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# The appropriation of educationpolicy on information and communication technology in South African schools

by

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Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree

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in the

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Faculty of Education

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# ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to explore how education policy on information and communication technology (ICT) influences teaching and learning in South African schools. An instrumental case study applying backward mapping principles as a strategy of inquiry was used. Utilizing a social constructivist lens and guided by a theoretical framework of a socio-cultural approach to policy analysis, this exploratory qualitative research study set out to investigate how teachers in South African schools appropriate education policy on ICT. The case study includedthree schools from diverse socio-culturalsettings, with two participating teachers at each of the identified research sites. The principal at each school and e-learning specialists (officials) at the District and Provincial Departments of Education constituted additional data sources. Data collection methods included interviews, classroom observations, field notes and document analysis.Constructivist grounded theory methods and computer assisted qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS)wereemployed in the analysis of data.

It was found that, teachers' professionalism and agency arecrucial in formulating and implementing a school-based e-education policy in practice.The national e-education policy currently exists as an "invisible policy" within the school context. Secondly, teachers reposition themselves as social and cultural actors of school-based policy appropriation and formulation rather than as recipients of, or reactors to the national e-Education policy. Thirdly, the lack of systemic support to teachers acted as the catalyst for the emergence ofcommunities of practice between schools. The notion of "our" system as opposed to an imposed system prevails. Fourthly, teachers' ignorance of the national e-Education policy indicates the need for policy development and implementation at school level and denotesa new construct to policy appropriation. I theorise that teachers' beliefs, attitudes, professionalism and will to improve teaching and learning through the use of ICT are integral and necessary conditions for effective policy implementation.

**Keywords**

Appropriation

Information and communication technology

e-Education

Policy implementation

Teacher professionalism

Communities of practice

# DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my wife Saloshna, for believing in me,nurturing and supporting me through this difficult period.

I owe all I am to you.

To my children Shavani and Mogeshin

forgiving me the freedom to pursue my studies with constant encouragement and support.

To my autistic son Suthakir, who will never be able to read these words,

thank you for sacrificing our ‘together time’.

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# LIST OF TERMINOLOGY

| | |
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| **e-learning**<br><br>**e-education** | • The design, development and delivery of technology-enhanced learning experiences, using a multimedia such as: web-based resources; audio-visual material, interactive whiteboards.<br>• In the South African context, e-education involves the use of ICT to accelerate the achievement of the national education goals. e-education also includes the connectivity between learners, teachers, support services, and providing platforms for learning. The broader goal of e-education is to improve teaching and learning through effective use of technology and pedagogy(Department of Education, 2004).<br>• E-learning is flexible learning using ICT resources, tools and applications, focussing on accessing information, interaction among teachers, learners and the online environment, collaborative learning, and production of materials and resources to enhance learning (Department of Education, 2004). |
| **Learners** | • In the current study students, learners and pupils are terms that are synonymous. However, the term learner will be used consistently. A learner, as implied in this research is a person who is in learning in the formal schooling period. |
| **Schools** | Schools are classified as public, government or state schools; former model C schools; or independent schools.<br>• Former model C (or inner city) schools are public schools that were previously (prior to 1994) designated for white learners only. Both terms 'model C' and 'inner city' school will be used interchangeably.<br>• Township schools are public schools, typically situated in suburbs out from the city centre and previously designated for black persons.<br>• Independent (or private) schools are defined as schools that receive minimal financial support from the state. |
| **Policy** | Policy and reform are terms used interchangeably, and may imply authorised policy or school based policy. |
| **Macro, meso and micro** | In this study, macro implies national government; meso represent provincial, district and school levels of government. Micro represents the classroom and teacher level. |
| **DoE** | At the time of conducting this research the national department of education was the DoE, and is referred to as such in this thesis. Currently the DoE has been restructured into the department of basic education and the department of higher education. |

# LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

| Acronym | Meaning |
|---|---|
| **BECTA** | British Education and Communication Technology Authority |
| **CELTS** | Cluster e-Learning Teams |
| **CES** | Chief Education Specialist |
| **DCES** | Deputy Chief Education Specialist |
| **DoE** | Department of Education |
| **EFA** | Education For All |
| **ICT** | Information and communication technology |
| **IQMS** | Integrated Quality Management System |
| **LEA** | Local Area Authorities (equivalent to District Offices) |
| **MoE** | Ministry of Education |
| **NCS** | National Curriculum Statement |
| **NEPAD** | New Economic Partnership for Africa Development |
| **NGfL** | National Grid for Learning |
| **NGO** | Non-Government Organisation |
| **OBE** | Outcomes Based Education |
| **OFSTED** | Office for Standards in Education |
| **PELTS** | Province e-Learning Teams |
| **SIP** | School Improvement Plan |
| **SITES** | Second Information Technology in Education Study |
| **TELI** | Technology Enhanced Learning Initiative |
| **USEIT** | Use, Support, andEffect of Instructional Technology |