfP for three years. Her position in PfP and her experience as a business leader meant that her contribution to this study was unique and for that reason, there are certain instances in Chapter IV of this report (Findings) where she is cited under her pseudonym.

The shift in the research interest to the school principals' and on the business leaders' perspectives of the partnership experience and on the structured programme, and the subsequent wider focus described in the preceding section led to the decision to limit the scope of this study to the partners only, and not to involve the LPFs. This was especially because the data collected from the partners' was found sufficient to understand the dynamics within the partnerships as well as the dynamics between

[5] The name of this programme changed to Advanced Diploma in Education (ADE) in 2015 (Msila 2015).

[6] All names used in this report are pseudonyms.

these partnerships and the programme. Nevertheless, future studies on this partnership model could include the LPFs' perspectives as they are likely to complement the partners' view of the partnership experience and subsequently the PfP process.

5. DATA COLLECTION

Semi-structured in-depth interviews were used to collect data for this study. Use was not made of document analysis as was foreseen in the research proposal. This was because the researcher found out at the start of fieldwork that PfP was in the process of revising its monitoring and evaluation (M&E) system (McMillan 2016). Nevertheless, PfP did give the researcher access to some documents, among them, the LPF monthly reports on some partnerships and these aided the researcher to understand the criteria used by the organization to evaluate its partnerships. Further, a few of the partnerships interviewed appeared in these reports which was interesting as it provided the LPF's perspectives on these partnerships. Nevertheless, the researcher decided not to use these reports extensively given the choice made to focus on the partners' perspectives.

The in-depth interviews occurred between August and November 2016 in varied locations. All except one interview with the principals occurred in their respective schools, while those with the business leaders occurred in restaurants, their homes or their offices. An interview schedule was used to guide the researcher, although in practice, the interviewees required little prompting to talk about the research project. A pilot study was conducted which involved three partnerships. The purpose of the pilot study was to test the research questions as well as to aid the researcher to familiarize herself with the field (Arthur and Nazroo 2003). This preliminary investigation pointed to new themes that had until then not been considered, such as the influence of the structured programme's components on the partnerships. The pilot interviews are included in the final sample. The interviews began by asking the participants about their background information and how they got to know of PfP.

On average, the interviews lasted about 75 minutes and these conversations were digitally recorded with the participants' consent (Appendix 4: Recording Consent Form) except in two cases: in one, the principal whose partnership was in the weak category declined to have the interview recorded; and in the second, the digital recorder was not available due to an oversight.

Of the 22 participants, all were interviewed once except three: Jane and two other business leaders, Thomas and Adam. Two interviews were held with Jane because of her unique position as a former PfP employee and as a business leader. Thomas was interviewed twice because prior to joining the PfP process, he had been involved in a public school that was close to his neighbourhood where he was trying to provide the school with material support. He however had to abandon this project after about a year because, although he had a good working relationship with the principal of this school, the latter was in conflict with the school governing body (SGB) over Thomas' involvement in the school. According to Thomas, there appeared to be some dissatisfaction among key SGB members despite the projects that Thomas had accomplished in the school through his networks, such as the acquisition of a new computer system and a playground for Grade R students. It was interesting to hear him compare this experience with his PfP partnership and it also helped the researcher to understand better the role of the SGB in schools and its interactions with the principal.

Adam was the second business leader who was interviewed three times. He is a former school principal. His experiences as school principal before and after apartheid were interesting, but more so his experience in the Advanced Certificate in Education (ACE) programme. The third interview with Adam was nevertheless a repeat of the second interview with him since the researcher suffered theft during the course of this study and lost, among other things, the recordings of five participants, including Adam's second interview. Luckily, the researcher had transcribed notes of interviews with four of the participants. The actual loss following the theft was therefore one interview with a business leader where no transcription had taken place. The loss of the digital recordings taught the researcher the tough lesson of the need to create a backup of the recordings and to make extensive notes of the interviews as soon as these were done (Creswell 2014).

6. DATA ANALYSIS

According to Marshall and Rossman (2011: 214), "identifying salient themes, recurring ideas or language, and patterns of belief that link people and settings together is the most intellectually challenging phase of data analysis—one that can integrate the entire endeavour". These authors maintain that the generation of categories and themes in data analysis is tough intellectual work (Marshall and Rossman 2011: 212) and this affirmation describes well the researcher's experience of data analysis in this study.

A pilot study was first conducted with a small sample of three partnerships. The researcher went into the field to conduct the pilot interviews with categories drawn from the initial research proposal which corresponded to the initial research questions. Extensive notes and partial transcription of the recorded interviews were done and a mini-report based on the findings of the pilot study was submitted to the researcher's supervisor. Two points became clear from this exercise: the first was that the interview questions needed some revision in order to include the impact of the structured programme on the partnerships since it was apparent that the partnerships could not be understood outside of the programme due to the respondents' constant reference to it. The second point was that, as the researcher, I was having difficulties in analyzing and interpreting the data since my analysis of the pilot study failed to convey the underlying meaning of the data, which is the essence of data analysis (Marshall and Rossman 2011; Creswell 2014).

The difficulties in data analysis and interpretation were eventually overcome by further reading of the topics that emerged from the data that the researcher was not familiar with; through reading and re-reading the data; through continued reflection and writing-up of memos on the data analysis process; and lastly, through frequent discussions and consultations with my supervisor. The large amount of data that had been collected through the interviews was eventually coded using categories that surfaced from the data. These categories were ultimately grouped into six topics which were derived from literature and from the data collected from the respondents. This report presents the findings of this study in four themes through which I, as the researcher, offer an integrative interpretation of the lessons derived from the investigation (Marshall and Rossman 2011: 219).

7. ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

This study sought to understand the partners' experiences of the dynamics in the partnerships and those which arose as they participated in the structured programme. Although the subject matter of the study was not of an explicitly sensitive nature, it was necessary to ensure that participation in this research would not be harmful or distressing to the respondents.

The researcher entered into a confidentiality agreement with Symphonia for South Africa (SSA)[7] regarding the use of documents accessed from the organization for purposes of this study. Since the

[7] PfP is an initiative of SSA, a local non-profit organization (NPO) (see I, 2).

researcher was interested in understanding the principals' and business leaders' experiences of the partnerships, the researcher relied on PfP to gain access to the participants. The fact of relying on PfP's assistance to compose the study's sample group led to the decision of limiting this group to partners who had completed the year-programme as it was hoped that they would be more objective about the PfP process.

All the partners engaged in this partnership model were over the age of 18 and were not members of a vulnerable population. Each of the participants received an invitation letter from the researcher which gave a description of this study and explained what participation would entail. The participants were required to give their consent in writing (Appendix 3: Participation Consent Form). The participants were also required to indicate whether or not they objected to having their PfP partner take part in this study as well. The reason for asking the participants to indicate how they felt about their partners' participation was because the researcher could only ensure partial confidentiality. Although the researcher would obtain the data in separate interviews with each partner, there were high chances that the two partners in one partnership would recognize each other's contribution in the final report.

Some ethical concerns came up during the course of this research. One related to the fact that most participants were curious to find out whether their partners had consented to participate in the study or not. Consequently, the researcher was afraid that some partners would try to coerce the other to take part in this study. To address this concern, the researcher emphasized with each participant the importance of allowing each person to voluntarily decide whether to participate in this study or not. The fact that some partners declined explicitly while others did so implicitly—some people expressed their willingness to participate but failed to commit themselves for an interview—could be an indicator that there was sufficient space for them to exercise choice. Another concern was that some partners were curious to find out what their PfP partner had said. This meant that as the researcher, I had to be careful to maintain confidentiality but without compromising the research relationship (Legard, Keegan and Ward 2003).

A copy of the final research proposal and the report will be made available to PfP. An electronic version of the final report will be sent to all those who participated in this study.

8. TRUSTWORTHINESS OF THE STUDY

In quantitative research, validity, reliability and generalizability are the criteria against which the soundness of a study is determined (Marshall and Rossman 2011). Validity refers to the accuracy of the measurement; reliability to the consistency or stability of the measurement; and generalizability to the extent to which the results can be applied beyond the particular study (Creswell 2014; Greenstein 2003). Marshall and Rossman (2011) argue that given the distinct nature of qualitative studies, it is more appropriate to refer to trustworthiness of a research. Research that is trustworthy is that which has been conducted ethically and fairly, thus making it believable, as it represents the experiences of those involved in the study (Marshall and Rossman 2011; Greenstein 2003). According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), trustworthy research is that which meets the following criteria: it is credible since it accurately represents the data collected; it is transferable, meaning that the findings can be applied to other contexts or with other respondents; it is dependable, that is, the findings are consistent and can be reached by other researchers with the same or similar respondents; and lastly, the findings are confirmable, which refers to the accuracy of the data.

In this particular study on the partners' perspective of the PfP experience, the researcher made use of triangulation to verify the credibility of the research by interviewing the partners involved in a partnership separately, in addition to making use of PfP documents such as the LPF reports in order to verify the data collected. Triangulation allows the researcher to determine the credibility of the evidence, plus it can lead to a deeper understanding of the phenomenon under study through the use of multiple perspectives (Lewis and Ritchie 2003).

9. RESEARCH BIAS AND ASSUMPTIONS

In order to maintain objectivity and neutrality which are aspects of research that is trustworthy, researchers are advised to "reflect about how their biases, values, and personal background, such as gender, history, culture, and socioeconomic status, shape their interpretations formed during a study" (Creswell 2014; Snape and Pencer 2003).

As the researcher, I was aware that both my personal and professional backgrounds meant that I brought with me certain biases and assumptions to this study. I am a Black (African) middle-class female researcher from Kenya who has been trained to be an accountant and has worked in a non-governmental organization (NGO) in Nairobi for close to 10 years on educational projects. My

professional training and work experience explain in part my interest in this partnership model. Further, coming from a country where social prejudices are mainly attributed to ethnic differences rather than to race, and considering that I am still relatively new to South Africa (having arrived in the country in 2015), I have become more aware that 'race' forms part of my reality and consequently 'being Black' is now an important aspect of my identity. My personal background, my professional training, and my work experience mean that I am not inclined to observe issues of race or domination, although I have become more aware of these thanks to the courses in sociology that form part of the Development Studies curriculum for which I am registered. It was therefore important to consult with my supervisor on a regular basis throughout the process of data collection and analysis in order to expose and challenge my biases and assumptions. These discussions also helped me to acquire a more critical perspective as is proper of a social scientist, and which complements my practical thinking as an accountant.

10. CONCLUSION

This chapter provides an account of the research journey that I travelled as the researcher with the objective of understanding how the partners involved in the PfP process experience their partnerships. The highlight of my research journey, in my view, is the pilot study which was conducted at the start of the interviews. The findings of the pilot study indicated the need for widening the scope of the initial planned study by co-opting the structured programme into the research. Although broadening the scope did not imply a radical change to the research objectives, it was nonetheless a diversion from the original plan which necessitated the revision of the initial research questions. Nevertheless, the detour instigated by the participants has, in my view, helped to give rise to a deeper and to a more complete understanding of PfP's partnership model. What the researcher sought to accomplish by undertaking this research journey is conveyed in the following chapter of this report.

CHAPTER IV: FINDINGS

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Themes

This chapter provides an account of the main findings that emerged from the research and which are discussed in four themes. The first theme that is discussed is on the nature of the partnerships in PfP's partnership model, that is, the interactions between the school principals and the business leaders (that is, the partners) who are paired up in this model. The different workings of the partnerships suggest variations in their type. Partnerships can thus be transformational or transactional in nature, and this section looks at the specific aspects that distinguish these interactions in order to have a better understanding of these partnerships. The second theme looks at the dynamics affecting the partnerships as the partners participate in the structured partnership development programme (referred to as the structured programme or programme) run by this organization. The structured programme is oriented towards building capacity in the principals and the business leaders in order to enable them to engage effectively in the partnership. The programme also aids them to sustain their relationship. Nevertheless, certain dynamics relating to the programme are found to affect the partners and the workings of the partnerships and these are discussed in this section. The third theme considers the impact of social differences on the partnerships, since most of these relationships are asymmetric in terms of race, class and gender. Lastly, the fourth theme considers the organization's focus of change as this informs the activities of the partners in the partnerships.

The themes presented in this study are by no means exhaustive. They nevertheless offer substantive insights into the dynamics within the PfP process and on the impact of the partners' activities on school improvement.

Prior to the discussion on the themes and in order to situate them, an outline is provided of the PfP process which encompasses the partnerships between the school principals and the business leaders as well as the structured programme.

1.2. Outline of PfP's Structured Programme

In the first chapter of this report, a brief background of PfP as an organization was given and the partnership model was also outlined (see I, 2). The purpose of this section is to consider the components

of the structured programme in order to understand how these relate to the partnerships. This exercise will help to ground this study.

In the partnership model under study, a school principal of an underperforming public school is partnered or paired with a business leader for the duration of one year. During this period, the partners are expected to work together in order to identify and address the challenges faced by the principal as the leadership in the school. The partners are required to combine their knowledge, experience and skills in a co-action and co-learning partnership and in the process, they come to discover the power of creative thinking and the ability to mobilize actions (Collins 2015). This type of developmental interaction is referred to as action learning, an experience-based approach to the development of leadership skills through the interaction of a diverse-problem solving team that is charged with the task of resolving complex systemic and societal problems (D'Abate *et al.* 2003; Collins 2015). The partners are also required to take part in the structured programme that is run by the organization throughout the duration of the partnership. The programme's objective is to build the partners' capacity to enable them to develop strong partnerships aimed at strengthening school leadership. The structured programme forms part of the PfP process which was briefly discussed in Chapter I of this report (see I, 2) and this discussion included a graphical illustration of this process (see Figure 1: Diagram Illustrating the PfP Process).

The structured programme consists of various components which are designed to build and to support the partnerships (Collins 2015: 95-104). These components include three training workshops, namely: Time to Think (a day workshop), Flawless Consulting, and Community Building (the last two are each two-day workshops). These workshops provide knowledge and skills to the partners which help them to effectively engage in the partnerships. The workshops also allow the partners to spend time together which, it is said, helps them to build strong and trusting relationships (Collins 2015).

A second component in the structured programme is coaching which is provided to support the partners. Nevertheless, the coach—referred to as a Learning Process Facilitator (LPF)—is particularly supportive of the business leader. This is because other than being an educational reform process, PfP is also a leadership programme as it aims to improve the business leaders' leadership abilities (Collins 2015). Further, given that the business leaders are unfamiliar with the operation and challenges facing

schools as well as the education system, they require support from the LPF in order to play their supportive role with respect to the principal as he/she works towards improving the school.

A third element of support to the partnership is the Community of Practice (CoP) where each partnership is assigned to a group consisting of 8 to 10 partnerships. This group is referred to as a leadership circle (LC). Each LC is assigned to one LPF who provides coaching to all the partnerships in the group and who is also responsible for facilitating the CoP meetings. Each CoP meets every six weeks throughout the year-programme, providing a forum whereby the school principals and the business leaders in the group can network with each other and where cross-partnership learning can take place.

The components of the structured programme are shown in the diagram below which also depicts the organization's four-level change process whose description will follow shortly. Note however that although the LPFs are not represented in the diagram, they are actively involved throughout the programme:

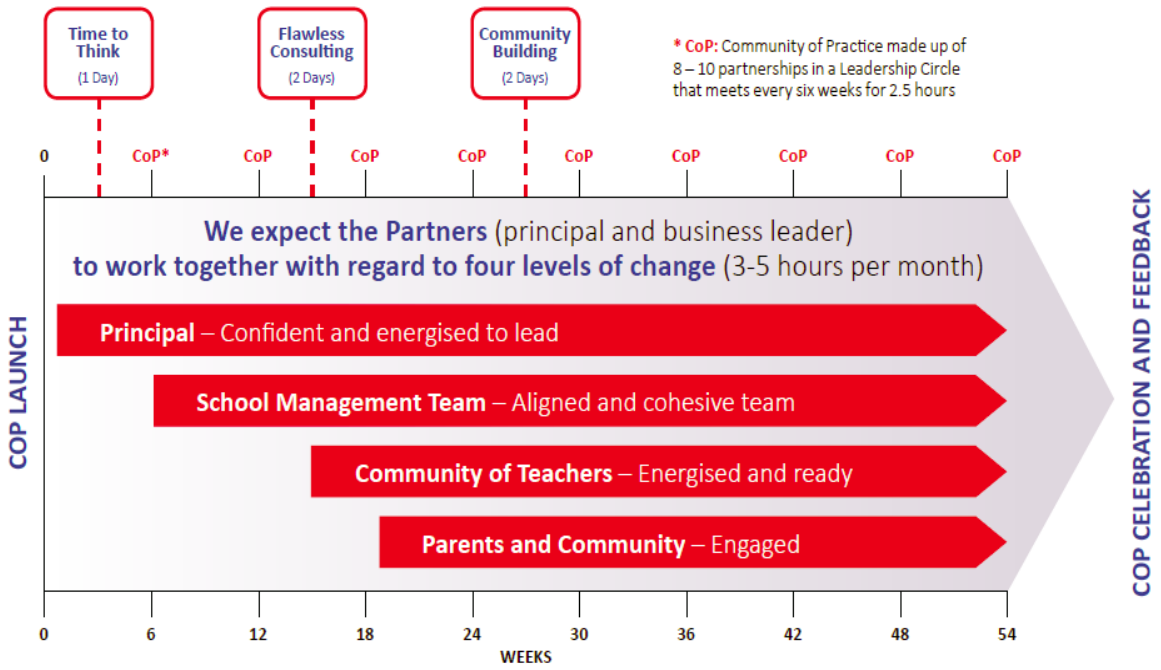

Figure 2: Partners for Possibility Structured Programme
(Source: PfP 2016a: 3)

At the end of the structured programme, the partnerships in the LC participate in a celebration event that officially marks the end of their participation in the PfP process. In this event, the partners are

expected to report on the activities that they have carried out while in partnership, as well as to relate to the public whether they intend to continue with their partnership relationship or not (Collins 2015: 97).

PfP's structured programme is designed to capacitate the partners so as to help them build an effective partnership (see IV, 2.2.2). The programme also reflects the organization's change theory which identifies the school as the largest unit of practical change in the education system (see I, 2 for an outline of PfP's theory of change). Through the PfP process, the organization envisages to bring about change in the school at four levels: the first is that of the school principal who needs to be empowered with leadership and management skills in order to lead change at the school – this level is the partnership's direct objective, that is, to improve the principal's leadership ability; the second level is the school management team (SMT) which needs to be aligned and to work as a cohesive unit; the third level of change are the educators who need to be energized and motivated to commit to teaching; and lastly, the fourth level of change involves the parents and the community who need to be more engaged in the school and to work together with the educators for the benefit of the learners (Collins 2015: 105).

The manner in which the partners are supported in the partnership-building process shows that although these partnerships are between one school principal and one business leader, the dynamics of the partnerships are learnt through an integrated process. This process includes the one-to-one interactions between the partners, the partnership's interaction with other partnerships as they engage in the CoP sessions and in the workshops, as well as through the partnership's interactions with the LPF. This study looks at the dynamics arising from the interaction within the partnership and between the partnerships in order to understand how these influence the partnership relationship. The findings are presented in four themes which are discussed in the rest of this chapter.

2. THEMES

2.1. Nature of PfP Partnerships: Transactional or Transformational Relationships?

2.1.1. Introduction

In the course of trying to establish the participants' experience of the partnerships during this investigation, two issues became apparent. The first issue was that although a majority of the participants who had successfully completed the structured programme (see IV, 1.2) expressed their satisfaction with their partnerships and with the PfP process, it was clear that some partnerships had accomplished more than others. For example, one partnership's main accomplishment was the improvement of the school infrastructure while in another partnership, the principal maintained that through his interactions with his business leader, he had grown in confidence as a leader and had been empowered to fundraise and network with other institutions, including a private school that is providing online access to math and science material to his teachers and to his matric students. The second issue was that, although the participants maintained that theirs was an equal partnership, some principals appeared to be uncertain of their contribution to these partnerships.

PfP literature describes its partnerships as co-learning and co-action relationships between school principals and business leaders which are designed to be transformational, that is, capable of giving rise to meaningful and sustainable changes in schools and subsequently lead to improved educational outcomes (Collins 2015: 104). In transformational partnerships, partners come together to pursue a shared vision by combining their knowledge and resources in activities that often lead to changes in the thinking and practices of people and organizations (Lasker *et al.* 2001; Butcher *et al.* 2011; McClellan 2010). These partnerships are distinguished from transactional relationships which are established to meet individual purposes and goals (Butcher *et al.* 2011), like a company providing school uniforms to needy learners.

Partnership literature however asserts that despite their high appeal, social partnerships in which businesses are involved face the problem of legitimacy, that is, these partnerships and the individuals within them can be pressurized to show the results of their activities (van Tulder *et al.* 2015; Waddock 1988). This pressure to show results can hinder the partnerships' transformative dimension and instead encourage the development of transactional relations. Moreover, change in social institutions such as schools requires the collaborative efforts of key stakeholders at different levels such as the state and

local policy makers, businesses, parents and the educators (Mason 2009; Jenkins 2001; Kolk *et al.* 2011). In other words, attempting to improve a country's education system by focusing on the principal and the school as change agents is difficult to achieve due to the large scale nature of the task and the slow pace of change (Harris 2010; Waite 2002).

The following subsections relate the findings of this study with regard to the nature of the partnerships in this partnership model that is under study. The first subsection considers the input that the partners (the paired principal and business leader) bring to their partnership and which points to the presence of synergy in these relationships. Synergy refers to the partners' ability to combine their knowledge, resources and perspectives, leading them to accomplish more as a team than they would in their individual capacity (Saltiel 1988; Lasker *et al.* 2001; McClellan 2010). The findings suggest that the partnerships that successfully complete the structured programme are characterized by synergy and that these interactions can either be transactional or transformational in nature. It is thus understood that a good partnership is one that is transformational. The second subsection shows that these partnerships are capable of giving rise to changes in schools. However, the quality of change may differ, depending on how transformative or not a partnership is, and this contrast is illustrated by way of two case studies which describe two partnerships: one with a transformative character and another that tended to be more transactional in nature. The transformational element in these partnerships can however be affected by certain factors and these are discussed in the third subsection. The conclusion to this section points to the partners' need to focus on sustainability rather than on the results and the need to involve other stakeholders in the transformative process.

2.1.2. Co-Learning and Co-Action Partnerships: Equal Contribution and Synergy

The partnerships established in the PfP process are considered to be equal partnerships where co-learning and co-action occurs between the partners, that is, the school principal and the business leader working together in partnership (Collins 2015). Although a belief in the equality in the partnership was confirmed by a majority of the partners who were interviewed, several principals made comments that signalled doubt concerning this aspect. One principal (Black female (BF)) described it as "a very unevenly unbalanced [relationship]" while another principal (Black male (BM)) felt that "it is hard to say what the business leader gained [from the partnership]." All the partners interviewed were found to be acutely aware of the business leaders input into the partnerships, namely, their business knowledge, skills, experiences, networks and resources. However, some principals appeared to be unsure of their own

contribution to the partnership which can put to question the co-learning and co-action aspects of these interactions.

The school principal's contribution to the partnership was explored in this study. It was found that the principal makes certain contributions, and one that was cited by several principals was the expertise in education. Several principals felt that the partners were equal because each individual brought in something specific to the partnership, and in the case of the principals, their specific contribution was their knowledge in education of which their business partners are ignorant about. This was acknowledged by several business leaders who expressed feelings of apprehension about their ability to support the principal because, as one business leader (White male (WM)) put it, "my experience does not pertain to this situation."

In addition to their expertise in education, this study suggests that the principals also bring in two other components to the partnership which are quite related: firstly, the school itself as the partnership's ultimate object of change; and secondly, the principal himself or herself as the partnership's change agent. Though related, these two components differ. Although this organization sells itself to business leaders as a leadership development programme, all the 12 business leaders who were interviewed were motivated to join the partnerships because of their desire to improve public education. In other words, it was not the need for better leadership skills that led them to engage in the PfP process but rather the desire to address the problem of poor education. PfP therefore provided the business leaders with the chance of giving back to society. The school principals are thus the medium through which this organization and subsequently the business leaders can gain access to underperforming schools. As one business leader (WM) put it, PfP gives business concerns the mandate to access and get involved in schools.

The second contribution made by the principal to the partnership is the principal himself or herself as the change agent. This idea was developed by Jane[8] who explained the principal's role in the partnership in the following words:

> I [as business leader] have no authority in the school – [Candice (the principal)] is the boss. [Candice] can stop us; [Candice] can move us forward; [Candice] can cooperate; [Candice] can decide not to cooperate. I can't do anything unless she says 'yes': I'm on her terms because she's

[8] A former PfP employee who was responsible for recruiting business leaders in Gauteng and who was also a business leader in one of the nine partnerships involved in this study.

> the boss.… I don't think the [principals] are fully aware that they are the boss; I don't think so.... They don't know that they are the boss in relation to their business partner. They know that they are the boss of the school. I don't think they fully understand that the business leader sees them as the boss in terms of: I respect you; that I'll go as fast as you want; as far as you are willing. I don't think they [know that].

What the above citation shows is that the partnership is very dependent on the school principal as the head of the school in which the partnership wishes to effect deep and lasting changes. Needless to say, the principal's contribution is not limited to the above three points as he/she can also contribute other factors such as his/her personal networks and those of the school in order to secure resources in aid of the educational project, though it is unlikely that this will be at the same scale as the business partner who is likely to have a wider network.

By combining their specific inputs in co-learning and co-action partnerships, these interactions give rise to synergy since the activities of the partnerships exceed what the individual partners would have achieved on their own. Of the ten principals who took part in this study, nine of them completed the structured partnership development programme in relationships which appear to be synergistic although in varying levels. Two of these nine synergistic partnerships reveal a transactional character while the other seven may be described as being transformational, although the level of transformation also appears to vary. Nevertheless, two of the transformational partnerships were particularly outstanding due to the substantial changes in the thinking and practice that were noted in the principal as well as in their respective schools, as is illustrated in the first case study that follows in the next subsection.

Only one of the ten principals involved in this study appears to have participated in a non-synergistic relationship. This partnership did not successfully complete the structured programme. The principal (BM) in this failed partnership attributed its collapse to the poor relationship between him and his business partner which was characterized by mistrust and lack of communication. This however could not be verified with the business partner as the latter declined to take part in this study. The transformational and transactional aspects of these partnerships and the changes resulting from these interactions will be the focus of the next subsection below.

2.1.3. Differing Outcomes of Partnerships: Two Case Studies

PfP partners who complete the 12-month partnership development programme established by the organization are likely to form synergistic partnerships. These synergistic relationships may be transformational or transactional in nature. Transformational partnerships have the capacity to give rise to substantial and sustainable changes which tend to be stable or permanent. Transactional partnerships, on the other hand, tend to meet specific objectives and the changes arising from these interactions do not affect the partners significantly and are usually of a temporary nature. The transformational and transactional aspects of the PfP partnerships are illustrated in the diagram below:

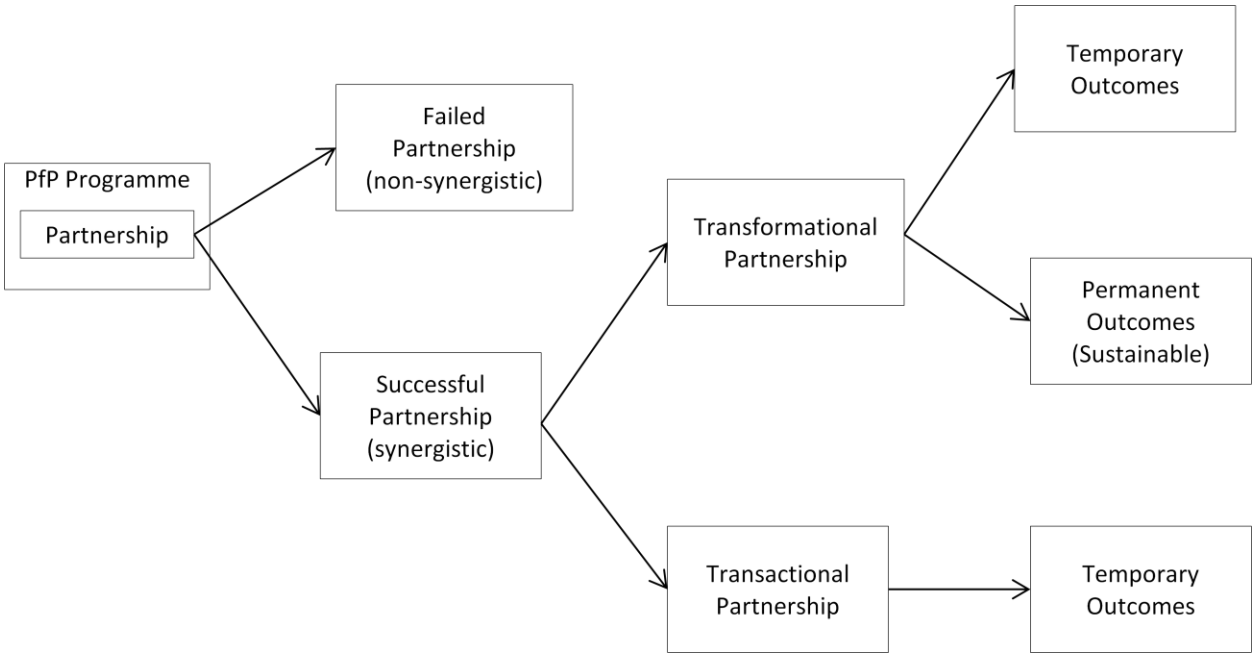

Figure 3: Possible Transformational and Transactional Outcomes of the PfP Partnerships

Note is however made that although the diagram above depicts the partnerships as being either transformational or transactional, in practice, a transformational partnership can have transactional aspects as well. This is illustrated by an example: a business leader (WM) managed to secure and run a training programme on discipline-related issues in a school since this was one of the key challenges that his principal partner (BM) was facing. The business leader conducted this programme for all the teaching staff and according to the principal, the teachers' attitude to corporal punishment improved significantly.[9] In this example, the transactional aspect of this initiative would be the resources

[9] The principal's concern about the use of corporal punishment in his school is one that was shared by several principals who participated in this study. The use of corporal punishment in schools remains a contentious issue despite its prohibition in the South African Schools Act of 1996 and the outlawing of caning in the Abolition of

expended by the business partner to secure the programme. Nevertheless, the partnership is said to be transformational since the change in the educators' perception on discipline was brought about by the combined efforts of both the business partner and the principal.

The transformational and the transactional features of the partnerships are depicted in the two case studies below which illustrate the differing levels of synergy in the partnerships as well as their transformational impact.

2.1.3.1. Partnership One: "If I left John nothing would revert"

The first case study is on a partnership between a Black male principal and a White male business leader. The school principal is in charge of a "no fee" (see III, 4) paying township primary school which he has headed for 20 years. The business leader is a retired Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of a large credit instalment institution and sits in the Board of Directors of several institutions. At the time the partners started the partnership, the school's main challenges included the lack of a financial system, staff rivalry, issues related to the language of learning and teaching (LOLT), and low literacy levels among the learners.

This partnership can be said to be highly transformative because of the impact that this partnership has had in the school. Some of the activities of a transformational nature that have been carried out in this partnership include a team-building session that was resourced by the business partner using his networks. In this instance, the fact of the business leader securing the financial and human resources to run the team-building activity in the school is an example of a transactional activity in a transformative relationship. According to the principal, this session was the first of its kind in the school and it led to improved staff relations. The business leader also noted a change in the school culture as the teachers had improved in terms of time keeping. This change among the school's staff members appears to be sustainable since the impact of the training is still being felt in the school, one year after this team-building activity took place. This was expressed by the principal as follows:

> In quite a lot of [the staff], it still sounds like, you know, they went through that team building just yesterday or just last week. If somebody tends to – you know, [the others] would always remind them…. [I'm] very happy because people have really internalized that whole process. It is

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Corporal Punishment Act of 1997. In their study entitled *Schools that Work*, Christie *et al.* (2007: 93) maintain that discipline in schools "is an area where school experiences are most at variance with departmental policies." This example has been used to show the change of attitude in the educators as a result of the activities of this partnership which points to the partnership's transformational character.

> not just a one-off event. But it was something that actually, you know, had some impact in the end.

The changes in the staff relations and school culture noted by both the principal and the business leader are examples of changes in the thinking and practices that have taken place in the school which is characteristic of transformative activities. Another transformative change that was noted in the school and which appears to be sustainable is the revision of the school's organogram whereby the number of persons reporting directly to the principal was reduced from 26 to 8. The principal is now able to dedicate more time to learners and teaching and less on administration since, as he explained it, "it's not like you have to be there in person, you know, all the time. Some of these things, you know, can easily be managed at that level without your direct intervention.... "

Other transformative changes include increased parental involvement in the school due to improved communication with the parents, and the school's participation in the 'MathsBuddy' programme, an online maths tutoring course which was secured by the principal via his network. Thus, substantial and sustainable changes appear to have taken place in the school through the activities of this partnership which led the business leader to comment as follows:

> The school's changed forever. The management that [John (the principal)] has learnt will be retained because his life is effective…. We addressed administration things in the partnership to enable the principal and the teachers to do a better job and this has to [now] turn into performance. If I left [John], nothing would revert.

2.1.3.2. Partnership Two: In Search of the Partnership's Legacy

This second case study is on a partnership between two females: a Black school principal and a White business leader. This partnership that was established in 2012 was the oldest among the nine partnerships that participated in this study. At the time of the interview, the partnership was no longer active. The activities of the partnership were disrupted by a change in the business partner's work situation which affected her ability to continue in the partnership.

At the time that the partnership was convened, the principal was still rather new to her job as she had been appointed principal of this school two years prior to engaging in the PfP process. She is the principal of a "no fee" paying primary school in a poor suburb that is mainly occupied by immigrants. Her business partner was at that time working in a major bank. The problems facing the school in 2012

included the lack of parental involvement, in addition to poverty-related challenges since many of the learners are from families with refugee status.

The activities of the partnership, prior to the disruption, point to a transactional relationship. For example, what appears to be the main achievement of the partnership – a school feeding programme – only lasted during the time when the partnership was active. The feeding programme was resourced by the business leader with the help of her colleagues at work. Although it gave rise to improved school attendance, in addition to boosting the learners' concentration in class, the programme ended with the business leader's exit from the partnership. The outcome of this activity can thus be seen to have been of a temporary nature and therefore not sustained.

2.1.3.3. Concluding Remarks to the Case Studies

These case studies show that the partnerships established in PfP's partnership model can be transformational or transactional in nature. Transformational relationships can bring about fundamental changes in the school which can be long-lasting or sustainable. The problem of attribution (Brinkerhoff 2002) is however encountered since it was sometimes difficult to distinguish whether the transformative influence was due to the partners' interactions or to the activities of the structured programme or to other factors that are external to the PfP process.

2.1.4. Transformation Hindered: When Partnerships become Transactional

The two case studies considered above illustrate that the partnerships established in the PfP process can impact schools differently. This awareness should motivate the partners (paired principal and business leader) to plan their activities thinking of the vision that they have for the school. As one business leader (WM) remarked: "the [partnership's] legacy can't just be: we got a new playground, we got a new hall or we got a new–. It needs to be: this school has fundamentally changed from where it was last year: how we think, how we operate, where are we going."

The transformative aspect in these partnerships appears to be hindered by the problem of legitimacy and by the partners' need to show the results of their partnership at the end of the structured programme. The pressure to show results can foster a short-term focus in the partners, inducing them to engage in activities that yield immediate and visible results such as infrastructure-related projects. As Jane remarked:

> [Resource-related activities] are possibly, for some business leaders, the easy thing to do… So [they] do a lot of stuff, but it's resource-stuff: it's things. It's not leadership; it's not management; it's stuff. The flip side is whether the principals actually prefer that stuff over [leadership and management related activities], because that is more tangible…

What this point shows is that a partnership looking for quick wins is likely to be of a transactional nature and will thus be incapable of bringing about significant changes that are expected of these partnerships.

As transforming a school is a slow and difficult process (Taylor 2008), the organization's goal of transforming schools by means of the principal appears to be a rather ambitious one, creating high expectations especially among the business leaders who, once in the partnership, come to see that in practice, transforming a school is a very complex and time-consuming process. Although PfP states that it requires three to five years to bring about significant change in schools (Collins 2015: 82), this study indicates that in reality, many partners, particularly the business leaders, enrol in the PfP process with the hope of realizing the expected changes in a year. Almost all the partners thought that a year is too short to bring change in schools, although many also noted the financial implications of extending the structured programme by another year or more.

Another limitation to the transformative impact of these partnerships is that there appears to be an assumption that because the principals are interested in bringing change to schools by participating in these partnerships, the parents and particularly the educators will be supportive of the principals by being receptive to the partnerships' activities. This however is not always the case. The need to involve the staff in the school was noted by some business leaders. In this regard, one of the principals (BM) suggested a team-focused solution instead of the current principal-focused partnership model that is established in the PfP process. This principal felt that a team-focused model would reflect what happens on the ground since the principal works together with others in a team for the effective running of the school.

The above suggestions about the need to involve other staff in the school apart from the principal invites the following two questions: how is the partnership between the principal and the business leader communicated to the staff? Does the business partner get to meet the other staff in the school and how much should he/she be involved in the school? The reason for these questions is that of the five principals who vividly maintained that their business partners were known to all the educators in their schools, four of these principals were in partnerships that could be classified as transformative, although of course the level of transformation varied. This suggests that there might be a connection between the manner in which the partnership is conveyed to the other staff in the school as well the way the business leader engages with this same staff, and the receptivity of this staff to the partnership's activities. This hypothesis could be the subject for future research.

The researcher came across a case that speaks to the above hypothesis. The school that this case refers to was however not involved in this study. The researcher was informed of a principal who joined the PfP process and got involved in a partnership. According to one of the teachers working in this school, she and the rest of the staff got to know about the partnership after the principal mentioned it in a staff meeting. In this meeting, the principal explained that the reason for forming the partnership was because he wanted to be a better manager in order to improve the school. This teacher said that although she did not get to meet the business partner, she knew that the latter would come to the school because she would see the business leader's car in the school's parking lot. The business leader was therefore not formally introduced to the other staff in the school.

Throughout the partnership period, the principal would talk to the staff about the vision that he had for the school and which he hoped to achieve through his partnership. This teacher however notes that despite the principal sharing his vision with the staff, this did not lead to any substantial changes in the way things functioned in the school. She also mentioned that during the time of the partnership (it concluded at the end of 2016) the principal had become more encouraging and more motivational in his interactions with both staff and learners.

The aim of the above example is to indicate that consideration ought to be given on how the partnerships are introduced to the rest of the staff in the school. It also serves to show that although the partnership formulated is between the principal and the business leader, the latter's interaction with

the other staff in the school could have an influence on how the partnership is received in the school. These aspects could be studied in future research.

2.1.5. Conclusion to the Nature of PfP Partnerships

PfP partnerships have been shown to be synergistic relationships where the partners engage in co-learning and co-action partnerships. Whereas the business leaders' contribution to the partnerships appears to be obvious to all, this section has looked at the specific contribution that the principal makes to the partnership. Although not immediately obvious, the principal brings three things to the partnership: his/her expertise in education; the school which is the partnership's targeted object of change; and, lastly the principal brings himself or herself as the partnership's change agent in the school.

Although the sample size is too small to generalize these findings, this study also indicates that these partnerships have the potential for transformation, and that while this is realized in some partnerships, others have developed into transactional relationships which are often unlikely to lead to long-lasting changes in the school. The transformational and transactional dimensions of the partnerships have been illustrated through two case studies. The partnerships' transformative aspect can be limited by the pressure to show results during the first 12 months when the partners go through the organization's structured partnership development programme. It is also assumed that the other stakeholders in the school are supportive of the transformation process. These findings point to the need to de-emphasize the programme's short-term focus and to highlight sustainability since complex social problems are difficult to resolve, take up much time, and often require the input of numerous stakeholders.

2.2. Dynamics Affecting the Partnership Relationship in the PfP Process

In section 2.1 of this chapter, consideration was given to the nature of the PfP partnerships since it became apparent in the course of this study that although most participants maintained that their partnerships worked well, it was evident that some partnerships worked better than others. This section argued that the differences noted in the impact of the partnerships in schools is due to the nature of the partnership: partnerships that led to substantial changes were found to be transformational in character while those that did not lead to significant changes were found to be transactional. This second section (2.2) provides a close inspection of the dynamics experienced within the PfP process with regard to the partnership relationship. In particular, it looks at the manner in which the partners (paired school principal and business leader) experience their relationship within their partnership as well as the impact of the organization's structured year-programme on their partnership.

2.2.1. Introduction

This study set out to establish how the principals and business leaders experience the partnership relationship by trying to determine the factors that affect the quality of their partnerships. All the participants appeared to have drawn much benefit from the organization's structured partnership development programme which, according to the participants, was instrumental in building and supporting their partnerships (see IV, 2.2.2 for the programme's description). Nevertheless, as the study progressed, it became clear that certain aspects of this structured programme were influencing some partnerships negatively. The dynamics of this structured programme on the partnership relationship is the focus of this section.

The aim of the structured year-programme is to help the school principals and the business leaders build and develop their partnership relationship. This programme consists of several elements where the partners learn from each other, outstanding of which is the action learning component where the principal and business leader engage with each other as a partnership. Nevertheless, there are other elements in the structured programme which involve group or collective learning such as the CoP meetings where cross-partnership learning occurs. Put differently, this means that although the partnerships in this organization's model are between one school principal and one business leader, the dynamics of the partnerships are learnt through the one-to-one interactions between the partners as well as through the partners' interaction with other partnerships.

As the partners interact in their partnership as well as collectively in a group of partnerships, there is a risk that the dynamics associated with group learning can negatively affect their partnership relationship. Feelings of comparison, envy and competition with other partnerships were expressed by some of the partners involved in this study and the presence of these feelings can be explained by critical action learning theory (CAL). According to this theory, persons coming together to learn from each other can begin to measure themselves against each other due to the dynamics arising from emotions, politics and power among the persons in the group (Vince 2011). The self-evaluation of the individual partners against other partners in the learning group, or the evaluation of one's partnership against one or more partnerships can inhibit the learning process, as the members of the learning group turn from being comrades to being adversaries (Yeadon-Lee 2013: 40; Vince 2004; 2011).

The following subsections will look at: firstly, how the structured programme is oriented towards promoting the partnership relationship; and secondly, at the ways in which the dynamics arising in the programme can affect the partners as well as limit the partnership relationship. The conclusion to this section (that is, 2.2) highlights the need for the organization to be aware of the impact that dynamics in a learning group can have on the partnership relationship.

2.2.2. Building Relationships: PfP's Structured Programme in Support of its Partners

According to the participants, the structured partnership development programme supports them in the effort of building strong partnerships in three ways: by emphasizing the need to base their relationship on trust; by clarifying their expectations and roles; and, by empowering them with the knowledge and skills to effectively engage in a partnership. These three points are elaborated below.

Because a strong partnership is one that is transformational and where the relationship between the partners is good, the structured year-programme is oriented towards building robust relationships that are characterized by trust and respect. Emphasis is placed on trust because the partners are expected to develop a transformative relationship despite the fact that: one, they come from different backgrounds; and two, they are two strangers who are paired up or matched by the programme and are expected to work collaboratively for the benefit of schools. For that reason, several partners described their partnerships using the analogy of an arranged marriage. Jane highlighted the diversity among the partners as follows:

> The majority of business leaders in this programme are White. That already comes with a whole different life experience. Some of them have never been in a township; they don't know what

> the challenges of a township school are. So, you have two people who, other than through this programme, their paths would have never crossed. But they are here together now and they have to work together.

Most partners mentioned that the workshops gave them the opportunity to spend time together and to interact with each other which is important in relationship building. According to one principal (BM), the exercises in the workshops encouraged the partners to open up to each other and to share their intimate moments, both happy and difficult, with each other. As one business leader (WM) commented, such topics were not the subject of conversation with a stranger. Several partners also highlighted the fact that their LPFs' advised them to dedicate the first three months of their partnership to building their relationship. One principal (BF) expressed her appreciation for this advice as follows: "[One of] the nicest things about this programme is that they actually say: take the first three months and just get to know your partner…. And I agree with the PfP Programme on this. You know, it's like in any relationship – you don't immediately trust someone: it takes time."

Secondly, the 12-month structured programme is seen to promote the partnership relationship by defining and clarifying the partners' expectations and roles and by highlighting that the partners were in an equal partnership. Several principals, for example, admitted that although a key motivation for joining the PfP process was the hope of the school gaining financially, their focus shifted from resources to an attitude of openness and learning thanks to their LPFs' and the workshops. Most business leaders also maintained that it is through the workshops that they learnt how to be a supportive partner, a role that they do not habitually play in their workplace. According to one business leader (WM):

> In the corporate world, bosses tend to want to give subordinates [solutions]. But PfP is equal partnership.... In the business I came from, that is not how it was. Generally, you come with a problem and the boss tells you the answer to the problem…. [PfP has been] a complete change for me and my management style. I have been a senior executive for a long time in the mines, with thousands of persons. Suddenly, [in PfP], you are in a totally supportive role. So you have to be different. If I hadn't been through the [PfP] training courses and not understood that, it would have been more difficult. But once I got my mind to what I am doing, it was not difficult for me. I have no problem to be a listener or subservient in the slightest.

By defining and clarifying the partners' expectations and roles, the structured programme also addressed the partners' apprehension of engaging in a partnership. Several business leaders admitted to having been anxious at the start of the partnership because of their lack of expertise in issues related to education and schools. The principals, on the other hand, expressed feelings of skepticism at the

thought of being partnered with someone from the private sector. One principal (BM) maintained that other than material resources, he wondered how else the school would benefit from having a business partner because "[this] whole business of running the school and stuff like that – I did not actually think one would benefit much."

Thirdly, the structured programme also empowers the school principals and the business leaders by providing them with the knowledge and skills necessary to effectively engage in a partnership. Most participants in this study maintained that the workshops had equipped them with the tools necessary to build a partnership, such as how to listen or to contract or engage other persons. All the principals were especially appreciative of the CoP sessions where cross-partnership learning occurred as it provided a forum where they could share their experiences as well as concerns and receive advice from each other.

From the foregoing, it is clear that the partners appreciate and value the support provided in the PfP process whose structured year-programme is designed to capacitate the partners to build strong relationships that are capable of transformation. The common ingroup identity model (CIIM) which is the main theoretical framework in this study aids in our understanding of the positive influence of the structured programme on the partnerships. The support that is provided by this programme appears to correspond to some of the conditions formulated by Allport (1954) which can lead to the reduction of intergroup bias and encourage the formation of a common identity (Dovidio *et al.* 2007; Gaertner *et al.* 1994) like that identity which is shared by the partners.

Nevertheless, the group dynamics arising from within the structured programme have been found to cause tension in the relationship building process and this is the focus of the next subsection below.

2.2.3. Limitations of PfP's Structured Programme on the Partnership Relationship

Although relationship lies at the core of the PfP process, certain aspects of its structured programme were found to impact negatively on the partnership relationship. This is because as the partners in the structured programme learn through their interactions with each other in the partnership, their learning also has a group aspect since, by participating in the CoP or in the training workshops, the partners gets to interact with parties that are beyond their partnership.

One of the limitations that was noted and which is associated with the group aspects of the structured programme, like the CoP meetings, is the element of competition, which could negatively affect the

partnership relationship and/or the individual partner's contribution to the group by generating feelings of inferiority. One principal (BM), for example, pointed out that although he faced no personal challenges in his partnership, he felt that the fact that his school had gained very little financially from his partnership in comparison with the other partnerships in his group, made him feel as though his partnership was non-performing. He was also concerned that his business leader would think that he was inadequate in his group's eyes:

> [The Community of Practice (CoP)] meetings tended to be competitive. It was a subtle competition, with partners showing off what they have achieved. If your achievement is however not material [which was the case of his partnership] then you felt the need to apologize. Consequently, some partnerships that are doing well become apologetic. Our partnership did not have many tangible benefits, and maybe my business leader felt: 'I am not satisfied', and yet I am happy with how things are going…. [Because in CoP] you present to the group: this is where we are; this is what we have done. Then [another] school says: we have engineers on site; we have software that does A and B. That makes you feel: we are not doing enough.

This principal was of the opinion that the LPF of his group could have been aware of this competitive element since the LPF organized the presentations in such a way that those partnerships that were engaged in impressive material projects would be the last to present to the group during the CoP meetings. Although through this strategy the LPF somewhat managed to delay the introduction of such feelings within the CoP meetings, this approach is only a partial solution to the problem since it fails to address the competition within the group.

Feelings of comparison and envy were also noted among some partners on seeing how knowledgeable and/or resourceful other partners in the group were. This concern was voiced by some partners, and among them, a principal (BM) who felt that some of the principals in his group were envious of him:

> [Some principals] were not happy with their business partners because the latter were asking: why can't you do what Khetha [the principal being quoted] is doing? … [But] I would indicate to [Robert (the LPF)] that the reason why I am able to [achieve so much] is that I have done a [master in business and leadership] and accounting. I know how [to run things]: it is not that I am cleverer than some of the principals.

Secondly, the need to show results of the partnership's activities, be it in the CoP meetings or in the Celebration Event which is held at the end of the partnership year (see IV, 2.1.4), could end up promoting a 'short-term' mentality whereby partnerships focus on problems that are easy to resolve at the expense of long-term challenges in the school. This short-term outlook is characteristic of transactional partnerships (see IV, 2.1.3). This was plainly expressly by a business leader (WM) who

offered the following analysis of the PfP process and also pointed to the dissatisfaction that the process can produce in the partners. He explained:

> Because it is a year-programme, in a way, you are incentivized as a partner to focus on short-term things because you want to show benefits within that year. So things like, you know, functions, or raising money, whereas I truly believe you should spend that year building foundations so [as to] set up the school for future success…. It doesn't encourage, in my opinion, building sustainable models [because] you can only do so much in a year. The old adage of 'teach a man to fish' versus giving him a fish: it encourages giving fishes [and] so it works for a year, and then at the end of the year, the programme ends unless the partner feels personally driven to continue the relationship…. I worry that many stories are like mine, and even more so – so at least we built some things that are sustainable if the school could decide to continue. I worry that many of the partnerships when they run their course, have not built the foundations for continued success. I think that's the biggest challenge facing the programme, for it to be relevant….

The focus on the results of the partnership could also encourage a handout mentality which reinforces the resource expectation among the principals. This concern was voiced by most principals. For example, one principal (BF) explained how she had heard that a business leader had sponsored his principal partner to go on an experiential learning trip for almost two weeks in another school in Europe: "when [this principal] tells you that," she said, "you expect [your business] partner to do the same."

Group dynamics can thus be seen to affect the partners as individuals as well as the workings of the partnership. These dynamics can generate feelings of inferiority and dissatisfaction, incentivizing the partnerships to address short-term problems in the school which are often not of a transformative nature. These findings are supported by CAL theory which argues that group dynamics in a community of learners can affect the individuals that make up the group as well as the learning that is supposed to take place in the group (Vince 2011; Yeadon-Lee 2013). CAL attributes the negative effect of group dynamics to the inequalities existing among the members of the learning group (Vince 2011). In other words, the tensions noted by some of the partners with regard to the PfP process attest to the presence of inequalities among the partners in the partnerships.

The affirmation made in the preceding paragraph about the presence of inequalities among the partners in the partnerships is not surprising given the social differences especially of race and class between the school principals and the business leaders. The impact of these social differences on the PfP partnerships are discussed in section 2.3. of this chapter and for that reason, this issue will not be developed here. Nevertheless, this study shows that other than inequality among the partners in a

partnership, inequality is also to be found among the principals as well as among the business leaders as members of two different groups. In other words, the principals are not a homogenous group nor are the business leaders. It is for this reason that feelings of competition, envy and comparison were noted among members of the same group as illustrated in this subsection. The partners and PfP as an organization should thus be aware that although the partnerships are said to be equal, the equality is not real or actual. The impact of group dynamics should thus be noted in order to take measures that can curb the limiting effect of these tensions on the partnership relationship.

2.2.4. Conclusion to the Dynamics Affecting the Partnership Relationship

PfP literature highlights the role of relationship in its partnership as well as that of its structured partnership development programme which is oriented towards building and sustaining strong partnerships. Although the participants acknowledged the relevance and value of the PfP programme on their partnership relationships, group dynamics in the CoPs and workshops were found to affect the partnerships negatively. The findings of this study support critical action learning theory which argues that the group dynamics in a community of learners can affect the individuals that make up the group due to the presence of inequalities within the members of the group. Whereas the social differences between the principal and business leader in a partnership can be a source of inequality, inequalities were also found to exist among the school principals as one group, as well as among the business leaders as a distinct group. The negative effects associated with group dynamics should thus be acknowledged in order to effectively address the root causes of these tensions.

2.3. Influence of Social Differences on PfP Partnerships

The first two themes discussed in this chapter relate to different aspects of the partnership relationship. In the first theme, the nature of PfP's partnerships was considered and it was established that these relationships are synergistic interactions that can be either transformational or transactional in nature. The second theme was about the relationship-building aspect of the partnerships. It was found that although the PfP process is designed to give rise to strong relationships, the fact that the organization's partnership development programme counts also on group learning can give rise to certain tensions that can negatively affect the workings of the partnership. The third theme is developed in this section and this discussion relates to another aspect of the partnership relationship, namely, the impact of social differences—particularly race and gender—on the partners and on their interactions.

2.3.1. Introduction

This study was initially framed around critical action learning (CAL) theory which seeks to understand how power relations stemming from differences in a team can support or inhibit the teams' learning process (Vince 2011). The researcher expected to find that the differences particularly of race, gender and class between the principals and the business leaders would negatively affect the formulation and the workings of the PfP partnerships. This expectation was based on the fact that South Africa is a highly unequal society that is deeply divided along racial and economic lines (Seekings 2008a). Since most of the school principals are Black (African, Coloured, Indian) people who were generally brought up in townships while many of the business leaders are White people who were mainly brought up in the suburbs, racial and class tensions were expected to affect the partnerships. Further, this expectation was also based on a study on mentoring projects for school principals in South Africa which found that racial tension interfered with the projects' effectiveness (Moorosi 2012). The researcher's expectations were however not met as the findings of this study suggest that the social differences among the PfP partners appear to have an insignificant impact on the partnerships. This section will provide the basis for this affirmation as well as the rationale behind it. But first, an overview of the participants in terms of their occupation, race and gender follows in order to contextualize this section (see III, 4 for further information on the participants).

A total of 22 partners were interviewed in this study of which 18 were paired together in nine partnerships, while the remaining 4 participated in this research but without their partners. The

breakdown of the 22 participants interviewed in terms of occupation, race and gender are given in the tables below:

Occupation / Race	School Principals	Business Leaders	Total
Black	9	4	13
White	1	8	9
Total	10	12	22

Table 3: Breakdown of Participants in Terms of Occupation and Race

Occupation / Gender	School Principals	Business Leaders	Total
Female	5	4	9
Male	5	8	13
Total	10	12	22

Table 4: Breakdown of Participants in Terms of Occupation and Gender

The data presented above indicate that most school principals are Black (9) while most business leaders are White (8). It also shows that most of the business leaders are males (8). This data reflects the country's private sector where White people—especially White males—occupy most management positions (Department of Labour 2016). Of the nine partnerships that were interviewed, tensions due to race and gender were found in only one partnership: that between a Black male principal and a White female business leader.

The minimal influence of social differences on the PfP partnerships can be explained by the common ingroup identity model (CIIM). This theory holds that members belonging to two different groups can share a common identity, perceiving themselves as belonging to one inclusive superordinate group, while maintaining their unique identity (Dovidio *et al.* 2007; Gaertner *et al.* 1993). Msila's (2013) findings on cross-gender mentoring of principals in South Africa also speak to this debate. His study on female mentors and male protégées maintains that competence, vision and the will to succeed exercised greater influence on mentoring relationships than did gender, age, and race.

The following subsections will consider: firstly, the rationale behind the minimal influence of social differences on the PfP partnerships; and secondly, consideration will be made of the one partnership in

which issues regarding race and gender were reported. Some conclusions are drawn at the end which point to the fact that the findings of this study do not necessarily express the deeper ideological orientations among the PfP partners regarding race and gender.

2.3.2. Insignificant Influence of Social Differences on PfP Partnerships: Rationale

A majority of the partners involved in this study felt that the social categories of race, class and gender had little impact on the partnership relationship because of the partners' shared vision, namely, to improve education. Most of the partners maintained that they were not just partners but that they had become friends, and the principals and business leaders in at least three of the nine partnerships affirmed that they had met and interacted with each others' families. One partnership between a Black male principal and a White male business leader appears to have taken their relationship even further by establishing a business venture together and have involved other people as well.

The minimal influence of the partners' social differences on the partnerships resonates with the common ingroup identity model (CIIM) which holds that members belonging to two distinct groups can, by focusing on their commonalities, develop a common identity without renouncing their unique identity (Gaertner *et al.* 1993; Dovidio *et al.* 2007). This focus on what is common was expressed by most of the participants and this aspect was clearly expressed by a business leader (White female (WF)) in the following terms:

> PfP normalizes things that in South Africa would otherwise be more awkward…. Because you are constructively busy with a project or with projects or whatever, it takes the focus off – not the difficult things, but the things that create division, I think. If I listen to [name of a local radio station], there is a lot more of blaming – and that doesn't solve the problem. You have to try and find the commonalities and [PfP] gives you the opportunity.

In the first theme, the nature of the PfP partnerships was discussed while in the second theme, the relationship-building aspects were considered. From the discussion in these first two themes, it was seen that the principal and business leader working together in partnership are ideally expected to form strong transformational relationships that are centred on school improvement. These transformational relationships are said to be equal partnerships that are characterized by collaboration and a common vision: not competition. Some participants felt that the absence of competition accounted for the lack of tension in the partnerships due to social divisions. According to one business leader (Black Female (BF)), this lack of tension is due to the fact that:

> We are not coming together to face off on a business deal, because [then, issues of race, gender and class] will come into play. Because then I, as hypothetically a White person, will either have a better shot at getting the deal because of my skin colour or who I am. Or you, because you speak broken English, will not get the job or whatever. Whereas we've come around this issue of how do we make the school better. So a lot of that ego stuff goes out the window; it is not a competition. So, I think it's easier for us to find our commonalities and where we connect, because you are not trying to steal a business deal from me, and I don't see you as the enemy.

Linked to the point on collaboration is also the fact that the principals and the business leaders enter into these partnerships voluntarily, and according to Pettigrew and Tropp (Pettigrew *et al.* 2011 referring to Pettigrew and Tropp 2001), the fact of engaging in interracial contact voluntarily can reduce prejudice. The voluntary nature of the PfP process could however be contested given that some of the school principals who received the invitation to participate in this process through the Gauteng Department of Education (GDE) appear to have been somewhat coerced to do so.[10] Of the 10 principals who were interviewed, four of them received this directive from the GDE but of these four, only one sustained that he had felt coerced to join the PfP process. The other three principals successfully completed the structured programme and their partnerships have extended beyond the first year. The partnership of the principal who felt coerced failed. He nevertheless attributes this failure not to the coercion, since he pointed out that although the invitation to enrol in the PfP process came from the GDE, he was not opposed to it. According to this principal, the partnership failed due to the lack of communication and trust between him and his business partner which led to a poor relationship. This principal's business partner expressly declined to take part in this study and so the principal's claim could not be verified. Nevertheless, taking into account this example, the voluntary nature of

[10] In 2015, the GDE sponsored 66 principals of underperforming schools to take part in the PfP process (see http://pfp4sa.org/index.php/awards/2-uncategorised/368-66-gde-schools-on-a-journey-to-excellence).

participating in the PfP process can be maintained given that within this study's sample, the vast majority were found to be participating in it freely.

CIIM appears to explain why differences of race, class and gender appear to have insignificant influence on the partnerships since the partners see themselves as members of one particular group. Put differently, each of the persons engaged in the partnerships comes to identify himself or herself as being a Partner for Possibility and this helps to reduce bias. Further, the principal and the business leader engaged in a partnership can also come to identify themselves as a team of two within the PfP process which serves to create a shared identity and to motivate their activities in their partnership.

The insignificant influence of the social differences on the partnerships can also be explained by the similarities existing between the partners as these can promote the partnership relationships. For example, one of the Black business leaders also grew up in a township, and as another business leader (WM) noted, the principals are often well educated professionals, just like some of their business partners.

Two possible limitations are however noted concerning the findings presented here: the first is based on the assumption that the respondents were truthful in relating about their partnerships; and secondly, the findings cannot be generalized due to the small sample size. Besides, although the principals and the business leaders engaged in a partnership appear to be unaffected by their social differences in their interactions, they may nevertheless encounter these tensions outside of their partnerships, like in the schools where these partners are working. For instance, several business leaders admitted that they had to be cautious not to appear like they knew everything while in the school and that they sometimes felt awkward at being the only White person there. As one business leader (WM) put it:

> I sometimes felt awkward in the community, but no one ever said anything or made any– Part of that might have been my own legacy guilt you know, as a White person, and also you know, I sometimes had to be cautious of almost a level of arrogance, which is: I'm coming in and I'm gonna tell you how you should be running your school …. I guess there were probably one or two teachers who kind of– would have looked at me a little bit as– you know: here is this White guy coming and telling us how things should happen …. I never felt any tension around gender or race.

What the above quotation illustrates is that although the social differences appear not to affect the partnerships, this does not however imply that these differences do not exist or that the partners are

blind or indifferent to them. Rather, these differences appear to be accepted as a 'given' since they form part of South Africa's society. This is how one of the business leaders (WM) explained it:

> I don't think [social differences are] relevant. Most South Africans understand that the country is split into different worlds: there is a privileged world and an unprivileged world.... All those principals are well educated people. I think the more educated you are, the more you will easily understand why we got to this situation. We are not going to eradicate history. This is the way it is, you know, and we better get on with doing what has to be done to sort it out, you know. And I think the principals will understand that.

The above points to the fact that being a principal of an underperforming school in a township or poor suburb refers to a specific context which differs from that of a person in management position in South Africa's corporate sector. This relates to CIIM's dual identity (Dovidio *et al.* 2007) since the partners working together in a partnership ascribe to a common identity while maintaining their specific identity as either a school principal of an underperforming school or a business leader.

Moreover, as discussed in the previous theme on the relational aspect in the PfP process (see IV, 2.2.3), it was argued that social differences do not only apply between the school principals and the business leaders. This is because the principals do not form a homogeneous group nor do the business leaders. Differences in terms of the level of professional training, experience in leadership, or the amount of networks and resources among the principals and also among the business leaders were found to lead to tensions.

The findings of this study point to the fact that the focus on building strong relationships and sharing the common vision of improving schools draws attention away from the social differences between the partners. Nevertheless, as pointed out by the proponents of CIIM, the common identity shared by the ingroup members is not always stable in real life due to the diversity existing in the different subgroups (Dovidio *et al.* 2007). In other words, if the partners in a partnership pursue different visions or fail to build a strong relationship, the social prejudices regarding race and gender are likely to be felt between them. The subsection that follows below highlights such an instance where race and gender did in fact affect a partnership relationship.

2.3.3. Influence of Race and of Gender Differences on a Partnership: An Example

Of the nine partnerships interviewed in this study, one was found to be grappling with problems around race and gender. This partnership was between a Black male principal and a White female business

leader. According to the principal, most of the arguments with his business leader were on time-related issues and this was the partnership's greatest challenge. He explained that the business leader would get upset to be kept waiting: "we can make an arrangement that I am meeting you at 11 am. But there is a possibility that at 11 o'clock, either I am dealing with the situation of a child or of a teacher. So herself then she can get very angry." This problem is however not unique to this particular partnership; in fact, time-related issues were unanimously cited as the greatest challenge by the participants. The second challenge cited by this school principal was race-related. He was of the opinion that the business leader expected him to yield to her suggestions because she is White, as he saw the staff in his school do:

> I realize that my staff members, some of them, they were not in [a] situation where they would be mingling with Whites. So every time they would just say 'yes! yes!' to everything [she said].... Maybe she was expecting that I would be under her and just agree with everything. This is the stratification system of South Africa [where] Whites were better than Black people.

The business leader, on the other hand, felt that her principal partner made inappropriate remarks of a sexist nature, demonstrating that the principal did not understand the terms of the partnership. She explained that although her professional field is male-dominated, she had managed to work alongside men in many partnerships without any problem:

> PfP— their name says partners, but I don't think they ever explain it and I think they should. So, I thought he had some sort of an idea that I was more than a business partner and just his partner [as] he made all sorts of [inappropriate] comments [to me].

Tensions due to racial and gender differences were reported only in this partnership out of the nine that were interviewed, although there were two other cross-gender and cross-racial partnerships among the nine pair of participants. This fact nevertheless implies that specific conclusions about racial and gender differences cannot be made based on this lone partnership.

Referring back to the partnership under consideration, there appears to have been no apparent tension in their first year of partnership. Tension appears to have emerged at the start of their second year of partnership for two reasons, according to the data collected from the separate interviews with the partners. Firstly, the principal felt that the business leader had been disloyal because of a comment that the latter made to a staff member in the school; and secondly, the business partner confronted the principal for the first time after he made a remark in public which the business leader felt was sexist in nature and which led her to turn to the LPF to intervene. In the interview with the principal, the latter

did in fact refer to the LPF's attempt to mediate a conflict between the two partners, but according to the principal, the conflict was due to cultural differences. The principal however felt that the LPF's intervention was ineffective as it was biased towards the business partner.

The facts presented above appear to suggest that when the personal relationship between the PfP partners is good, the partners are able to focus on their common goals and this brings them together, keeping at bay the social prejudices which would otherwise arise due to their differences. Nevertheless, when values that are vital to the partnership relationship such as trust, respect, and loyalty are missing, this leads to the weakening of the personal relationship between the partners which in turn affects their shared identity. In other words, instead of focusing on what they have in common, the partners' attention is drawn to their differences, that is, to the social prejudices associated with differences in race, gender and power stratification in a bid to explain and/or justify the conflict arising between them. Their shared identity ends up receding in the background as their unique identity takes up the prominent position, highlighting the differences between the two distinct groups.

2.3.4. Conclusion on the Influence of Social Differences

Social differences, especially race, gender and socio-economic status, were expected to affect the PfP partnerships given the inequality in the country. This expectation was further based on Moorosi's (2012) study which affirmed that racial tensions inhibited the effectiveness of a mentoring programme for school principals. Nevertheless, tensions due to race and gender differences were noted in one out of nine partnerships.

The findings of this study counter those reached by Moorosi (2012) as race does not appear to inhibit the PfP partnerships that were involved in the study. The findings of this study broadly support Msila's (2013) argument that cross-gender mentoring relations are not affected by gender, age, and race. The insignificant influence of social differences, particularly race, gender and class, resonates with the common ingroup identity model which holds that a shared common identity and a focus on commonalities can reduce bias and improve intergroup relations. It was also argued that the presence of similarities among the school principals and business leaders could explain the absence of social prejudices in the partnerships. Nevertheless, the fact that the social differences appeared not to affect the partnerships does not imply that the partners were indifferent or impervious to them. As Gibson and Claasen (2010) rightly point out, interracial contact may reduce expressed interpersonal prejudice but

this does not necessarily point to a change in the deeper ideological orientations. The question of how PfP partnerships affect intergroup prejudice is particularly interesting since PfP maintains that it is building social cohesion in South Africa (Collins 2015). This matter however falls outside the scope of this study.

2.4. PfP's Focus of Change: Leadership or Teaching and Learning?

The first three sections under themes (that is 2.1, 2.2 and 2.3 in this chapter) focused on various aspects of the partnership relationship. Section 2.1 considered the nature of the PfP partnerships. It was found that although PfP aims that its partnerships be transformational, in practice, the partnerships were either transformational or transactional in nature. Section 2.2 looked at the partners' perceptions of the structured programme that seeks to capacitate and support the partners in the partnership-building process. It was found that while the structured programme provided valuable support to the partners, the group aspects of the programme posed certain challenges on the partnerships. In section 2.3, consideration was given to the impact of the social differences on the partnership relationship. This fourth section (2.4) shifts its attention from the partnership relationship in order to delve into the organization's focus of change, that is, the medium used by the partnerships to effect change that is transformational in schools.

2.4.1. Introduction

The initial research question sought to understand the partnership experience from the perspective of the partners, that is, the principal and the business leader engaged in a partnership. All the partners in the nine partnerships that participated in this study felt that the principals and the schools had gained from these relationships. Nevertheless, it became clear that the participants' experience of the partnership could not be understood without reflecting on the PfP process. Further, dissatisfaction was noted in some of the participants which was expressed in different ways. For example, almost all the participants complained that a year was too short to bring lasting changes in schools and many of the partners suggested that the PfP formalized process of one year be extended, although it was noted that this would have financial implications. Dissatisfaction was also expressed through the concern to establish the impact of the partnerships and subsequently the impact of the organization on school performance, since it appeared that some partners were not seeing the change that they were hoping for.

The participants' concerns that were expressed above led the researcher to question the aim of the PfP process and the means it is using to bring about the desired change. What is the goal(s) of the PfP process? PfP literature acknowledges that the organization is not run by experts in educational change (Collins 2015: 83). It also maintains that the aim of the organization is to improve school leadership and

to get the parents and the community more involved in schools (Collins 2015: 110). Nevertheless, the ultimate objective of the PfP process is to improve the academic performance in South Africa's underperforming schools (Collins 2015: 10-11; 16; 79; 110; 125). Having established the goal of the PfP process and subsequently its partnerships, the next question to be asked was: can this goal be reached given the organization's particular focus on school leadership? This is the question that is addressed in this fourth theme which also probes the dissatisfaction that was noted in the participants.

2.4.2. Educational Reform: Background to Discussion

Experts in educational reform argue that teaching and learning ought to be the starting point in any reform aimed at improving school outcomes (Christie *et al.* 2007; Taylor 2008; Bush *et al.* 2010). Moreover, Christie *et al.* (2007) add that efforts to improve school leadership do not necessarily lead to improved educational practices that will lead to improved academic performance. In addition, school leadership is said to have an indirect impact on learners' performance which is estimated at between 5% and 7% (Leithwood *et al.* 2006). The effect of leadership on academic performance is measured through a range of models, some of which try to establish the direct effect of leadership on student achievement and others that are mediated as they study the effects of school leadership on several intervening variables affecting student achievement, like school culture and instructional organization (Leithwood *et al.* 2006).

The above arguments for teaching and learning as the basis of educational reform might appear to criticize PfP's focus on school leadership. PfP's four-level change process (see IV, 1.2) – namely, the school principal, the SMT, the educators, and the parents and community – implies a wide focus which, it might be feared, gives little room for initiatives that directly favour teaching and learning. This possible criticism may be supported by two other factors: the business leaders have little expertise in education-related issues, and the content of PfP's structured programme for the partners is based on general leadership development rather than on educational management and leadership which, Bush (2007) maintains, has a distinct focus. Further, Christie *et al.* (2007) argue that not all functioning schools owe their achievement to a powerful school principal.

It is then pertinent to ask if school reform efforts focused on school leadership can positively affect teaching and learning in order to improve education outcomes. Is the focus on leadership compatible or not with that of improved teaching and learning outcomes? These questions are discussed in the three

subsections that follow. The first subsection looks at the direct impact that improved leadership can have on teaching and learning. In the second, consideration is given to PfP's change process and this subsection shows that although PfP's focus is wide due to its change process, it allows for flexibility which permits the partnerships to engage directly in teaching and learning initiatives. Nevertheless, certain challenges to teaching and learning are found in some of the PfP partnerships due to the programme's wide and flexible focus and these are considered in the third subsection. The section ends with a conclusion that points to the need for evaluation of the partnership's impact on performance.

2.4.3. Change in School Leadership: Can this affect Teaching and Learning?

The objective of PfP's change process is to improve school leadership since South Africa's poor education system is explained in part by the lack of leadership in schools (Spaull 2013b; Ngcobo and Tikly 2010). The majority of the school principals who were interviewed in this study agreed that leadership in schools was a major concern. One of these principals (BM) who at the time of the interview was heading two schools substantiated this concern as follows:

> It's a testimony: [look], I am sitting here, and I am managing two schools! In [this township], how many people do we have? We've got plenty of people! Why do I have to go to one school and then go to another school? It tells you [something]! It's a serious problem that we have within the education fraternity.

This concern with leadership, according to the majority of the principals involved in this study, was one of the key motivations that made school principals take part in the PfP programme. Most of the principals pointed out that unlike leadership in the corporate sector, school principals embarked on their career without formal preparation and training for the principal's position. This was supported by the majority of the business leaders who declared that they had participated in numerous training programmes during their career. The business leaders can thus be seen to be conduits of training—which is likely to be of a high quality—that can be found in the corporate sector to school principals; this is a benefit deriving from PfP.

Of the 10 principals interviewed, nine of them had successfully completed the 12-month structured programme, and all nine maintained that they had become better leaders: they listened better, they were more inclusive, empathetic, and more confident. Although at first glance these skills cannot be easily linked to teaching and learning, they can in fact affect the educational project directly. For instance, one school principal (BF) related how in her first meeting with her business leader, she learnt

not to take things too seriously as this would distress and cloud her thinking. This advice, she said, was the most valued lesson that she had drawn from the partnership. She gave a practical example of how she had recently exercised this lesson. Her school engaged a highly qualified and competent teacher by the name of Richard. Although he was good at his work, Richard was mostly absent from school and would attribute his absence to illness. Attempts to reach him were often in vain. During one term, for example, Richard had only been to the school on the second week of the term. The situation was concerning as only two weeks of teaching had been left to the end of the term. The principal explained how instead of getting stressed and upset like she used to do, she decided to apply the advice received from her business partner. She narrated how she entered her office and sat back on her chair in a relaxed position:

> [It is then that] the voice came to me: Lesedi, why do you stress? Would he come to school if you are stressed? No. Would it change the situation? No. What you have in the school are other teachers: is there anything they can do to keep the learners busy? Definitely yes. Why don't you call [Heads of Departments] and sit and talk about this problem?

In the meeting with the Heads of Department, the principal found out that despite his absence, Richard had covered his subject's curriculum. They also discussed in this meeting the marking of the learners' final exam as well as the actions to take to have this teacher changed from the school. In this example, one can see how the change in the principal's leadership enabled her to constructively engage the SMT and to involve the other educators to ensure that teaching and learning continued to take place despite the teacher's absence.

Some principals maintained that they had learnt how to mobilize resources by overcoming their shyness and the fear of rejection – something that their business partners confirmed. One of these principals (WF) was able to negotiate a partnership with a major bank that extends beyond financial resources and which is having an impact on the educational project. This principal narrated how she got the bank involved in the school as follows:

> [The bank approached me and] said to me: we will fundraise for you and give you R10 000. I said: no, thank you. I don't want the R10 000. I want you to come—and that is what happened in the end—…. I said: fundraise, but my need is A, B and C. You choose in your group what you want to do. So what happened in the end is they have fundraised and they are bringing now 154 abacuses. So they are going to come to this school, and they are going to have a mental math quiz with my Grade One's, Two's and Three's. And then they are going to give to the teachers the abici to use in the classes.

The confidence acquired by the principal in the example above enabled her not only to mobilize financial resources for the school but also to engage the donor actively in the education project through the provision of a teaching aid and through the coaching that will be provided to the learners.

The above two examples show that change in leadership can have a clear impact on learning outcomes. In other words, a focus on leadership is compatible with that of teaching and learning. The examples also illustrate the transformative potential that PfP partnerships can have as was extensively discussed under the first theme in this chapter (see IV, 2.1). In the first example, change is noted in the principal's way of thinking and reacting to stressful problems, while in the second, change is noted in the principal's character. These changes are transformational in nature and appear to be long-lasting or permanent.

2.4.4. PfP's Wide and Flexible Focus: Impact on Teaching and Learning

PfP's four-level change process implies a wide focus which can be compatible with that of teaching and learning. A majority of the partners interviewed were found to have engaged in such initiatives during their formal year of partnership. Examples of initiatives that have been carried out and which favour teaching and learning include the following: learners reading at assembly each morning; enrolling teachers to the 'BrainBoosters' programme; book donations in several schools; discipline programme for teachers in a particular school which was successfully conducted by the principal's business partner; computer training for teachers in several schools; and lastly, numeracy and literacy programmes in some schools. One principal (BM) shared how his business partner (BM) introduced him to the principal of a private school and thanks to this relationship, his teachers and students can access math and science material online. The business partner to this principal claimed that the school's results had shown improvement and this was confirmed from some other source citing his principal partner who claimed that the learners' pass rate had gone up by 7%, thanks to the partnership's initiatives (PfP NDa).

From the initiatives outlined above relating to teaching and learning, it is evident that the PfP partnerships have a flexible focus. In other words, whatever issues that the principal and the business leader decide to concentrate on during their formal year of partnership (and beyond, since many partnerships continue past the one-year period) will be the content of the partnership. This flexibility of focus is balanced by PfP's structured programme which guides and sets parameters for the partnerships. The structured programme places certain demands on the partners, such as the requirement to attend the three training workshops and to submit a partnership plan, among others (see IV, 1.2 for

components of the programme). All the participants interviewed showed great appreciation for PfP's structured format and this aspect was considered under the second theme (see IV, 2.2.2).

2.4.5. Challenges to the Focus on Teaching and Learning

As earlier discussed, the partnerships have a wide and flexible focus deriving from PfP's four-level change process. However, while this flexibility is of benefit as outlined, the wide focus centred on school leadership can and does pose certain challenges affecting the teaching and learning in schools.

The first of the challenges encountered is the difficulty to evaluate the impact of the partnerships' initiatives on the education outcomes. Although all the principals claimed that they had become better leaders and that their schools had definitely improved, the measures of improvement are subjective. It is difficult, if not impossible, to objectively evaluate the benefit obtained by the schools and the impact of the partnerships' initiatives on the learners' performance without tracking the school's academic performance. Currently, PfP has no access to this data since the partners do not monitor learners' performance at the partnership schools.[11] It is thus impossible to statistically assess the sustainability of this programme as noted by one of the business partners (WM): "what is hard to prove is the sustainable improvement in results. School principals say that they are better off [but] there is need to show sustainable results."

A second challenge identified is in relation to the partners as the content setters of the partnership. With regard to the principal, he or she can have the partnership focus on issues that may only insignificantly impact teaching and learning. As one business partner (WM) indicated: "very often the principals say we need more money …. Our infrastructure is poor [and] we need more money. So what do you do? You focus on raising money." The business leader's role could thus be reduced to fundraising instead of sharing his/her expertise and experience on leadership with the principal which is PfP's focus. It is also likely that such a partnership will end up being transactional and not transformational in nature.

The lack of conviction and drive in the principal for better academic performance may also affect the partnership's content. A business leader (WF) noted a laid-back attitude in the principal when the latter

[11] Note is however made that PfP is in the process of revising its monitoring and evaluation (M&E) processes in order to better evaluate the impact on teaching and learning (see III, 5.).

implied that the learners in a township school could not perform better. With regard to the business leader, the lack of knowledge and expertise in education, as well as the pressure to show results at the end of the partnership year, could cause the partners to focus on things other than what could lead to improved academics which is the core business of schools; this was pointed out by a business leader (WM) with an educational background. This business leader argued that whereas improved infrastructure could lift both teacher and learner morale, it is difficult to relate certain ventures with academic improvement, such as setting up a guard house or planting grass to 'green' the school.

In order to address the challenges discussed above, the PfP partners—but more so the principals—would require motivation and assistance to effectively monitor teaching and learning performance to allow for an objective appraisal of the effects of the partnerships on the education outcome. This would help determine the sustainability of the partnerships and consequently of the PfP process. Consideration could also be given on how to better prepare the business leaders to work effectively in the education field by highlighting the role of teaching and learning and its effects on school performance. These recommendations are elaborated further in the following chapter.

2.4.6. Inquiry into the Evidence Pointing to Partners' Dissatisfaction

2.4.6.1. Divergence between Expected and Actual Goals

Prior to concluding this section which considers PfP's focus of change, this subsection will inquire into the sense of dissatisfaction that was described briefly in the introduction to this section (see 2.4.1). It was argued that feelings of dissatisfaction were expressed in some instances, such as through the general complaint that a year was too soon to see substantial changes in schools, as well as through the concern expressed by some business leaders of the need to ascertain the impact of the partnerships and subsequently of PfP on school performance.

In the discussion about the nature of the PfP partnerships (see IV, 2.1.4), it was found that some business leaders appeared to have been motivated to join these partnerships in the hope of seeing significant transformation in the school by the end of the partnership year. The hoped-for transformation was however not realized by the end of the first year since, as Taylor (2008) correctly points out, transforming a school is a slow and complex exercise. A divergence is thus seen between the expectations of the partnership and the actual practice which, these findings suggest, could be

attributed to the manner in which PfP promotes its initiative in order to attract people and organizations to engage in the PfP process. This divergence or tension is described below.

PfP presents itself to the private sector as an innovative way to engage in corporate social investment (CSI) as it enables business persons to apply their business acumen—and not just their financial resources—to resolve the problem of poor education. The organization sells itself as a year-programme, inviting South African business leaders "to join this transformational programme and make a significant contribution to South Africa's education system by helping to strengthen leadership and management capacity at one school" (PfP 2016a: 4). This assertion invites the following questions: what does "a significant contribution" mean? And what should the business leaders expect to achieve after one year? These questions are especially significant given that PfP is aware that transforming schools takes time and it has established that it can take up to three to five years to see improved educational outcomes in the schools involved in the PfP process (Collins 2015: 82; Hartnack 2016: 46).

PfP seems to offer two answers to the question regarding the meaning of "significant contribution" which are somewhat conflicting and which could account in some way for the dissatisfaction that was noted at the start of this subsection. Firstly, the organization appears to suggest that after a year, the partnership will have helped the principal become a better leader and that this will trickle down to the educators (including the school management team (SMT)) and the parents for the benefit of the school. These goals are graphically presented in a diagram drawn from a PfP publication which was referred to in the introduction to this chapter (see Figure 2: Partners for Possibility Structured Programme).

The second response to the meaning of significant contribution can be found in PfP literature (Collins 2015) as well as in a recent external evaluation report on the organization that was requested by PfP (Hartnack 2016). According to these publications, the goal that PfP expects following the first year of partnership is improved leadership in the principal and the formation of a strong partnership, because "if [the partnership] is strong, there is a very good chance that [the partners] will continue to work together for many more years and be a catalyst for meaningful change at the school over a number of years" (Collins 2015: 104). In the external evaluation report, the same goal after the first year of partnership is repeated (Hartnack 2016). The report however goes on to specify other goals which the organization expects to follow from its partnerships: after 2 years (these are medium-term goals), greater parental and community involvement are expected in the PfP schools (including a stronger

school governing board (SGB)), in addition to having a more motivated staff (educators and SMT); and in three to five years (intended impact of the PfP process), educational spin-offs (includes better performance in Annual National Assessments (ANAs) and fewer student-dropouts prior to National Senior Certificate (NSC), among others (Hartnack 2016: 46)) are expected to occur in the schools. The time-frame set for these goals are represented graphically as follows:

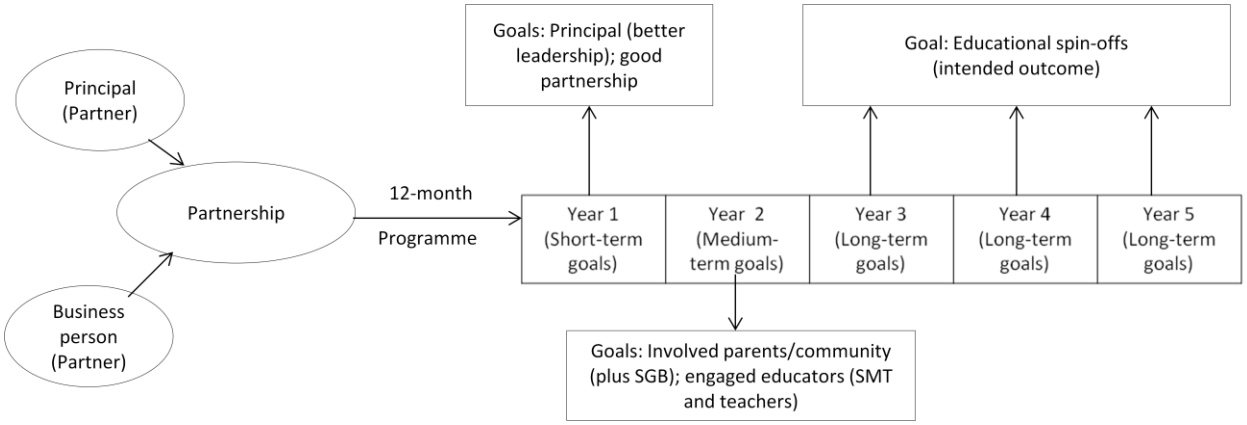

Figure 4: PfP Process Depicting PfP Goals and the Established Time-Frames
(Source: Hartnack 2016)

Nevertheless, the findings of this research indicate that although after the first year of partnership the participants had achieved the short-term goals as established by PfP, there appears to have been the expectation of achieving more in terms of greater involvement of educators and parents in the school as set out by the organization (see Figure 2: Partners for Possibility Structured Programme). This suggests a discord between what the partnerships actually accomplish and what they had hoped to achieve through this process. This discord is illustrated in the following diagram:

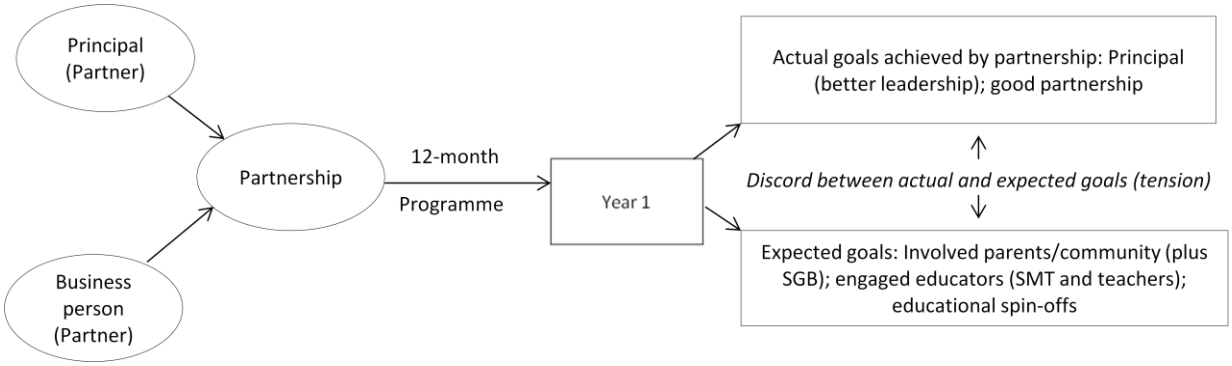

Figure 5: Illustration of the Variance in the Partners' Goals at the End of the Partnership Year

2.4.6.2. Possible Causes of Partners' Dissatisfaction

Educational reform is a long-term project, and this long-term vision is implied by PfP's affirmation which states that it takes three to five years to effect significant changes in schools (Collins 2015: 82). Nevertheless, PfP promotes itself as a year-programme rather than say a three-year programme. PfP literature (Collins 2015: 220) and findings from this study suggest that the reason for promoting the year-partnerships is mainly due to resource limitation. Participation in the 12-month partnerships involves a financial expense since there is a fee attached to take part in the year-programme.[12] Further, participation in the PfP partnerships requires time and this was the main challenge facing the partnerships according to most principals and business leaders.

The problem of limited resources described above is cited among the principal challenges of social enterprises (Zahra *et al.* 2009; Malunga *et al.* 2014). This is because the nature and scope of the social concerns that these enterprises address usually lead to the establishment of large and complex organizations with many financing and staffing needs. These authors caution that the lack of resources could jeopardize the primary social mission of these organizations due to the problem of sustainability and the need to show results (Zahra *et al.* 2009). Referring back to PfP, the organization appears to suffer from the named challenges. The organization appears to be seeking to maximize its influence by establishing the goal of reaching the 20 000 schools that are said to be underperforming by the year 2025 (PfP NDb; Collins 2015: 87). Put differently, PfP appears to have made the decision to focus on breadth (enrol many schools to the programme) rather than on depth (that is, follow-up what occurs in the PfP schools after the partnership year). The decision to maximize PfP's influence is however not surprising given the very real challenge of sustainability as seen above. Note is however made that PfP has made provision to provide support to partners who wish to extend their relationships for a second year. One of the business leaders (WM) explained that about six partnerships in his group decided to continue with their partnerships into a second year (2016-2017). They nevertheless opted to engage the LPF outside of the PfP process at R600 per coaching session (held approximately every six to eight weeks) rather than pay R15 000 which was the quote received from PfP in order to formalize phase two

[12] As from March 2017, participation cost per partnership is R85 000 broken down as principal's portion of R45 000 (typically covered by corporate social investment (CSI)/Skills Development) and the business leader's portion of R40 000 (accounted as Leadership/Skills Development fees). This cost increased from the 2016 partnership fee of R78 000 (R40 000 and R38 000 for the principal and the business leader respectively) (PfP 2016a).

of the partnership programme.[13] This example also serves to illustrate the resource challenge from the business leaders' perspective (the principals are usually financed by the business leaders, DBE or some other sponsor).

From the point of view of the partnerships, the dissatisfaction attributed due to the divergence between the actual and expected goals can also serve to explain why some partnerships focus their efforts on activities that are sure to give rise to evident results but which are often not transformative in nature (see IV, 2.1.4). The conflicting goals as articulated by PfP appears to put the partners in a contradictory position which, it is argued, can encourage the establishment of transactional partnerships. The discussion in this and in the preceding subsections indicate the need to clearly specify the goals following the year-partnership as well as the need to emphasize the long-term nature of the problem. This means that the business leaders in particular should be made aware that the likely outcome of the year-partnership is improved leadership in the school principal. If the business leader cannot continue with the partnership, he or she is not likely to see the impact envisaged by PfP (that is, more motivated teachers, greater parental involvement, etc.), although this does not in any way imply that the said impact will not occur if the partnership ends after the first year. The reason for this affirmation is explained below by looking at one of the older partnerships that was involved in this study.

Of the nine complete partnerships that took part in this study, one of them was established in 2012 while another two began in mid-2014. Two of these partnerships are no longer active since in one, the principal had been promoted to the district office while in the other, the business leader's work-situation limited her ability to continue in the partnership. The third partnership was one that began in 2014 and its activity was found to be limited to the establishment of a school library which was to commence in 2017. In the interview with the business leader (BF), the latter was of the opinion that the principal no longer needed her active support as the principal had been empowered: she had become more confident and had, during the partnership year, undertaken activities that were centred on learning, and she had also managed to draw in some support from parents and the community around the school. The business leader further indicated her intention to form a new PfP partnership with another school principal in 2017.

[13] There appears to be no conflict of interest as in a conversation with the researcher's contact person in PfP about a similar incident, the contact person maintained that the organization was more interested in seeing its partnerships continue past the first partnership year.

Because the school principal (WF) mentioned in the preceding paragraph also participated in this study, the researcher was in a position to ascertain what the business leader had said. At the time of the interview, this principal was found to be negotiating an agreement with a major bank that would benefit the school financially and academically (see IV, 2.4.3, citation three). This partnership illustrates that although the business leader was no longer actively involved in the partnership, the effects of participating in the PfP partnership and in the structured programme appear to be still taking place in the school, although these effects could also be attributed to other factors.

To conclude this subsection, the above discussion helps us to understand some of the limitations of the partnerships as well as of the PfP process that have been noted in this study. This discussion serves to understand the dissatisfaction noted in some partners, and it also helps to explain why some partnerships tend to engage in activities of a short-term nature that is characteristic of transactional relationships. The context in which the PfP partnerships operate can be better comprehended. This discussion points to the need to clarify the goals and the expected time-frames, which also serves to highlight the long-term nature of the expected changes in schools.

2.4.7. Conclusion to Focus of Change

PfP's vision of change for South Africa's education system is that by 2025, the education outcomes in the country will have "significantly improved" by enhancing school leadership (PfP NDb). Christie *et al.* (2007) and Bush *et al.* (2010), among others, advocate a focus on teaching and learning instead in order to improve education outcomes. Although an apparent tension exists between a focus on school leadership vis-à-vis teaching and learning, this study has shown that efforts to improve the principals' leadership can have a direct impact on the education project. In other words, the focus on leadership and that on teaching and learning are not mutually exclusive since the partnerships established in the PfP process have been seen to engage in activities that directly affect teaching and learning. This however poses two challenges: firstly, that of objectively determining the influence of the partnership's activities on the learners' performance – it is difficult to measure the impact of the partnerships' varied initiatives on teaching and learning in schools; and secondly, the partners can choose to engage in activities that may not impact education outcomes significantly due to the programme's wide and flexible focus.

3. CONCLUSION TO CHAPTER ON FINDINGS

This chapter has presented the key findings of the research which sought to understand the experiences of the partnership relationship and of the PfP process from the perspective of its partners, that is, the school principals and the business leaders engaged in the PfP process. The findings were summarized in four themes which were covered in four different subsections. The first subsection considered the nature of the PfP partnerships. It was argued that the model provided by PfP can lead to improved school outcomes provided that the partnerships are transformational in nature. The second and third subsections looked at the dynamics affecting PfP partnership relationships but from two points of view: the second subsection considered the dynamics arising from within the workings of the PfP process as the partnerships engage in group learning; and the third subsection considered the dynamics arising from the social groupings that characterize South Africa's society. In the fourth subsection, it was seen that the focus on leadership by the PfP programme is compatible with that of teaching and learning since the programme's wide and flexible change process allows the partnerships to engage in activities that can directly affect the learning outcomes. It was also argued that the change in the principal can positively affect the teaching and learning in schools.

From the findings presented in this chapter, it can be concluded that the PfP partnerships and programme can lead to improved leadership in school principals and consequently to improved education outcomes, provided the limitations noted in this chapter about the PfP process are addressed. These limitations are outlined in the conclusive chapter of this report which also includes recommendations which could improve the impact of the PfP partnerships and subsequently the PfP process.

CHAPTER V: CONCLUSION

1. INTRODUCTION

This report presents the findings of a study on an initiative that is attempting to address the educational crisis in South Africa, where about 75% of its public schools which are mainly attended by Black African learners have been labelled dysfunctional (Spaull 2013b; NDP 2011; Collins 2015). Inadequate infrastructure, ineffective school leadership, teaching incompetency, and poor learning attitudes are some of the main challenges that are said to be affecting South Africa's education system (Spaull 2013a; Taylor 2008; NDP 2011). Partners for Possibility (PfP), a non-profit organization (NPO), is the social initiative under study which seeks to improve South Africa's education system by addressing the problem of poor school leadership. PfP tries to achieve this objective through a partnership model in which school principals of underperforming schools are partnered with business persons who have leadership experience to form a collaborative partnership for a period of 12 months. During this time, the pair goes through the organization's structured partnership development programme with the aim of forming a strong partnership that will strengthen school leadership in individual schools. This is expected to lead to an improved educational system. Although this structured programme runs for only one year, it is hoped that the partners will continue their partnership beyond the 12-month period.

This research sought to understand the experiences of the partnership relationship and of the structured programme from the perspective of the partners, that is, the school principals and the business leaders who have taken part in the PfP process. The focus of this study differs slightly from the initial research objective which sought to understand the partners' experiences of their partnership relationship by reflecting on two points: firstly, the challenges that they face in the partnership; and secondly, the factors affecting the quality of their partnership relationship. It became apparent during data collection and analysis that the interior dynamics of the partnerships could only be understood in light of the PfP process, as the participants reflected on their partnerships in relation to the structured programme. This shift in the focus of the study is not surprising since, as Auerbach and Silverstein (2003) point out, this can sometimes happen in research. The inclusion of the partners' perspectives of the PfP process implies that this research has a wider focus than initially planned which can aid further our understanding of the partnership relationship.

2. OVERVIEW OF THE KEY FINDINGS

The findings of this study are presented in four themes which arose in the course of the study. Whereas the initial research questions sought to understand the experiences, challenges and factors affecting the partnership relationship, the four themes respond to three questions concerning the partners' experience of the partnerships, the influence of the 12-month structured programme on the partnership, and the effect of the partners' social differences on these partnerships. The first three themes relate to different aspects of the partnership relationship while the fourth theme relates more directly to the focus of the PfP process. The themes are briefly reviewed below.

The first theme was about the nature of the partnership relationship (see IV, 2.1). In the course of trying to establish the partners' experiences of their partnerships, two questions arose which form the basis of the first theme: firstly, although the partners maintained that they were in an equal partnership, the principal's contribution to these relationships was not clear unlike that of the business leader; and secondly, although all the participants considered their partnerships to be successful, some appeared to be more successful than others. For example, a partnership that renovates some classrooms differs somewhat from another that leads to positive changes in the teachers' attitude with regard to discipline.[14] Although both partnerships can be said to have been successful as outlined in this section (see IV, 2.1), the first partnership appears to be transactional in nature while the second can be said to be more transformational. The insights regarding the principal's contribution to the partnership and the type of partnership relationship—transactional or transformational—are covered in the first theme about the nature of the partnership.

The second and third themes (see IV, 2.2 and IV, 2.3 respectively) consider the dynamics affecting the partnership relationship in the PfP process as well as the impact of the partners' social differences on the partnership. Although all the participants maintained that the organization's structured programme had helped them to value, build and sustain their partnership relationships, feelings of inferiority and insecurity were expressed by some partners in connection with this programme. Some dynamics within the structured programme were seen to negatively affect the partnership relationship due to the inequalities within the partners and this is the matter covered in the second theme. In the third theme, the asymmetries in terms of race, class and gender in most of the organization's partnerships appeared

[14] See Footnote 9 in subsection IV, 2.1.3 about the challenge of discipline in schools.

not to exert significant influence on the partnership relationship. The reasons for the minimal influence of the social differences on the partnerships are explained in the third theme.

The fourth and final theme is about the focus of change of the PfP process (see IV, 2.4). This theme arose in the course of the research as the findings pointed to feelings of disappointment in some of the participants which were expressed in two ways: firstly, a majority of the partners felt that PfP's year-process was too short to bring about significant changes in the schools; and secondly, although this process is focused on improving school leadership, some partners, especially the business leaders, appeared to question the impact that their partnerships and consequently PfP was having on improved learners' performance. The latter concern pointed to the question: is PfP focusing on the right thing in order to lead to improved school performance and consequently to an improved educational system in the country? Academic literature on school reform (discussed below) argues that teaching and learning should be the focus of any reform seeking to improve academic performance and this theme considers how PfP's focus on leadership relates with that on teaching and learning.

What this study shows is that if PfP hopes to bring about a transformation in the educational sector through its partnerships, one school at a time, more emphasis needs to be placed on the long-term nature of this project. Although PfP acknowledges that changing schools can take up to three to five years, the one-year partnerships appear to give rise to unrealistic expectations in the partnerships. These unrealistic expectations could explain why most partners complained that after a year of working together in the partnership, they felt that they had not accomplished much in the schools despite their efforts. This study confirms what Harris (2010) maintains about reforms centred on schools as the main focus of change. She argues that such reforms are limited by the magnitude of the task and by the slow pace of change, and instead advises on the need to involve all the levels of the education system—school, district and national levels—for the reform to be successful. In addition, van Tulder *et al.* (2015) point to the pressure that social partnerships involving business collaborators face to justify the involvement of business by showing the social impact of such partnerships. This pressure to show results is among the challenges faced by the PfP partnerships as established in this report, and this pressure was seen to negatively affect the workings and goals of the partners (see IV, 2.1.4; IV, 2.2.3; IV, 2.4.6).

Further, with regard to the transformation of the educational sector, if the aim of the PfP process is to improve the academic performance in schools, then this process should also include educational

management and leadership in its curriculum. This is because, as Bush (2007) argues, educational leadership has distinct aims which differ from general leadership which is what this organization currently provides through its structured partnership development programme. In addition to including educational management and leadership in its curriculum, the partners should be encouraged to engage in activities that can improve teaching and learning in schools. This is because several educational experts caution that educational leadership training may not necessarily lead to improved didactic practices, hence the need to actively engage in processes and activities that are sure to lead to improved teaching and learning in schools (Christie *et al.* 2007; Taylor 2008; Bush *et al.* 2010).

With regard to the partnership relationships, this study shows that the partnerships in this model are not all the same: some are transformative in nature, that is, capable of bringing about long-lasting changes in the way the staff in the schools think and work, while those which are incapable of such changes are said to be transactional in nature. It is therefore up to the partners along with PfP to make sure that the partnerships are transformative in order to lead to the desired changes in the schools. The characteristics of transformational partnerships in PfP coincide with those suggested by Butcher *et al.* (2011) and include: the ability of both partners, not just the business leader, to leverage and network to raise resources; openness to learning and to change; drive and commitment to a common vision; trusting and respectful relationship; and lastly, collaborative working to achieve the desired outcomes.

This study has also shown that although the partners maintain that theirs is an equal partnership, the dynamics arising in the course of taking part in the structured programme show that the partnership is not actually equal. The feelings of comparison, competition, and inferiority that were expressed within and between some partnerships taking part in the PfP process point to the presence of inequalities in the group. This finding is supported by the critical action learning theory which holds that people forming a learning group can begin to measure themselves against each other due to the dynamics arising from emotions, politics and power among the persons in the group (Vince 2011; Yeadon-Lee 2013).

Given their different backgrounds, this lack of actual equality noted above is not surprising. Inequality is noted at two levels: within and between partnerships, and within the principals as members of one group and within the business leaders as members of another group. In the first level, although the principals and the business leaders involved in the partnerships may share some similarities such as a

comparable level of education and/or responsibility, most partners were found to differ in terms of race and gender. These differences could give rise to social prejudices emerging as occurred in one partnership. The second level of inequality refers to the fact that the principals and the business leaders are not two homogenous groups. For example, it was found that some principals were envious of other principals because the latter were better qualified, while some business leaders maintained that they felt inadequate since some of the other business leaders were able to make greater financial contributions to their partner schools than them. These two levels of power or resource asymmetries can give rise to various tensions as was illustrated in this study, where such dynamics were found to have a dysfunctional effect on the partnerships and subsequently on the PfP process.

Lastly, also in relation to the partnership, this study has shown that the social differences among the partners enrolled in the PfP process do not significantly affect the partnership relationships. This finding is supported by the common ingroup identity model which holds that members belonging to two different categories or groups can form an inclusive superordinate group by embracing a common group identity without jeopardizing their unique identity (Dovidio *et al.* 2007; Gaertner *et al.* 1993). The common identity shared by the partners in the PfP partnerships seems to enable the principals and the business leaders to get past the racial tensions that typify South Africa's society and PfP should be commended for this achievement.

Further, this study does not support Moorosi's (2012) findings which maintained that differences of race and gender can negatively affect the outcomes of a leadership programme for school principals in South Africa. The reason for the different outcomes reached by Moorosi's study and this study on PfP could be the subject of future research, as it would be interesting to determine whether the fact of involving business persons and not education experts has had any bearing on the results. This is because one of the factors that appears to have motivated several principals to join the PfP process was the fact that they were not going to be partnered with educationalists. The findings of this study broadly support those of Msila's (2013) who in his study on cross-gender mentoring of principals in South Africa maintains that these relations are not affected by gender, age, and race.

The recommendations drawing from this research are presented in two parts. The first part is in view of the partnerships, that is, the workings of the paired principal and business leader, while the second is in consideration of PfP as an organization.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

3.1. The PfP Partnerships: Aim for Transformation

i. The partners' (paired principal and business leader) aim should be to establish transformational relationships (see IV, 2.1.3 for the discussion on transformational partnerships) since such relationships are more likely to produce change that is meaningful in schools. Nevertheless, the partners should be made aware of the following:

   a. The temptation to achieve quick results: transformation of a school is a slow and difficult process;
   b. The tendency to compete against and to compare oneself and one's partnership with others on a material basis: this is likely to cause dissatisfaction which can negatively influence the goals of the partnership.

ii. PfP stresses the importance of developing a strong partnership (see IV, 2.2.2) and this advice cannot be overemphasised. The partners should understand the need for building and maintaining a strong partnership relationship. They should also agree on principles that will govern their relationship, as well as devise ways to address any tensions that could arise in the course of their partnership relationship.

iii. In the formulation of the partnership's plans:

   a. Since the aim of the partnership is to improve the school's academic performance, then these partners should focus on activities that could significantly affect teaching and learning in the school;
   b. Measures to monitor and evaluate the teaching and learning in schools ought to be incorporated in these plans over a long period of time in order to assess the impact of the partnership's activities on school performance.

3.2. The PfP Process: Aim for a More Holistic Approach

i. This study shows that the PfP process can lead to improved leadership in schools since all the principals who had successfully completed the structured year-programme maintained that they

had become better leaders. The research shows that the improvement in school leadership can give rise to better educational outcomes, despite the limitations noted in this study. In order to reform the educational sector, PfP needs to scale up but this would require the support of the Department of Basic Education (DBE). Such support should however maintain PfP's model since it is this unique partnership process that makes the model work. In other words, the PfP process should continue to remain distinct from the DBE.

ii. Since leadership in schools is not only exercised by the principal as he/she usually works alongside the SMT especially, the PfP process could revise its change process in order to actively include other stakeholders in the transformation process other than the principal. Further, consideration should be given to how these partnerships are communicated to the rest of the staff in the schools since this could influence the latter's receptiveness to the partnerships' activities.

iii. Because poor school leadership is just one of the several challenges affecting the education sector, PfP could consider forming strategic partnerships with other organizations that are also trying to improve schools and the quality of education by addressing other aspects of the education crisis, such as teacher training. The formation of these new partnerships will allow for a more holistic approach in resolving the challenges in the education sector;

iv. Suggestions with regard to improving the PfP's partnership development programme:

   a. Because group dynamics have been noted to have limiting effects on the partners and on the partnerships (see IV, 2.2.3), the partners should be warned of these dynamics as part of the training to prevent conflicts from arising during the partnership journey;
   b. Some business leaders felt that PfP, as an organization, could make better use of its experiences and networks to further assist its partnerships. Specifically, the organization's administration could do more to compile its experiences and draw lessons from what has worked in schools with respect to the PfP process in order to design a common framework that could guide the partners when formulating their partnership plans. Such a framework would also help to orientate the business leaders who have limited knowledge on issues relating to schools and the education system;

c. The business leaders could be better prepared to support the school principals if they were educated about the challenges experienced by under-resourced and underperforming schools. PfP could consider organizing a session prior to the first training workshop in the structured programme (namely, 'Time to Think') in order to familiarize the business leaders with the challenges facing schools and the education sector. One of the key facilitators in this session could be an experienced school principal. The principals could be invited to attend this meeting alongside their business partners. This suggested session could provide the basis for the partners to begin their discussions about the kind of changes that they wish to see occurring in their school.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Permission from PfP

From: **Robyn Whittaker** <robyn@symphonia.net>
Date: 27 June 2016 at 11:57
Subject: RE: Urgent request for PfP Contact Person
To: Maureen Kirori <1271821@students.wits.ac.za>, Gail McMillan <gail@symphonia.net>, Sophia Janse van Rensburg <fia.vanrensburg@gmail.com>, Dina Cramer <dina@symphonia.net>, Melissa van Zyl <melissa@symphonia.net>
Cc: Louise van Rhyn <louise@symphonia.net>

Dear Maureen,

My great apologies for having taken so long to revert to you on this. To my PfP colleagues, please see your name in bold for where you can assist Maureen with the information she needs to conduct her MA.

I would suggest that we give you a letter signed by **Louise** for your request to interviewees. If you could please draw up a draft, we will then forward it to her to sign.

In terms of a local contact to discuss which partnerships to study, and to put you in contact with the relevant people, I would suggest you speak with**Dina Cramer**. She is the Learning Process Facilitator Co-ordinator and Supervisor for Gauteng and Tshwane.

I would also suggest that you speak to **Gail McMillan**, and probably also **Fia van Rensburg** (whom you met with me at the coffee we had), as they manage the M&E aspect of PfP's work, and would be well positioned to assist with any research related aspect of your work. They are copied in on the e-mail.

In the interim, please see attached the final draft of the M&E study conducted by Andrew Hartnack – it's not for wide circulation as there are still one or two typos to correct.

I am also going to ask **Melissa** to forward me a list of our Gauteng and Tshwane partnerships and the corresponding LPF's, to date, so that you can select from these the people you would like to interview.

I'd be happy to meet up again with you if that will assist.

With warmest regards, and all the best for your study,

Robyn

Robyn Whittaker
Stakeholder Engagement Lead
Tel: 021 913 3507
Cell: 082 552 7157
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Appendix 2: Participant Information Sheet

Dear Participant,

I am a student at the University of the Witwatersrand and I am conducting a study on the Partners for Possibility (PfP) partnership model for my Masters research. I am particularly interested in understanding how the school principals and the business leaders experience the partnership relationship, including the challenges encountered in establishing this working relationship.

I will conduct in-depth face to face interviews in order to gain a good understanding of the partnership experience. Participation involves making yourself available at a time and place of your preference. I expect the interview to take around an hour. I would like, with your consent, to record the interview in order to accurately capture what you say. The recording will not be given to any other person.

Participation is entirely voluntary. Participation will not be beneficial to you in any way, other than it will provide an opportunity to explain the partnership process that you are involved in. There will be no compensation. You can refuse to answer any questions, and to end the interview at any time without any consequences.

Please note that if you agree to be interviewed in this project, you are expected to indicate whether or not you consent to your PfP partner's participation in a (separate) interview. Given this, I am not capable of guaranteeing confidentiality in my report if your PfP partner participates in the interviews as well. However, I will not use your real name in reporting the results of my research (other than in the acknowledgment) and you are also free to indicate during interviews if any information is sensitive. If so, I undertake to only use that information in a way that cannot be linked to you in any way. The final research report will be published online on the university's website and an electronic copy of the same will be sent to you as a participant in this study.

If you are willing to participate, I will be most grateful. You are welcome to contact me at the number listed above, and/or to contact my academic supervisor at the university at any time about this research: David Dickinson, 011 717 4438, david.dickinson@wits.ac.za.

Yours sincerely,

Maureen Kirori

Appendix 3: Participation Consent Form

I, _____ am willing to participate in Maureen Kirori's research study. I (please tick the preferred box(es)):

☐ am willing to take part in the face-to-face interviews;

☐ consent to have my partner in the Partners for Possibility (PfP) programme participate in the face-to-face interviews;

☐ do not consent to have my partner in the Partners for Possibility (PfP) programme participate in the face-to-face interviews;

I understand that there will be no direct benefit for me in participating in this study and that my participation is voluntary. I understand that I am free to withdraw from the study at any time.

I have been given sufficient information about this research project. The purpose of my participation as an interviewee in this project has been explained to me and it is clear.

I understand that confidentiality cannot be guaranteed if my PfP partner and I decide to take part in these interviews. I have nevertheless been guaranteed that the report will not identify me by name, and also that confidentiality will be safeguarded for information that I deem sensitive.

I have read and understood the Participant Information Sheet. My questions about participation in this study have been answered satisfactorily and I am aware of the risks and benefits of participating in the study.

Signed: _____ Date: _____

Appendix 4: Recording Consent Form

I_____hereby give the researcher Maureen Kirori permission to tape-record the interview.

Signed: _____ Date: _____