

## Chapter 3

### The Knowledge Base on Educational Change: Restructuring and Reculturing

*Every change involves choice: between a path to be taken and others to be passed by. Understanding the context, process and consequences of change helps us clarify and question these choices. Which choices we make will ultimately depend on the depth of that understanding but also on the creativity of our strategies, the courage of our convictions, and the direction of our values. ... For if we can come to understand the possible futures of change, we may be more able to take charge of such change in the future (Hargreaves, 1994:19).*

#### 3.1 Introduction

The objective of this review of literature on educational change is to provide a critical assessment of the literature on policy implementation with the intention of: i) establishing what is already known about educational change in the context of *restructuring* and *reculturing* perspectives on this problem; ii) identifying gaps in the existing literature and; iii) then identifying the original contribution of my research to this extensive knowledge base on educational change.

I used my two research questions directed at the structural and cultural factors that influence policy implementation as the focal point when reviewing the available literature. This chapter is divided into three sections. In **Section One** I define what policy is and the policy process with particular emphasis on top-down mandates as in the case of *restructuring*. I then explore the intentions and implications of the South African FET policy reforms within the context of globalisation.

**Section Two** provides a synthesis of *restructuring* and *reculturing* as approaches to change. I have identified several elements that constitute structure and culture, and which have been found to influence policy implementation. In this section I explain *restructuring* and *reculturing* as approaches to educational change. I conclude the section by indicating that both *restructuring* and *reculturing* should be considered as mutually exclusive in order for long-term sustainable reform to take place.

Finally, in **Section Three** I draw from the literature reviewed and present a conceptual framework for analysing policy implementation within the FET context of the South African education system. The conceptual framework presented here served as the basis for the rest of the research process for this case study.

## **Section One**

### **3.1.1 Defining policy and implementation**

Various definitions have been given for policy. According to Fowler (2000:9), “[p]ublic policy is the dynamic and value-laden process through which a political system handles a public problem. It includes a government’s expressed intentions and official enactment as well as its consistent patterns of activity or inactivity”. Policy can be considered as rational activities directed towards resolving group conflict over the allocation of resources and values in order to restore the cohesiveness, order and functionality of society (Harman, 1984). Ball defines policy as “clearly a matter of the authoritative allocation of values ... [A policy] project[s] images of an ideal society” (Ball,1990:3). He sees policies as exercises of power and control, and authoritative allocation between social groups.

Accordingly, policies vary in their purpose, complexity, target groups, distribution costs and benefits, and location of their impact. A distinction can be made between the various public policies. Substantive policies reflect what government should do, procedural policies indicate who is going to take action and through which mechanisms, material policies provide real resources or rights among the social groups, while symbolic policies remain more rhetoric about the necessary changes. In the South African context since the release of Nelson Mandela in 1990, most education policies have been symbolic, substantive and redistributive (Jansen, 2001; De Clercq, 1997). Since the election of the ANC-led government in 1994 change has been urgently needed and the government compelled to deliver on its promises. The result was a multiplicity of new policies in the education arena with virtually no attention given to implementation or the concerns of implementers.<sup>59</sup> International literature indicates

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<sup>59</sup> In this case study implementers refer to the provincial department of education officials, college rectors, lecturing and administrative staff, College Councils and students.

research interests in the relationship between policy formulation and implementation (Fowler, 2000; Sarason, 1990), and policy and practice (Hargreaves, Lieberman. Fullan & Hopkins, 1998; Fullan, 1993; McLaughlin, 1987). Policy has been perceived as a process consisting of four distinct stages that follow a logical sequential order: policy initiation, formulation, implementation and evaluation. The activities of policy formulation and implementation are often considered to be two distinct and separate actions. According to Ganapathy (1985) this is particularly relevant in developing countries where policymaking is seen as more prestigious than policy implementation. Policy formulation is usually the responsibility of the politicians and undertaken by those near the top of the political system, while implementation, on the other hand, is put into practice close to the grass roots level and perceived to be a rational, technical, administrative activity. Within this context my observation is that policymakers generally assume that decisions to bring about change automatically result in changed institutional behaviour.

The South African FET policy process, although having been the subject of extensive and vibrant consultations at different levels, was drafted by senior bureaucrats with strong political affiliations to the ruling ANC government. Considering the immature state of the new democracy at the time of drafting the policy, and the enthusiasm of the policymakers who were still very much part of the anti-apartheid struggle, the intention was to set the stage for a highly political agenda with little consideration of the implementation realities. Implementation was something that was going to happen at a later stage, elsewhere and be carried out by someone else, and as such, the policymakers did not view it as their major immediate concern. Their immediate priority was to have a policy in place so that there would be some indication that the newly elected government was serious about addressing the inequalities of the past.

Constitutionally, provincial departments are responsible for implementing the policy by translating it into such action as they, as implementers, consider best within their unique contexts. On the other hand, policymakers, being oblivious to the tensions and contradictions in implementers' contexts, assume that change will happen as prescribed.

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Instead, my experience indicates that time should be spent on planning the implementation stages that follow on from the policy decision to the initiation of change. According to Khan, in developing countries “implementation is assumed to be a series of mundane decisions and interactions that are not worthy of any scholarly attention” (1989:851).

The question arises as to what are the implications of viewing policy and implementation as two distinct activities. The assumption following upon the perspective that policy and implementation are distinct actions is that the translation of policy into practice is an unproblematic, linear process that requires strong control to ensure that the implementers carry out their directives as stipulated by the policymakers. However, McLaughlin (1998) reminds us in the Rand Case Agent Study of the complexities associated with implementation.

*It is exceedingly difficult for policy to change practice, especially across levels of government. Contrary to the one- to-one relationship assumed to exist between policy and practice, the nature, amount and pace of change at school level is a product of local factors and are largely beyond the control of higher-level policymakers (McLaughlin, 1998:12).*

If one considers the intergovernmental nature of the South African FET system, implementation occurs at both the provincial and institutional levels while policy, norms and standards are set at the national level. If this is the case, then to what extent could policies and plans developed centrally at the national level be implemented as intended across the levels of government? To compound the problem even further the FET implementation plan was developed with no consultation with those who would be most affected by the imminent changes – the FET college staff.

It is important to bear in mind that implementers cannot be perceived as robots that mechanically carry out the instructions as issued from above. Unlike policymakers, they face the reality, diversity and complexity of their contexts, and are in most instances capable of making appropriate decisions in specific social and cultural contexts which they, as implementers, understand better than any policymaker or politician. It would be naive to think of implementation as an automatic transmission rather than as a process of bargaining and negotiation between the various role players. Implementers

(departmental officials and technical college staff) always apply their own meaning and interpretation to the intended policies and, in the process, use their power or discretion to subvert or alter the original goals of the policymakers. Policies are therefore always mediated through minor or major adjustments within the context in which they are implemented, and are changed in the process (Fowler, 2000). Having recognised the power of implementers it would be appropriate for policymakers to anticipate implementation problems in order to strategise so as to minimise or influence the agents of the implementation process (Gunn & Hogwood, 1982; Sabatier & Mazmanian, 1979).

A top-down approach to policy implementation, such as *restructuring*, which is based on the Weberian notions of bureaucratic rationality has been widely criticised because of the inability of policymakers to acknowledge the unique contextual differences, or to have control over the organisational, social and political processes that affect implementation. The distinct natures of policymaking and implementation guarantee that policymakers can never be sufficiently close to the dynamics on the ground to produce anything but vague and ambiguous proposals that are usually in conflict with one another. The assumption that implementation is rational and hierarchical ignores the complex and unique properties of institutional cultures, and the realities that implementers face in terms of the influence of context, micro-politics, institutional culture, the emotions of implementers and leadership styles. Top-down mandates are highly insensitive to the fact that people respond differently to change initiatives and that planned change is seldom achieved as anticipated. According to Ball (1994:20) “policy as texts enter rather than simply change power relations. The complexity exists between the relationship of policy intentions, texts interpretations and reactions”. I want to argue that it is important to pay attention to what has been said so far in appreciating that change is more than just a mandate – it involves the complexities and subtleties of the change process (Tyack & Tobin, 1994; Tyack & Cuban, 1995; Stoll & Fink, 1996) and also how implementers interpret the change. This means that both the context and process of change need to be addressed simultaneously (Sergiovanni, 2000).

If the role of implementers is to translate policies into action, then policy needs to be defined more broadly as something that starts with the policymakers and continues throughout the implementation phase “a movement back and forth between policy

formation and implementation” (Barrett & Fudge, 1981). According to Fullan (1989) implementation is a process of policy clarification and is less about putting predefined policy into practice than about making further policy. Hjern (1982) argues that policy is not so much the result of government decisions and controlling actions as the outcomes of the activities of all the different stakeholders (implementers and target groups).

The policy perspective of accentuating the role of the various actors’ goals, strategies and struggles in respect of the FET policy is useful in order to understand the interaction of the various stakeholders (implementers) in the FET college sector in South Africa. Ball defines policy first “as discourse” that places policy within the big picture of possibilities and constraints, and secondly “as text” in which a range of policy options is available (1993:13). It is within these perspectives that this analysis of the FET policy in South Africa is based. This is particularly relevant when one considers the degree of uncertainty that prevailed with the adoption of the FET policy. On the other hand one would argue that a substantive and symbolic policy such as the FET policy was not meant to engage with implementation issues.

### **3.1.2 FET policies in the global context**

The reforms in skills training and FET stem from the analysis of the *restructuring* that has taken place in the world economy over the last quarter of a century. These changes are based firstly on the spread of new electronic technologies leading to new forms of work organisation and new managerial philosophies that require workers to be “multi-skilled” and “flexible” (Mathews, 1994; Story, 1994). Secondly, the growing internationalism of world production, investment and trade has made local markets more dependent on international markets and investments to the extent that nation-states need to train and equip their workforce to international standards (Ashton & Green, 1996; Brown & Lauder, 1996). New employees are required to demonstrate flexibility, creativity, problem-solving skills, confidence with information technology, and be able to co-operate in the workplace.

In addition to the above, what is also prevalent in the South African context and which raises concern is the growing numbers of youth unemployment, welfare dependency and social marginalisation of the historically disadvantaged masses. In South Africa where

economic considerations are deemed important there is a growing need for FET to meet the vocational demands faced by the country, as FET is seen as the crossroad of adolescents lives and a “gateway” to economic advantage. Reform of the FET college sector is intended to improve the quality of education in order to effectively combat educational alienation, so that the youth is able to make a contribution to society. The policies put in place to reform the FET college sector require an overhaul of the inherited apartheid vocational education and training system that will bring about economies of scale, increase efficiency and effectiveness, and redress past inequalities. The question that arises is whether the intended *restructuring* of the FET college sector will bring about the desired changes through the mergers.

### **3.2 The paradox of either restructuring or reculturing as policy options is no option**

There are several lessons to be learnt from the work on the dimensions of change (McLaughlin, 1998; Fullan, 1991; 1993; 1996; 1998a; 1998b; 1999; 2000; Lieberman, 1992; Louis & Miles, 1990; Elmore, 1990, 1995; Hargreaves, 1994; 1995a; 1995b). Findings indicate that both top-down and bottom-up approaches to innovations often do not succeed to bring about the desired changes for several reasons (see Reynolds, Hopkins & Stoll, 1993). Cuban (1988) distinguishes between innovations that are “first-order” changes and those that are “second-order” changes. First-order changes are those that seek to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the organisation without disturbing existing organisational *structures*, or substantially altering the roles of students or lecturers. Second-order changes involve fundamental modifications within the organisation, which could involve reviewing organisational structures and roles.

The reform of the FET sector in South Africa seeks to bring about second-order change. The demographics of the student population in FET colleges have been undergoing change over the past decade. Cultural diversity has become the hallmark of South African education institutions. Work practices have altered significantly and there is a need to develop instructional practices that are in line with global trends in developing a self-directed, life-long learner. The policy framework promises greater development, effectiveness, equity, participation and redress. In addition, the unprecedented volume of information available both nationally and internationally requires complex analytical

skills in order to access this information in an efficient and meaningful way. The policy framework for FET identifies *restructuring* as the implementation framework in order for the sector to respond to these social, cultural, and economic needs.

The impetus for changing structures (*restructuring*) as an approach to educational change can be seen in certain influential reports such as *Horace's compromise: The dilemma of the American high school* (1985), *A place called school: Prospects for the future* (Goodlad, 1984) *A nation prepared: Teachers for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* conducted by the Carnegie Forum on Education, and the Economy Task Force on *Teaching as a profession*, (1996) and *Restructuring the education system: Agenda for the '90s* (Cohen, 1987). Changing structures was seen as way to improve learner performance. The changing of education structures to bring about significant changes has resulted in widespread change efforts in countries such as Canada, England, New Zealand, Sweden, Australia and the United States. *Restructuring* is often used to describe a pattern of events and activities of mandated changes through “top-down” directives that generally operate at two levels: first, within the classroom, and second, within the larger context of the institution (college or school), the district and its larger jurisdiction (the province). In educational settings *restructuring* initiatives have focused more and more on the use of time and space, grouping of staff and students, staff roles, organisational curriculum and the use of technology (Harradine, 1996 cited in Hattam, Mcinerney, Lawson & Smyth, 1999) to effect changes.

Why has *restructuring* been so popular? There are several reasons for the choice of *restructuring* as an approach to educational reform (Elmore, 1995). Firstly, structural changes have been proven to have high symbolic value in that they are highly visible and send out a signal that something important is happening. Structures are important, and disrupting patterns communicates that change and reform is being taken seriously. *Restructuring* in the FET context through merging and setting up new governance structures sends out a strong message that the government is serious about making the changes promised in the FET policy (Department of Education, 2001:25). The public impression created is that a new system is in place and promises the South African society greater responsiveness, efficiency and effectiveness. Secondly, structures are easier to change than most other proponents for change. Staff employed in the South African FET college system, as in most other school systems, are usually subjected to

legislative prescripts relating to their conditions of service. To replace the staff would be a long and costly procedure and would involve much resistance and protest. The same would apply if a decision were taken to close down a particular college. Therefore, the most effective option would be to change through *restructuring*. Thirdly, lecturers are of the opinion that structures exercise a strong influence over their teaching, and that structure constrains their ability to do what they believe is beneficial for their students. Fourthly, it is consistent with deeply held beliefs among reformers and practitioners about what people think is wrong with schools or colleges.

Metaphorically, *restructuring* conveys the image of discarding the old and starting anew – moving from the old order to inventing an order based on new assumptions, values and vision. The *restructuring* of the South African FET colleges is associated with discarding the stigma attached to these institutions from the apartheid era, and creating new vibrant FET colleges that are responsive to the social, political and economic needs of the society. In the FET sector the concern among many nations around the world, in the last 20 years, has been about the growing number of students who are unsuccessful in making the transition to working life, and this in turn poses the threat of long-term unemployment, long-term social dependency and social marginalisation. Concerns over the last three decades have led to the *restructuring* of the FET sector in many countries in order to address the specific issues of academic failure, school dropouts, student alienation and the need to equip students to contribute to an increasingly complex society. The changes are perceived to be in line with the *restructuring* of the global economy and the endeavour to create a skilful workforce that could lead to greater economic development and contribute to a more advanced, competitive society (Convey, 1991).

The major limitation upon which *restructuring* is based is the assumption that individual contextual factors are not considered important. *Restructuring*, like all other top-down mandates, is based on the premise that all institutions, staff and students are the same, have the same interests and the same needs, and that the scientific rules of reform supersede the professional judgement of the implementers (Elmore, 1995, 2000; Fullan, 2001a). In reality we know that each institution, like individuals, possesses unique characteristics and is located within a particular contextual setting. Any change process, no matter how small, is not an isolated process, but occurs within some specific

context (Fullan, 1991; Sarason, 1990). The FET colleges should not be seen as merely buildings, but considered in terms of the people inside making them complex organisms. The context of the South African FET colleges is characterised by the ideological intentions of apartheid education. Changes in the FET college sector over the last two decades have led to increases in the enrolment of black students at these colleges, while the staff component remains to a large extent unchanged and predominantly white.

The organisational context has been found to influence change initiatives in several ways (Deal, 1990; Sergiovanni, 1987; Sarason, 1990). At the same time top-down planned change, efforts have also been made to discover what constitutes barriers to change, of which there are several. Firstly, the structure (physical arrangement) of an organisation (FET college) in terms of its patterns of scheduling, physical layout and size can minimise opportunities for interaction among the members of the staff. When there is limited or no interaction among staff members, we find decreased self-efficacy, an avoidance of controversy and the assumption that individuals do not share the same views (Fullan, 1991; Sarason, 1982). This is typical of the South African college culture. Staff operate in their own little “boxes,” oblivious to the need for change. Instead, they perceive change to be something that disrupts their activities, wastes limited resources (time and money) and has no effect on their jobs as lecturers in benefiting students.

When top-down mandates like *restructuring* are imposed, the general impression created is that those who initiate these changes are not concerned about those upon whom the changes are imposed. Top-down change initiatives are considered to be authoritarian and dictatorial in nature, ignoring the principles underlying a democratic society in which participation is fundamental for the effectiveness or efficiency of the change process. Fullan maintains, “change in education depends upon what teachers do and think – it’s as simple and complex as that” (1999:117). In order to be able to get staff to engage more, it may be necessary to change the structural organisation to foster interaction and collaboration.

Changing the structure may not be sufficient on its own because secondly, the policies and regulations required to achieve substantial change may also be inhibiting factors

(Levine, 1991). Policies that facilitate change are those related to providing greater autonomy at the organisational level, fostering collaboration among staff and providing adequate channels for communication and staff development (Carnegie Foundation 1998). Collaboration, discussion and disagreement lead to a sense of ownership and understanding of the change agenda. For the reform agenda to achieve success it is important that implementers embrace change, and that the change decisions are arrived at collaboratively (Fullan, 1991; Lieberman, 1992; Louis & Miles, 1990). Not only does collaboration help to overcome resistance, but it also has positive effects in that it leads to better change ideas, group consensus and greater commitment from all involved in implementing the change agenda. *Restructuring* initiatives are seldom reached through collaboration, as they are generally mandates that need to be executed within relatively short spaces of time. However, in some instances consultation and collaboration may not be appropriate, or perhaps be restricted to certain levels, as too much consultation may result in implementation delays, particularly when there is a strong political motive for change.

One may argue that in a country like South Africa where change is a fundamental part of the redress agenda and policies were developed through a vigorous consultation process the intents of the policies are fairly clear. Stakeholders are aware of what changes mean and imply even if they do plead ignorance. What may be unclear though is how the policies would be implemented.

Thirdly, the availability of resources in terms of both time and money greatly influences change initiatives (Louis & Miles, 1990). Time is required for implementing activities and without this time implementation has been found to fall flat (Sarason, 1982; Simpson, 1990), while a lack of money could limit the type of improvement and materials available for successful change (Louis & Miles, 1990). Typically *restructuring* is about altering the “rules, roles, responsibilities and relationships” (Hargreaves, 1994:242). In order for implementers to change their roles there needs to be clarity as well as receptivity about their new goals and role expectations, their ability to enact the new roles, sufficient resources and an enabling or compatible environment to implement the change agenda.

In addition there needs to be adequate time allocated for the role changes to take place, and the necessary coordination, support and encouragement to reinforce the changes as desired. Role change requires a deliberate process of “role re-socialisation” (Giacquinta, 1994). In the Cambire Study (pseudonym) Gross et al. (1971) identified several reasons for implementation failure, among which the lack of clarity among implementers and resistance among rank and file who have to carry out the changes have been identified as barriers to implementation. Not only do implementers need to be clear about their new roles, but they also need the necessary capacity, skills and knowledge to carry out their new roles. It is when the coalescing and maintenance of the broadly conceived “desiderata are missing” that incomplete implementation occurs (Giacquinta in Hargreaves et al., 1998).

The complexity of the changes envisaged for the South African FET sector required new knowledge, skills and understanding all of which require time. In order to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of the colleges staff need to upgrade their qualifications, be re-trained to develop partnerships with business and industry, and to exercise more flexibility and innovation in their teaching practices. This premise is based on life-long learning while the existing culture of the FET colleges does not promote this kind of development among staff.

Fourthly, leadership and support are essential from all levels (provincial and institutional) in order to foster relationships and institutionalise change by creating opportunities for shared decision-making, developing a shared meaning and understanding, alleviating fears and addressing resistance to change. According to Berman & McLaughlin (1978), it is important to establish whether there is sufficient support for the policy among the major stakeholders. In terms of the technical college mergers there was a need to ascertain whether the Rector and staff, who were required to implement the policy, were ready to accept the change. Without acceptance and buy-in there is bound to be resistance. The role of leadership at both the provincial and institutional levels is vital to steer and guide the change agenda. Without a leader in place the plan is left to “run on its own,” with implementation taking place in an ad hoc manner. In cases where there is more than one level of governance affected by the policy, it is the role of the leadership at the highest level of the hierarchy to gain the trust and confidence of the rest of the staff in order for the reform to be implemented

successfully. In the case of the FET sector this entails the Gauteng Department of Education officials, Rectors and College Council members. On the other hand, the support of the lecturing staff is not as important as that of the Rector or provincial department officials, as staff at lower levels often conform to a Rector once they are convinced of the value of the change. This, however, does not preclude the fact that lecturers may initially resist the reform even though their Rector may support it. Considering the “closed” institutional culture of the FET colleges, change initiated from outside would almost certainly be approached with scepticism. The role of the leader in the Gauteng Department of Education should be to develop trust and confidence in the new system and in the changes.

It has been reiterated several times that there is no doubt that change is a highly complex processes (Fullan, 1993; Deal & Peterson, 1994; Mintzberg, 1994). It was assumed that *restructuring* the FET sector through the merging of the FET colleges would bring about greater flexibility, responsiveness and life-long learning opportunities through an overhaul of the inherited apartheid FET system. Merging in this context would involve the uniting of two or more FET institutions to form a larger institution, the thrust of which I have already discussed in Chapter 2. However, the multifaceted nature of the change intervention in the form of *restructuring* requires a parallel and perhaps more important approach to improving the internal interactions and relationships. Tyack & Tobin (1994) refer to this as the “grammar of schooling” which remains unchanged through *restructuring*. Elmore argues that the relationship of structure and practice is mediated by “relatively powerful forces such as shared norms, knowledge and skills” and that these non-structural aspects need to be considered when implementing change innovations (1995:26). These tangible and intangible cultural elements are referred to as the “doors” (Joyce, 1991) for sustainable reform.

The challenge for the FET sector is to bring about cultural or second-order changes. Several authors have made reference to balancing *restructuring* with *reculturing* (Hargreaves, 1994; Fullan, 1996) in order to bring about sustainable change. Fullan and Miles (1991) found that change initiatives that focused on structural and organisational changes alone constituted a very limited strategy for sustainability. They maintain that there is a need to look more closely at the culture of the organisation.

Organisational theorists suggest that educational institutions are associated with a particular type of culture (Deal, 1983). Several definitions of “culture” have been suggested. Akin (1991:3) defines culture as the “social organisations of the ... staff which represent shared beliefs, customs, attitudes and expectations”. Deal and Kennedy (1983:140) refer to culture as “the way we do things around here”. Akin’s more formal definition sees culture in terms of a social dimension and regards culture as the social and phenomenological uniqueness of a particular community or institution, which comprises of intangible and symbolic elements such as values, beliefs, ideologies and also tangible elements such as behavioural and visual expressions (Beare, Cladwell & Milikan, 1989). Schein (1985) argues that culture is based on implicit and silent assumptions, which cannot change unless brought to the surface and confronted. If necessary, culture can serve as a mechanism for change on condition that the cultural assumptions are openly examined, as all of the institution’s cultures may not need to change in order to bring about the desired sustainable reform (Schein, 1985).

While there are several dimensions to culture, the most relevant to this research study is in fact that change does have some impact on an organisation’s culture. The FET institutions will need to respond to the pressures of globalisation, and the political and socio-economic challenges of South Africa that require a deeper thinking about the threat to the institutions’ traditional habits, norms, values, beliefs and assumptions, all of which are based on the philosophy of CNE. In addition the staff is predominantly white while the majority of the students are black. There are also disparities in terms of gender, work ethos and management styles. The challenge in transforming the FET sector would be to change the way staff think, work, and relate to their purpose through *reculturing*.

What would *reculturing* entail? Fullan (1996:420) refers to *reculturing* as “the process of developing new values, beliefs and norms”. *Reculturing* is seen as shifting the “hearts and minds” of implementers so that they do not merely accept but are committed to the changes. The intention is to change the shared beliefs, customs, attitudes and expectations of the implementers “the process of developing new values, beliefs and norms” (Fullan, 1996:420) so as to find ecological connections between the purpose of education, the organisational values of the institution, as well as its structures, cultures and leadership, and the work and lives of staff through (Hargreaves et al., 1998). In

other words both the internal and external contexts of change should be considered. In terms of the South African FET college sector this implies questioning the traditional, deep-seated beliefs, values, norms and assumptions of the institutional culture.

The perception is that change will be successful when implementation is successful. However, Fullan (1993:21-22) argues that change cannot be mandated. The complex nature of the changes envisaged through the implementation of the FET policy requires high levels of understanding of what is meant by the change agenda. Considering that FET is a new concept introduced in the South African education system capacity and skills are needed to communicate the vision and mission of the sector. This requires time, support, adequate structures and leadership in order to create a common vision.

Leadership needs to be aware that change, because of its unfamiliar contents is bound to be resisted and challenged by those affected by the change agenda. The mergers in the FET sector entail a complex and difficult process. Several studies on educational change focus on implementation and the way in which change happens, including barriers to change and the role of the change agent(s), but with little consideration of the decisions, events or action that precede the implementation phase. In this regard Fullan raises the question:

*What do we know about successful initiation; that is what do we know about startups that have a better chance of mobilizing people and resources towards implementation of desired change? (1991:62).*

The important adoption stage has been identified as “what happens by way of mobilisation, and preparing for change” (Fullan, 1991). This was also identified earlier by Miles (1978). Preparing for change lends itself to earlier theories of planning which emphasised the need to plan for change. This is perhaps what influences Fullan’s (1992; 1993) notion that vision and strategic planning come later in the change process. For successful change it is important that the vision be created and communicated, that there is commitment to it and that people align their work with it (Beckhard & Pritchard, 1992). The vision for the FET sector is articulated in the policy. The policy development process entailed rigorous consultation and debate among stakeholders. This commenced with the establishment of the NCFE in 1996. Considering the gradual

impetus to initiate change in the FET colleges sector it would have been appropriate to create an awareness of the role the sector should play and how changes in the sector could be brought about. This could have taken the form of national advocacy campaigns directed toward the human resources needs of the country and the role that colleges could play in meeting the skills needs of industry and commerce.

Changing beliefs, values, norms and assumptions requires understanding and commitment from those involved. Time for reflection is needed before a plausible vision can emerge and it is important that the vision precedes any implementation actions. Furthermore success presupposes that the vision be shared (Fullan, 1992). The notion of a shared vision through *reculturing* conveys the idea of ownership and commitment which is achieved through a complex array of communication processes that are essential to question fundamental values, beliefs and behaviours (Fullan & Stiegelbauer, 1991). In complex changes cognisance needs to be taken of the time lapse between policymaking and implementation.

In the case of the FET colleges a great deal of time (two years) had elapsed between the two processes. In this case, despite the rigorous consultation during the policymaking process, and the numerous workshops conducted by the CCF and AFETISA, it was necessary to create a shared meaning of the change at the institutional level so that implementers could understand their role within the bigger picture of systemic change. Provincial departments have a significant role to play in changing the preconceived beliefs, values, norms and assumptions prevalent in the FET college sector. It would have been appropriate for the provincial department to hold meetings with colleges individually and collectively to impart information about the envisaged change (merger) and ensure support from the Rector, Council and college management for the merger. This would have ensured trust, built commitment and motivated colleges to participate in the restructuring activities.

Senge (1991) developed the concept of personal mastery, shared vision, and team learning as the necessary proponents of what he calls the “fifth discipline” or “systems thinking” through the establishment of “learning organisations”. The concept of “learning organisations” has been endorsed as a way to *restructure* organisations (Kerka, 1995) through “fundamental change(s) in an enterprise’s (school’s) culture and

core competencies, both of which require substantial time and interventions” (Miles, 1999).

It should also be borne in mind that the results and effects of the change innovation take even longer to be noticeable (King, 1995). Most people do not discover new understandings until they have delved into something (Fullan, 1992) and experienced change as a process and not an event (Hall & Loucks, 1978; Fullan & Stiegelbauer, 1991).

One of the challenges that the South African FET sector faces is the provision of workforce preparation and *restructuring* through closer integration of the vocational education and human resource development fields. This involves changing the roles and responsibilities of all involved – a new way of doing things by working together. Integration of education and training represents a partnership of the two fields that is pertinent to workforce preparation through close alignment of the roles and responsibilities of the two sister national departments – the Departments of Education and Labour. It is important to create a shared vision even between these two departments. This requires adequate time frames to bring about the appropriate mind-shifts. Partnerships also entail closer linkages with business and industry (Cheek, 1990; Doty, 1990). Traditionally, changes of this nature have been brought about through the establishment of new governance structures with representatives from business and industry on these structures (Strong, 1990). The FET policy indicates the establishment of new governance structures with representation from business and industry. This arrangement requires new skills and the capacity to perform the new roles and responsibilities necessary for successful change. If the change is to be in line with global practices then there is a need for deeper changes or second-order changes (Cuban, 1998). This requires changing attitudes, perceptions, behaviour, relationships, and the way people collaborate and communicate.

Communication lies at the heart of any change process and is essential in order to engage the mind shift that enables us to rethink the purpose and nature of the change. The role of communication in ensuring an understanding and shared meaning of the change innovation so as to establish trust and understanding cannot be underestimated. Rogers refers to "the process by which an innovation is communicated through certain channels over time among the members of a social system” as diffusion (1995:5).

Communication is important in that it not only informs those who are directly involved in the key events and activities, but also serves to increase the attention and enthusiasm of implementers. Shared meaning and understanding can make significant change a reality (Rosenholtz, 1989; Joyce & Showers, 1988).

In addition, organisations do not exist in isolation and it is important to acknowledge the internal and external environmental influences. It is also important to bear in mind that, irrespective of whether change is imposed or sought, the meaning of change is seldom understood. On the other hand, by nature people do not change unless they share a compelling reason for doing so (Fullan & Stiegelbauer, 1991; Schwahn & Spady, 1998; McNaught et al., 1999; Bates, 2000). In order to be responsive stakeholders need to understand the influences of the internal as well as the external environment on the effectiveness and responsiveness of the institution. The effects of globalisation increase the need for the institutions to review their values, beliefs and assumptions on a continuous basis.

Hargreaves (1994) argues that it is important to establish and maintain the socio-cultural conditions needed for collaborative professional development. By this he means that it is necessary to consider on-going learning and development as a professional responsibility. However, the traditional culture of the FET colleges in South Africa can be characterised as an individualistic, balkanised culture, which isolates staff and thereby creating very few opportunities for collaboration and professional interaction (Dobbins, 1997; Hargreaves, 1992). This is a culture that does not support learning, a shared vision and collaboration. Instead the organisational culture is characterised by what individuals are expected to know, how they are to behave, the meaning of the institution's sagas and stories, and what new individuals have to learn in order to function effectively. For successful change new shared goals have to be established, and the challenge is to build the culture of the restructured organisation. Participants (implementers) at all levels of the system are part of a system, and how they relate to one another partially explains how they attribute meaning and do or do not comply in ways that translate mandates into building level changes (Fullan, 1996).

By and large culture is learned, often because people within institutions develop attachments, particularly to the tangible elements of the culture, which are then

reinforced and entrenched through interaction and daily routine. As a result, “when change alters or breaks the attachment, meaning is questioned” (Deal, 1987:6). Since the cultural and structural features of a FET college are inextricably linked (Hargreaves, 1994:256) “the purpose of *restructuring* becomes one of changing organisations so that good ideas and strategies born in practice can flourish and not be stymied by existing bureaucratic forces” (Grimmett, 1995:210).

Culture is not just restricted to a classroom or college, but extends beyond the college into the district where there are distinct cultural norms. Even if two colleges appear to be similar from the outside, closer examinations of the organisations will reveal that their cultures are reflective of the individual and group relationships. For any planned change to be successful, it is important to recognise that the school’s need and directions of change are a product of its uniqueness – in a holistic, ecological way. The decisions taken by policymakers on implementation and reform should be such that there is coherence and connections, and such that the implementers or “street bureaucrats” are able to see the interrelationship between and interconnections of the many things happening to bring about the desired changes. In terms of the FET colleges this demands a review of the inherited conservative institutional culture.

In this section I identified a number of factors that play an integral role in the process of organisational change. Culture in its widest aspect has potential and power within organisations (Beare et al., 1989). My experience as a practitioner indicates that it is important to examine the cultural factors, and to strengthen those elements of culture that fit the college improvement effort, in order to create a context that supports change taking into account the reciprocal, and not static or linear relationship, that exists between structural<sup>60</sup> and cultural<sup>61</sup> changes. An understanding of the importance of the power of culture and the importance of staff collegiality to influence change has been emphasised several times (Fullan & Hargreaves, 1991; Hargreaves, 1994; Stoll & Fink, 1996).

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<sup>60</sup> Refers to the physical environment, organisational arrangements, roles, finance, governance curriculum and training.

<sup>61</sup> Refers to norms, habits, skills and beliefs.

*This relationship is much more powerful when teachers and administrators begin to work in new ways only to discover school structures are ill fitted to the new orientation and must be altered. This is a more productive sequence than the reverse when rapidly implemented new structures create confusion, ambiguity, and conflict (Fullan, 1993).*

By looking “at change through (the) multiple frames or lenses” (Bolman & Deal, 1997; Fink, 2000) of *restructuring* and *reculturing*, we are able to see the college in a holistic manner, thereby ensuring the sustainability of the reform agenda. In the next section I present a conceptual framework for my “case” derived from the review of the literature presented in this section.

### **3.2.1 Applicability of the concepts of restructuring and reculturing to FET**

FET is a collective term to identify curriculum programmes designed to prepare students to acquire an education and job skills that enable them to enter employment immediately upon the completion of high school (Lynch, 2000:1-2). In the South African context this translates to level 4 on the NQF. At the same time the FET offered through schools and FET colleges is supposedly required to prepare individuals for the place of work. On the other hand global policy discourses have not only effected changes in FET, but have introduced major changes in all aspects of the education system. The changes brought about in the education systems worldwide include *restructuring*, decentralisation, curriculum standardisation, partnerships, new governance and funding models.

Although a major proportion of the literature reviewed for this study involves school change, the concepts of *restructuring* and *reculturing* are also applicable to changes within the FET college sector for example, the principles of changing rules, roles, responsibilities and relationships underpinning the structural changes through mergers in the South African context. The *restructuring* of the FET sector seeks to remove the duplications in programme offerings and service provision; promote the joint development and delivery of programmes between schools and colleges; enhance responsiveness to local, national and regional needs, and to refocus and reshape the institutional cultures and missions of institutions as South African FET institutions.

At the same time the cultural domains of FET colleges are hierarchical. The FET policy provides limited autonomy<sup>62</sup> to the FET colleges. The greater authority granted to FET colleges pre-empts the building of capacity and professional development to equip college staff to take on added responsibilities over time – medium to long term objective (Department of Education, 2001:17). *Reculturing* therefore implies changing beliefs, attitudes, norms and values through professional development, and the creation of learning organisations as defined by Senge (1991).

### 3.3 Conceptual framework

I now present a tentative conceptual framework for my case investigation. Fullan's (1999) reconceptualisation of change as *reculturing* is persuasive in that research has shown that schools that simply *restructure* (change the curriculum, add new roles and relationships, reorganise) bring about little difference in teaching and learning. On the other hand, schools that *reculture* and *restructure* simultaneously make a difference if they focus on student learning, link the knowledge of the student learning to changes in instructional practices, and work together to assess teachers and leadership in order to make the necessary changes (Fullan 1998c). However, there is a need to describe this construct in practice, particularly in the South African FET context in which the emphasis is on *restructuring*.

I used the concepts of *restructuring* and *reculturing* as the organising tools for my case study. I looked for evidence of *reculturing* in the data collected at the national, provincial and institutional levels in their attempt to *restructure* the technical colleges. The comparative analysis of the three cases enabled me to see how *restructuring* and *reculturing* work, and to identify the constructs in terms of their most predominant descriptive characteristics. The objective was to identify codes, categories and embodied elements of the theories, and to generalise findings to these “theories” of educational change in respect of the three cases.

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<sup>62</sup> The term accorded to colleges is “greater authority” which by definition translates to mean the devolution of a number of day-to day decision making functions to the FET colleges (Department of Education, 2001:17).

### 3.3.1 Dimensions of change

Trying to change the behaviour and functions of an existing organisation is one of the most difficult reforms to accomplish. This is particularly true when more than one level of government is involved, when fundamentally different behaviours are required, when the functions and behaviours are those of a large and diverse group, and when the actors have varying incentives for change (Mazamania & Sabatier, 1989).

The implementation of the design developed by an external agent (design team) within an organisation (school or FET colleges) involves multilevel (national, provincial and institutional) implementers (practitioners). The adoption and implementation of *restructuring* in the FET sector involves college Rectors, and provincial and national department officials.

International literature on implementing school reforms has highlighted local capacity and will as the two most important factors for successful implementation (McLaughlin, 1987, 1990). In practice, implementers often interpret policies as they see fit in their specific contexts, and make minor adjustments during implementation. McLaughlin refers to this as “mutual adaptation” and cautions policymakers that it would be naive to expect a plan to be implemented as designed, considering the differing capacity, skills and contexts of the implementers and that “local variability is the rule; uniformity is the exception” (1990:3). Despite the adaptations made there is no assurance that the original policy will be enhanced, or better outcomes achieved. This is as a result of unanticipated consequences, policy disappearance, policy erosion, policy dilution, policy drift, or perhaps poor or slow implementation (Cuban, 1984; Mazamania & Sabatier, 1989; Yin 1979; Pressman & Wildavsky, 1973; Daft, 1995; Weatherley & Lipsky, 1977).

It is often found that the cause of these less desirable outcomes is that policymakers do not put in place the needed support mechanisms, or change the supporting infrastructure to assist implementers when implementing new interventions. For successful implementation of any reform mandate there needs to be sufficient “slack resources” in the form of adequate support for the implementers, capacity to deliver their mandate, and some enforcement or incentives to support compliance (McDonnell & Grubb,

1991). On the other hand, capacity-building requires resources in the form of time, funding and information.

Particularly in education, full implementation is often only evident after several stages of activity (Mazamanian & Sabatier, 1989; Yin, 1979). This happens sometimes because of the developmental nature of the intervention, but in other instances may be due to the cycles of support and interest of leaders, competing policies and available funding.

### *3.3.2 The FET case study framework*

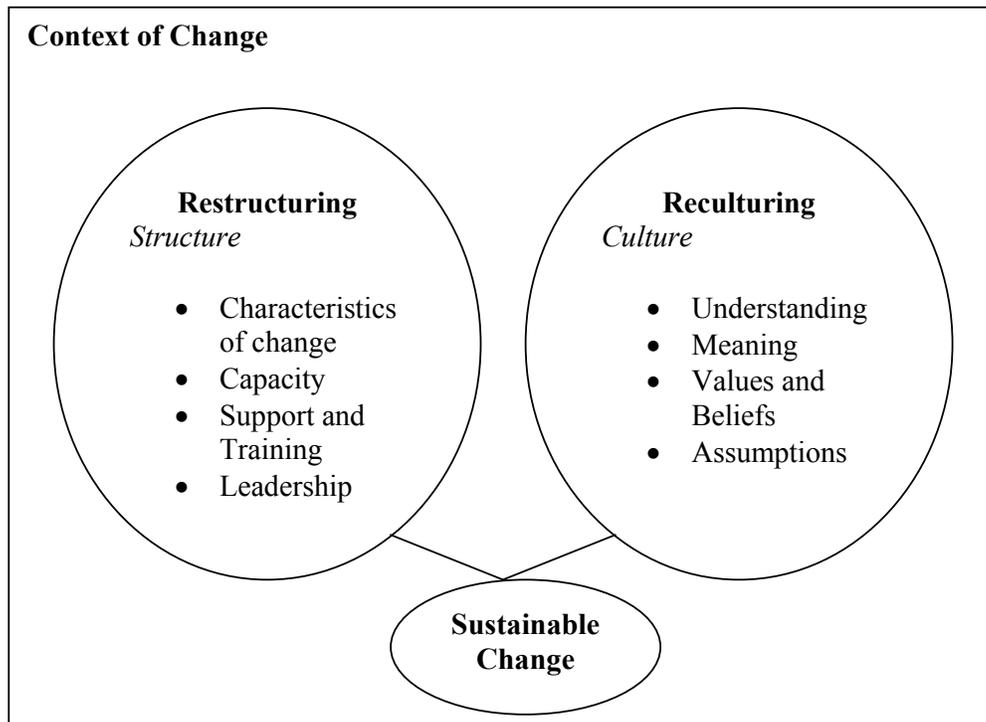
The framework portrayed in Figure 3.1 is an attempt to capture the complex factors that I identified at the heart of policy implementation. I intend to use the framework to examine the *restructuring* of the FET colleges in the South African context, with the intention of informing and improving implementation practices in developing countries.

The innovation and change framework is based on some of the assumptions derived from the literature review undertaken for this study. The framework is underpinned by the assumptions that educational change

- is a process
- takes place over time
- is influenced by contextual factors
- involves the formal and informal organisational dimension (management practices, nature of change, resources, capacity, support, skills, knowledge and understanding)
- involves the informal, intangible organisational dimension (understanding, meaning, values and beliefs, and assumptions).

These five assertions guided my development of the conceptual framework and design of the case study.

Figure 3.1: Conceptual framework for restructuring and reculturing as approaches to change



The innovation or change framework that I used provides two dimensions of change:

- the organisational (structural) dimension
- the cultural dimension

Inherent in these structures are factors that influence change. These will now be addressed.

The structural dimension of an innovation entails the organisation's philosophy, management practices, employees, clients and capacity to handle change. Inherent in this are the characteristics of the context of change which have a bearing on the nature and extent of the change process. The following factors which could influence the change process are associated with the context of change:

- the general setting (such as a technical college) and the specific scene (state or state-aided college)
- the participants (implementers) involved
- the issues that emerge

- the various actions carried out to effect the change.

The general setting and specific scene together provide a way of examining the dynamics of the change process. This dimension of the change framework helps to uncover the change process and to establish the relationships between the contextual variables (setting, scene, implementers, options) of the change process.

There are many influencing factors which must be taken into account in highlighting the complexity of change. For the purpose of this study I identified the following structural factors: characteristics of the change, capacity, support and training, leadership and resources. The cultural dimensions identified are the assumptions, norms, values, understanding, beliefs and meaning attached to change.

The abovementioned factors collectively constitute a way of examining the dynamics of the change process. These dimensions of the innovation and change framework provide a basis to “unpack” the change process, and to establish relationships between the various contextual variables of the process.

To highlight the complexity of change it must be borne in mind that there are many factors influencing change. For the purpose of this study I made use of the following operational definitions to describe the structural and cultural elements and their respective sub-constructs.

### ***3.3.3. Description of the elements in the framework in terms of the FET case study***

#### **3.3.3.1 Structural factors**

**Capacity** comprises the elements of motivation, skills (material and intellectual), and human resources vital for bringing about the desired changes or reforms. It includes knowledge, support and accountability, and the taking into consideration of the uniqueness and complexity of the differences in local conditions. Insufficient capacity could be as a result of a lack of training, lack of appropriate experience, inadequate equipment, or a combination of these. The objective of capacity building is to ensure that people within the institutions are capable of implementing the reform innovations.

**Characteristics of the change** are those intricate and organic variables that are required to bring about the reform innovation. The change process includes tolerance of a certain degree of uncertainty, greater trust, complexity and is non-linear.

**Leadership** entails the sharing of power and influence to facilitate an organisational development process that engages the human potential and commitment of staff. It includes communicating effectively, demonstrating trust, showing respect, and creating opportunities for growth.

**Resources** are the physical and financial provisions needed to implement an innovation or reform successfully. In terms of educational change time is also regarded as a critical resource for successful implementation.

### **Support and training**

Training entails the ongoing, interactive, cumulative learning necessary to develop new conceptions, skills and behaviour – staff development skills, specific training. Support helps to provide learning by doing, concrete role models, meeting with resource consultants and fellow implementers, the putting into practice of the behaviour, gradual self confidence, continuous assistance. Training is effective when combined with concrete, teacher-specific training activities, ongoing continuous assistance and support, and sustained interaction and staff development.

#### 3.3.3.2 Cultural factors

**Assumptions** are the underlying values and shared identities that determine the behaviour patterns of the people working in the organisation and the visible artifacts of the organisation. Deep assumptions are unconscious, taken for granted and not easily changed.

**Meaning** refers to the sources and purpose of the educational and social change.

**Norms** are behaviour patterns that are typical of specific groups. Such behaviours are learnt from parents, teachers, peers, and many others whose values, attitudes, beliefs, and behaviours take place in the context of their own organisational culture.

**Understanding** refers to the know how of the orientations and working conditions of the actors and the school system.

**Values and beliefs** have to do with the importance of the “moral purpose” of education. Teachers are perceived as agents of educational change and societal improvement. This involves teachers having the conviction that every child can learn, considering learning as a developmental process, valuing the creativity of staff and students, and respecting individual differences among staff and students.

### **3.4 Summary**

In this chapter I offered a synthesis of *restructuring* and *reculturing* as two recent and complementary approaches to educational change. I highlighted the difficulties involved in using either approach on its own because of the complexities associated with human organisations such as the school system. Large-scale change involves systemic reform encompassing multi-layers of stakeholders, each functioning within their own contexts, capacities, realities and understandings. Systemic change, which is associated with deep organisational and cultural change designed to bring about transformation in the beliefs and values of an organisation, is underpinned by a vast array of complex factors. I concluded the chapter with a conceptual framework based on the constructs of the literature for understanding policy implementation.

In the next chapter I describe the methodology used to collect and analyse data in relation to my two research questions.