Chapter Two

LITERATURE REVIEW
Locating Macro Education Policy Change and Teachers' Experiences

2.1   Introduction

The literature review provides an overview of research on education policy change and teachers' experiences thereof. The purpose of this review is to present some perspective of current research and debate on the topic. It also intends to discover what has been done on this topic and what could possibly still be done, and it sets the context and rationalises the significance of the problem (cf. Hart, 1998:27).

This review sets the stage for the inquiry into the education policy debate, and provides a theoretical framework along with the context. In general terms, it serves to situate the findings relating to teachers' experiences of education policy change. More particularly, I have accessed literature that relates to teachers' roles as implementors of policy change, focusing on the South African situation which is swamped with a number of new education policies. The link between education policy change and teachers' experiences thereof forms the unit of analysis of this inquiry.

I have arranged this chapter around the unit of analysis – that is, education policy change and teachers' experiences. Between these two conceptions lies the tension between a variety of closely-linked issues relating to the analysis. Firstly, I introduce

the general background of the transformational setting in South Africa. I then locate education policy change using a heuristic model (Berkhout & Wielemans, 1999) which clearly shows the complexity and interactive process of policy. I found this model useful to illustrate the wider contexts and to locate my particular inquiry at the micro-practical level. Next, I examine the policy-practice interface from theoretical perspectives. Issues such as policy production-implementation, intended-rhetorical, text-practice, and policy-practice gaps are investigated. Following this, I look at the role of teachers as implementors of policy change, and their influence in terms of their thinking and emotional responses. I conclude this theoretical chapter with a brief summary and prompt the following chapter indicating the empirical approach used to answer the research questions.

2.2   Political and educational transformation in South Africa

2.2.1   Background

Policy change in South Africa since 1994 was in the main an attempt by the African National Congress (ANC) to build the future by looking into the past at the disparities and inequalities of apartheid education (Sayed and Paterson 1997). Before the first majority-rule election in April 1994, the apartheid government was responsible for setting and developing education policy. Once the ANC became the new government, it had to take over this duty. Samoff, Rensburg and Groener (1994:1) describe what was expected to be the new direction for education policy, which no doubt would be a contested and widely debated process.

> It is important to recognize the widespread expectation that policy making authority would be transferred from the apartheid government to the African National Congress, which would then proceed to implement its education agenda. That transfer might be halting, spasmodic, and rocky, but its direction would be clear. In practice, the transition from critique to consultation to curriculum is far more contested than was commonly anticipated.

Most education policies and laws that have been introduced by the Minister of Education aimed to transform the national system of education and training to nine

provincial, non-racial departments within a single national system (cf. Bengu, 1999:1-40). For example, the *South African Schools Act* (RSA, 1996c) brought all children under "one school roof, in peace and freedom" (Bengu, 1999:6). Hartshorne (1999:113-114) contends that this act "pulled together proposals from the Hunter Report, the White Paper of February 1995, and the National Education Policy Act of 1996. It specifically repealed and replaced much of the education legislation instituted under apartheid." Issues such as compulsory school attendance, the abolishment of corporal punishment, admission refusals, representative governing bodies, funding, school fees, and language policy in schools were clarified in this act.

The South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) created a national learning system and developed a National Qualifications Framework, integrating education and training at all levels for the first time in South African history. Furthermore, the phasing in of the new Curriculum 2005 (C2005) – which encompasses a new approach to learning and teaching – started in January 1998 (Hartshorne, 1999:114). Bengu (1999:6) contended that this curriculum was designed to "break the shackles of the old South African pedagogy, and lift our learning system into the future". While that may be so according to Bengu, Hartshorne (1999:115) asserts that the curriculum process has been criticised as being "bogged down in too much bureaucracy, academic rationality and theoretical logic, while teachers, who are directly involved in classroom practice, have become mere observers of the process driven by 'outside specialists' ".

We can assume that education systems are bureaucratic "and are intended to be bastions of stability" (Samoff *et al.*, 1994:35). They change slowly, and are by their very nature and function "open to divisions, dissent, and protest in society" (cf. Hartshorne, 1999:8). Schools may become "sites of struggle" and centres of resistance, particularly when the authority of the state is questioned (Hartshorne, 1999:9). This may be perpetuated by the fact that teachers who have spent many years teaching the way they learned to do – "internalising the appropriateness of their pedagogical and professional strategies" – also change cautiously and

tentatively (cf. Samoff *et al.*, 1994:35).

By and large, education policy change cannot be separated from politics. On the contrary, politics put education in its place and education does not exist in a vacuum. That is why it was important to describe briefly the political and transformational educational context for this inquiry. Hartshorne (1999:10) in this regard cautions that "one cannot hope to understand crises in education except against the more immediate canvas of political ideologies and practices in South Africa."

2.2.2   Policy developments since 1994

South Africa has experienced an educational "policy boom" (cf. Sayed & Paterson, 1997, and Addendum K), notably in extensive national legislation documentation – a "comprehensive and ambitious set of education policies" (cf. Harley *et al.*, 2000:287). Since an elaborate historic account of all policy developments would extend the scope of this inquiry unreasonably, a limited overview of education policy change is presented here. Relevant policy documents are briefly described, locating the policy change process in South Africa to contextualise the inquiry. The intended restructuring of the education system is extensive and encompassed in legislation being passed on a continuous basis. At the time when the interviews for this inquiry were being conducted, the following applicable legislation had already been passed:

- *Educators Employment Proclamation,* No. 138 of 1994
- *South African Qualifications Authority Act,* No. 58 of 1995
- *National Education Policy Act,* No.27 of 1996
- *South African Schools Act,* No. 84 of 1996
- *Constitution of the Republic of South Africa,* No.108 of 1996
- *Abolition of Corporal Punishment Act,* No. 33 of 1997
- South African Council for Educators (SACE): *Code of Conduct,* 1997
- Committee on Teacher Education Policy (COTEP): *Norms and Standards for Educators,* 1998
- *Further Education and Training Act,* No.98 of 1998

Hartshorne (1999:109) summarises the initial stage of policy change in South Africa:

> The first major statement on post-apartheid education policy was the White Paper of February 1995, subtitled 'Education and Training in a Democratic South Africa: First Steps to Develop a New System'… Many had expected this document to be the blueprint for a new system, but instead it dealt with a framework of principles and was a statement of intent on the part of the government.

However, a number of specific proposals were submitted in this document, including a suggestion to link the new integrated approach to education and training to a National Qualifications Framework based on a system of "credits for learning outcomes achieved" (Hartshorne, 1999:110-111).

This was done by the South African Qualifications Authority, which was established in 1995 (RSA, 1995) to integrate education and training within a National Qualifications Framework. Bengu (1999:9) saw the NQF as a "powerful vehicle to promote wider access to learning, portability of learning credits and greater mobility of learners across the learning system." In brief, the government was given the mandate to plan development of the education and training system for the benefit of the whole country and its entire people (cf. also Manganyi, 1997).

Bengu (1999:6-7) commented on two reports that emerged from discussions between education and training stakeholders – *Structures for the Development of National Policy Regarding Curriculum and Related Issues and Curriculum Frameworks*, and *A Curriculum Framework for General and Further Education and Training* (SAQA, 1999). The first report dealt with the structures and processes concerning the establishment of National and Provincial Institutes for Lifelong Learning Development. The second report outlined the wider ramifications of the NQF and the outcomes-based approach, as in C2005, for the various levels of the General and Further Education and Training bands.

As was stated earlier, teachers in South Africa have been subjected to momentous education policy change in the form of many new documents, particularly those who had to implement Curriculum 2005. The following section locates education policy

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in a heuristic model.

2.3   Education policy in a heuristic model

An integrative heuristic model (cf. Berkhout & Wielemans, 1999) of the process of education policy situates this inquiry, designating the wider societal contexts. Berkhout and Wielemans (1999: 416) assume the education process

> … to be a dynamic, complex and interactive process. This dynamic interplay can be presented heuristically as ascendant 'cycles' reflecting a complex set of societal fields within which habituated people interact and which temporally manifests at various levels and to different extents within the public domain. We want to consider the role of education policy in a democratic society as part of an increasingly interdependent trend towards globalization. This requires a holistic approach that links the different dimensions of the education policy process instead of merely describing the particular skills, competencies, and behaviors conducive to improving the efficiency of education administrators and governors or the subordinance of policy to the various power processes. Such a heuristic model would suggest the complexity of the domain, although it enables the interpretation of the education policy process (or the question regarding centralization/decentralization dynamics) within a more comprehensive interrelational interpretive framework (including the discursively developed and developing historical context).

Berkhout and Wielemans (1999) present a model which illustrates the interactive communicative patterns encircling policy development, legislation, implementation and comments (see Figure 1[2]). They maintain that "policy continuously shapes and reshapes within these complex, differentiated and dynamic contexts of interrelated societal fields enfolded in an increasingly interdependent tendency towards globalization."

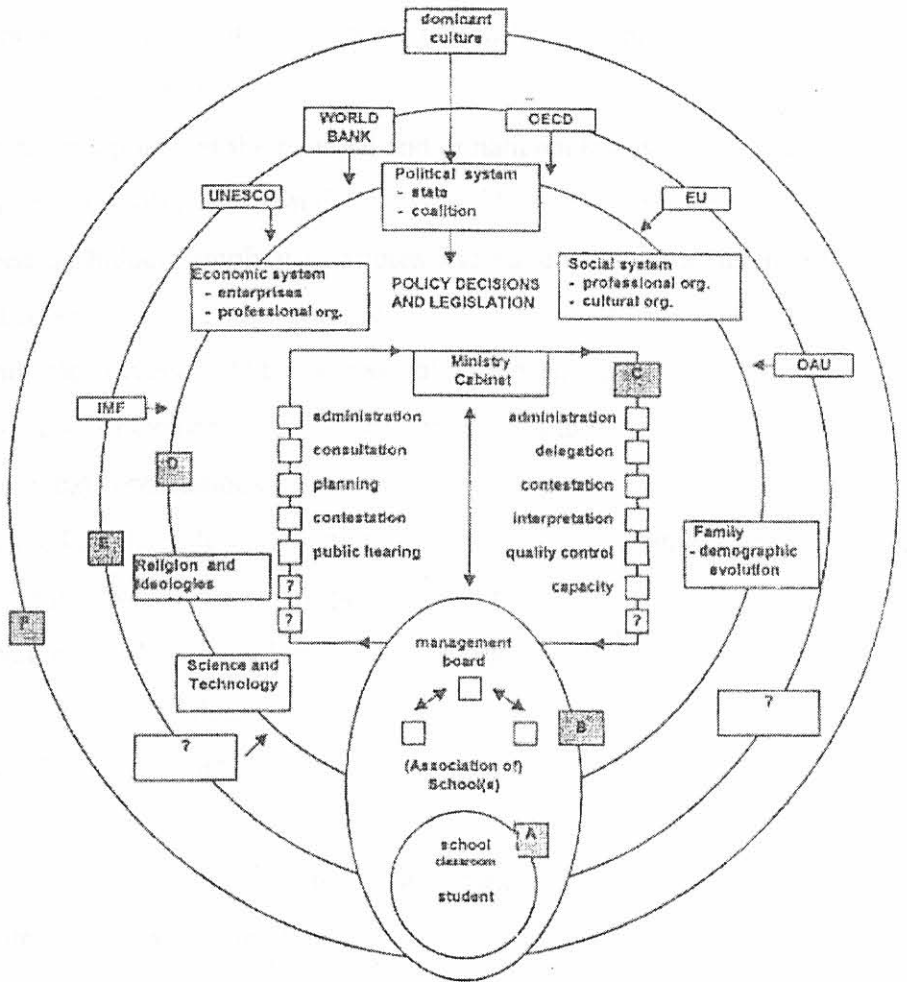[2] Permission to reproduce this figure has been received from the authors.

Figure 1

Source: Berkhout and Wielemans, 1999: 417

Figure 1   A heuristic model of policy development

The various circles within the model represent the complex realities influencing policy development:

- Context A is central to the policy process; it represents the interrelated and diverse nature of learning situations. The pedagogical imperative is reiterated to prevent education policy from becoming disproportionately influenced by

economic needs or the political-ideological struggles between contesting groups.

- Context B represents the institutional patterns in which all learning situations are embedded in a specific community.
- Context C represents policy at the regional and or national levels and focuses on formally constituting political institutions and juridical processes. In addition, focus is placed on hidden, implicit structures and patterns, such as interactive networks and contesting discursive practices.
- Context D indicates diverse additional societal subsystems interacting with the education system – for example, economic changes, labour market conditions or political-ideological contestations.
- Context E embodies the role and impact of supranational organisations – for example, the United Nations, the European Union, the Organisation for African Unity, the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank.
- Context F portrays the dominant rationality of Western modernism or industrialisation-technocratisation.

Berkhout and Wielemans (1999) reason that "the context and circles should not be viewed as absolute, with power linearly or uni-dimensionally enforced," but rather as interactive processes. Their presentation of the policy process does not imply that all policy processes follow a similar successive evolution; instead this representation ought to be considered as an attempt to incorporate and map various facets of the policy process to provide the means for a comprehensible focus.

This heuristic presentation might resemble an objectivist model, which could easily result in a set of overly-simplified indicators to be considered in the successful development, implementation or understanding of education policy. Nevertheless, Berkhout and Wielemans (1999) argue that the habituation and interactive fields of the people at the various levels would eventually be decisive in interpreting the policy process. These actors or groups of actors at the various levels of the policy process should rather be seen as filtering or mediating the process interactively in discursively developed historical contexts. This suggests that teachers, too, filter, mediate and interpret policy change at the micro level.

Any attempt to fully comprehend the complexity of education policy encompassing policy change necessitates an interactive contextual approach. This model provides a complex overview of the contextual perspectives of education policy processes. For the impending inquiry, teachers are the focal point, contextually inclusive, which implies interactive processes as described by Berkhout and Wielemans (1999).

In addition to this heuristic model, Bowe *et al.* (1992:19-23) conceive other policy contexts, which facilitate where this inquiry is located, particularly with regard to the role and positions of teachers in this complex process. In Chapter One, I alluded to some contexts which are now elaborated. Each context involves a variety of fields of responses, some of which are private and others public.

To begin with, the *context of influence* is where public policy is generally established. Here policy discourses and discussions take place among interested groups of people who attempt to define aims of human purposes of education. Political issues that could influence the discourse for policy initiation are also deliberated.

Then there is the *context of policy text production*, which relates to the context of influence in that texts are often rationalised for the public good. Policy texts represent policy in the form of official legal documents. Such texts may, however, be intrinsically incoherent or unclear; misunderstandings may occur, and texts may be generalised or even contradicted. Bowe *et al.* (1992:21) point to intertextuality – in other words, policy text needs to be read in context. They also infer that texts are consequences of conflicts and negotiated compromises.

Lastly, the *context of practice* (Bowe *et al.*, 1992:22) includes responses and reactions to the policy texts that have some kind of repercussion. For policy is not merely "received and employed"; instead the text is interpreted and "re-created". From personal perspectives and value systems, the texts are contested (cf. also Ozga, 2000:1). Importantly for this inquiry, teachers in practice have vested interests in the

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meaning of policy, and policy writers certainly cannot manipulate meaning of their texts as certain parts may simply be rejected, disregarded or intentionally misunderstood. In the following section, I allude briefly to curriculum policy change in South Africa since 1994.

2.4   Curriculum policy change

As mentioned earlier, the post-apartheid government adopted a variety of polices to restructure and transform the legacy of apartheid. OBE and C2005 are part of this. Chisholm (2000:10) explains that in 1998 provincial departments commenced phasing in Curriculum 2005, a new outcomes-based curriculum, which

> arose out of coalition processes to ensure the integration of education and training through the NQF. As an assessment, qualifications, competency and skills-based framework, it encouraged the development of a curriculum model aligned to the NQF in theory and practice.

Christie (1996:415) maintains that this model was based on international notions, including OBE, which were reshaped for local circumstances.

However, Curriculum 2005 was not implemented "onto a blank slate"; rather, it was shaped in a context of multiple social disparities and various educational contexts. People expected and hoped that this national curriculum, which is at the core of the education process, would overthrow the legacy of apartheid. The idealistic and promising principles – such as co-operation, critical thinking, social responsibility and lifelong learning – were expected to empower most individuals to partake in all aspects of society. The reality of implementing C2005 has yet to be witnessed. Not only was C2005 imposed from the top, just like the apartheid curriculum (cf. Christie, 1999:283), but teacher support, development and outcomes based on pedagogical preparation were seriously lacking; only "emergency training and materials" were offered (Christie, 1999). Some academics expressed their deep concern and reservations (cf. Jansen 1997, 1999, 2000) and critiqued C2005 as being obscure, "jargon ridden and generally inaccessible in its discourse" (Christie,

1999:283).

It came as no surprise that on 8 February 2000 the Minister of Education announced a Review Committee to inquire into implementation aspects, structural issues and the level of understanding of outcomes-based education. This was indeed not a review of the outcomes-based philosophy, but of C2005.

The findings of the review team reiterated earlier critiques – for example, policy formulation should not be divorced from policy implementation and political vision alone could not realise educational transformation. In brief, the review team, headed by Professor Linda Chisholm, showed that levels of understanding of C2005 differed greatly, and caused quite some confusion amongst teachers. The curriculum document itself was obscure and loaded with complex language. Continuous assessment raised many questions, the training of teachers was inadequate, and follow-up support was lacking. More often than not learning materials were unavailable, hindering sound implementation. In the main, implementation was believed to be rushed, unrealistic and unmanageable (Chisholm, 2000). It is clear that any education policy change requires adequate teacher assistance as well as structural support in order to facilitate sound implementation.

2.5   Dimensions of the disjuncture between policy text and policy practice

As stated earlier (section 2.2.2), education policy change may be initiated through new policies and it may take place when new policies as text documents are implemented in education practice. For instance, new policies such as a new curriculum, new allocation of educational resources, or a new employment policy signal educational change.

2.5.1   Contested policy and practice connections

Policy tells us something about practice, because policy legitimates and initiates practice (Ball, 1990:22). This contradicts Christie (1999:286), who cites Heneveld (1994):

> … Major policy reforms to improve the quality of primary education over the past fifteen years have not managed to change teaching and learning in classrooms…. Most of the national reform efforts seem to assume that a national policy and delivery of inputs to schools will be sufficient to change what teachers do with children in classrooms.

She also points out Fuhrman's (1995:4) argument:

> Policy research has long demonstrated that reform is not simply a matter of getting the policy right; influences ranging from the political, social, and economic culture to the norms and knowledge structures of educators affect teaching and learning. Part of the challenge for reformers is understanding the limits of policy…

Jansen (2000:86) supports this view from a slightly different stance, and argues that policymaking in South Africa "hinged largely on the symbolism rather than the substance of change in education". Christie (1999:288) states that the

> challenge for policy-makers is to start as close to the school levels as possible and to identify the key points of leverage to bring about the desired changes… Policy makers need to recognise that established patterns and dynamics in schools cannot simply be mandated by policy directives…

Be that as it may, and despite these limitations of government reform policies, they still have power to accomplish change and to serve as directives for change, although depicted as a "fairly blunt instrument in the improvement of educational quality" (Christie, 1999:287, citing Heneveld 1994:4). It is in this broader context of policy-practice connections that I place the focus of my inquiry. Malen and Knapp (1997:419) explain that:

policy analysts and actors often struggle to 'make sense' of
perplexing policy developments such as the seemingly tenuous
connections between policy and practice. The stark and stubborn
disparities between policy's stated aims and the actual effects seem to
defy explanations in part because the social conditions to be attended
are tangled webs of problems with symptoms, sources and 'solutions'
that are neither readily apparent nor reliably addressed by policy.

Sayed and Paterson (1997) in this context cite Dale (1989), who states that "there is
an 'irreducible minimum' in education policy work, namely, that such work must
have a bearing on classroom practice." The focus particularly in South Africa has
been on the production of policy text, on initiating educational change, and often
policy implementation strategies are ignored. Christie (1999:286) suggests that:

> ... the important lessons to be learned about policy processes are that
> policy-makers cannot avoid responsibility for strategic engagement to
> implement change at the point of delivery, and that a policy approach
> which separates formulation from implementation and does not
> recognise the importance of interactive processes in implementation
> cannot hope to achieve the change it envisages.

Policy implementation is thus not a linear process that can be neatly planned and
executed (cf. also Walker & Barton, 1987:x). On the contrary, education policies are
contested readings. Ball and Bowe (1992:18-19) acknowledge this:

> ... policies are textual interventions into practice ... it may be
> possible for some to 'hide' from policy but that is rarely a common
> option ... it is important because it consists of texts which are acted
> on.... Policies do not normally tell you what to do, they create a set of
> circumstances ... or particular goals or outcomes are set.

Notably, the production of policy texts does impact on educational practice although
their meanings are certainly not fixed, as Ball and Bowe (1992) and Bowe *et al.*
(1992) argue. Also, when we review texts on education policy change we need to
realise that "policy texts outline possibilities for action and simultaneously suggest
particular paths for implementation. They set discursive limits on what can be
realised in educational practice. In this respect policy texts inter-relate with each

other" (Sayed & Paterson, 1997:15). Thus, while some policy texts place limits on the processes, others offer particular possibilities in that regard.

As stated earlier, various authors have investigated these policy-practice connections and their integrated and interdependent linkages (Cf. Huberman, 1973; Darling-Hammond, 1990, 1998; Hargreaves, 1991, 1994, 1997, 1998; Ball & Bowe, 1992; Bowe & Ball with Gold, 1992; Sikes in Fullan & Hargreaves, 1992; Spillane, Peterson & Prawat, 1996; Corbitt, 1997; de Clerq, 1997; Finkelstein, 1997; Malen & Knapp, 1997; Rousmaniere, 1997; Stokes, 1997; Reay, 1998; Harley, Bertram & Mattson, 1999; Mabry & Ettinger, 1999; MacGregor, 1999; Wallat & Steele, 1999; Harley *et al.*, 2000; Ozga, 2000). The policy-practice connection also comprises production and implementation issues, which I discuss in the following section.

2.5.2   Education policy production and implementation

According to Bowe *et al.* (1992:6) education policy studies have focused mainly on the generation or the production of policy and to a lesser extent on the implementation of policy, which are mainly seen as two separate processes. Policy makers at provincial level usually produce policy, and schools and teachers remain in the background. Although teacher unions may represent them at policy level, teachers' voices are seldom heard. Research into the implementation phases of policy are mostly "detailed analyses (micro-based ethnographies for example) of how the 'intentions' behind policy texts become imbedded in schooling" (Bowe *et al.*, 1992:6).

However, little research is conducted that relates to the silent voices of the teachers, who are either overwhelmed "beyond their control" or "autonomous resisters or subverters of the status quo" (Bowe *et al.*, 1992). In this context, Reay (1998:194) cites Ball (1994), who says that "the teacher is increasingly an absent presence in the discourses of education policy, an object rather than a subject of discourse". Sikes (1992:36ff) supports the view that teachers have to implement policies

even though in the current educational Zeitgeist they are unlikely to have been involved in their formulation. They are required to change themselves and what they do, to meet specifications laid down by policy makers who neither know them or the contexts in which they work.

Perhaps the time has come to involve teachers, who should participate fully in the education policy change process.

2.5.3   Intended, rhetorical and implemented policy

To unpack the meaning of teachers' experiences of education policy change requires some conceptual background on the education policy and practice debate. Some underlying processes characterise the policy-practice interface. These processes become visible, in that policy may be the intended policy or the rhetorical or the implemented policy (cf. Samoff, Rensburg & Groener, 1994:22). Samoff *et al.* reason that the intentions of policies may or may not translate into concrete actions. This again reflects disjuncture between policy text and policy practice.

The rhetorical policy is the official education policy statement, which focuses on the

> wording of legislation, circulars and policy documents – the policy texts – that set out to lay down the ground rules for policy-in-use. These provide one form of intended policy. However, with all their 'spaces', 'silences' and contradictions, they remain a resource for practitioners (teachers) to develop policy-in-use" (Samoff, Rensburg & Groener, 1994:22).

These may or may not reflect what actually happens in education practice. To uncritically assume that policy is what officials say it is, is a gap in reasoning.

The implemented policy or policy-in-use, too, may or may not correspond with what is announced. This refers to "the institutional practices and discourses that emerge out of the responses of practitioners to both the intended and actual policies of their arena, the peculiarities and particularities of their context and the perceptions of the intended and actual policies of other arenas" (Samoff, Rensburg & Groener,

1994:22). Thus, the adoption of a policy document is not the end of the process.

On the contrary, policy documents initiating change may "remain partial, often ephemeral (short-lived/fleeting), and inherently vulnerable ... and they may be distorted, deflected, or simply ignored" (Samoff, Rensburg & Groener, 1994:23). In addition, they argue that education policy is a main arena for contestation, conflicts, and challenges. In this context, Ozga (2000:2) describes her view of policy, "as a *process* rather than a product, involving negotiation, contestations or struggle between different groups who may lie outside the formal machinery of official policy making." It is important to notice that policy change is contested and debated from contrasting and opposing points of view, which in itself may impede the implementation process. Evidently this is no simple process and requires not only more tentative approaches to its understanding but also further investigation into its contexts.

2.5.4   The significance and complexity of putting policy into practice

Generally speaking, it appears that many countries experience difficulty putting policy into practice. De Clerq (1997:129) argues in this regard that "the evaluation of many World Bank policies has revealed a great discrepancy between their policies and what happens on the ground, especially in Africa." Samoff (1999:417) also raises the question and argues:

> What, then, is policy? From one perspective, the policy is what the ministry has promulgated, and what the teachers do is a deviation from official policy. From another perspective, the actual policy (i.e. the working rules that guide behavior) is what the teachers are doing. In this view, the ministry documents are just that: official statements that may or may not be implemented and certainly do not guide what people actually do. *Stated policy* may thus be very different from *policy in practice*.

This particular inquiry deals with issues pertaining to "what happens on the ground", or "the educational dynamics on the ground" (Samoff, 1994:144). Such "on the ground" issues are revealed in this inquiry through in-depth, non-directive

interviews and open-ended questionnaires, to sensitise, inform, and stimulate education policy process debates. Also, policy debates and policy development processes that are removed or uninformed from such experiences of teachers may run the risk of unsuccessful or inadequate implementation. This is notably so if the inquiry is not grounded qualitatively in micro-level, school-based research – that is, research "on the ground".

Finkelstein (1997:310) endorses this notion that there is "ample evidence to suggest that policy that proceeds from the 'top down' without consideration of the commitments and habits of education practitioners, is likely to fail or succeed only partially…". In addition, "policy-practice connections are relatively unstudied by policy scholars, providing little systematic work that distinguishes the relative impact of policy from other kinds of influences on the behavioural repertoires of teachers…".

In this context, Vulliamy *et al.* (1997:100-101) argue that comparative education is often "bedevilled by an overemphasis on policies and systems at the expense of the actual practice of such policies". This implies that closer attention to education policy change – to what happens on the ground, to classroom practice – is essential (cf. Bowe *et al.*, 1992; Vulliamy *et al,.* 1997).

This potential gap between policy and practice reflects the distance that exists between education policy makers and the teachers who are the recipients of education policy. A national study conducted in South Africa (Holman, 1998) shows that national policy makers in South Africa are far removed from the realities of teaching. The study showed that policy decisions made by government are seen to have a major negative effect on teacher motivation.

In this context, Eisner (1998b: 163ff) expresses some reservation concerning the distance between educational reformers and teachers implementing policy change. He argues that reform efforts – for example, in American education – are mostly top-down, mandated through national or state reports and educational legislation,

sending messages of changed policies to the teachers "on the front line". He explains further that the implied presupposition is that once new policies are formulated, a stream of expected and intended change will begin to flow.

I concur with Eisner's views and concerns. Top-down policy imposition may have detrimental effects on policy implementation, and if educational structures do not support the policy change then certainly this is not only a call for caution in understanding, but also a cause for real concern. Empirical data from this inquiry reveals how such imposed and top-down policy processes are experienced and interpreted. We need to realise that despite new policy papers, curriculum guides and workshops – which may or could facilitate the policy change process – the structural conditions of schools usually stay the same.

Dyer (1999:45-61) offers yet another perspective of policy change implementation which, if not done properly, results in strong resistance and unexpected outcomes. In practice, *ad hoc* adjustments and short-term strategies for coping are made. This relates to a view that policy making is seen as more prestigious than policy implementation, which is often neglected. How policy change is viewed, understood and experienced, however, only becomes real once teachers attempt to implement policy. Mistakenly, it is thought that policy decisions to bring about education change will automatically result in changed education practice.

The implementation process is (or should be) an integral part of policy formulation, and is not an "add-on". It is precisely in this translation of policy change into practice that the messages can be tested for appropriateness and feasibility. Needless to add that it is here that opportunities arise to adjust policy in the light of the experiences of those involved in the implementation process. Kahn (1989:864) eloquently argues that "implementation [of policy] is not a brief pause between a shiny idea and a smart delivery."

The split between production and implementation of policy creates a direct top-down conception of the policy process, as if policy can "get done" to people.

Teachers and schools appear to be disconnected policy receivers (Bowe *et al.*, 1992:7), "absorbing implementors to deliver" the goods, excluded from the generation or the production of policy. Contrary to this perception, Bowe *et al.* (1992:9) have shown that education policy in the form of legislated texts is recontextualised through different kinds of interpretations. They maintain that "… it is not *simply* a matter of implementors following a fixed policy text and 'putting the Act into practice' " (Bowe *et al.*, 1992:10). Instead, policy texts initiating educational change need to be understood within a variety of contexts. As such, policy is by no means a fixed or rigid text; "instead it is a constantly changing series of texts whose expression and interpretation vary according to the context in which the texts are being put into practice" (Bowe *et al.*, 1992:ix).

De Clerq (1997:129) also questions this policy/practice or text/practice relationship. "Is there a fracture between policy and practice?" she asks. She reveals research evidence from other countries that accentuates the complexity of putting policy into practice, particularly in Africa. Furthermore, Harley, Bertram and Mattson (1999:156) argue that what teachers believe "as educationists ('the educationist context') and what they actually do in practice ('the teacher context') alert(s) to the possibility of disjunction between policy and practice." This view is also shared by Sparkes (1991:4) who cites Hargreaves (1989:54): "What the teacher thinks, what the teacher believes, what the teacher assumes – all these things have powerful implications for the change process, for the ways in which curriculum policy is translated into curriculum practice."

Correspondingly, teachers experience education policy change differently (cf. Rousmaniere, 1997:355-367). According to Spillane *et al.* (1996:431), this notion differs from the

> conventional notions of implementation [that] portrayed policy and practice relations as a matter of transmitting ideas from policy to practice: policy was something that was done to local educators. In the scheme of things, policy implementation involved putting into practice the plans of policy-makers.

Instead, it is argued that "local educators adopt an active stance towards policy and in doing so re-shape policy-makers' proposals to fit with their local contexts and work. Local practice is the site where educators figure out what policy means for their work" (Spillane *et al.,* 1996:431). This implies that teachers

> respond to the ideas they construe from policy, rather than some uniform, fixed vision of policy. In this view, relations between policy and practice are not uni-directional: while policy may shape practice, practice in turn may shape policy in that it influences what local teachers make of policy-makers' proposals" (Spillane *et al.,* 1996:431).

Put differently, policies are recontextualised, reconstructed and reinterpreted at school level; they are not simply formulated and then implemented as if these processes were functioning along a continuum (cf. Corbitt, 1997:175). Likewise, education policy change can be viewed as reform acts, and/or "working documents" that are implemented, together with participants' and/or actors' changeable interpretations of policy texts within different contexts and environments, which impact the ways in which change is attained. How these texts are conceived and understood depends on the frame of reference, personal assumptions and presuppositions, along with prior knowledge construction within the different contexts. Texts connect differently in altered contexts, and meaning making becomes contextually personalised and value-driven. Policy texts are interpreted in order to make sense or meaning, to understand them, as they are "translated" to fit with prior knowledge. Bowe *et al.* (1992:13) indicate that policy texts may be "a set of claims about how the world should and might be, a matter of 'authoritative allocation of values', operational statements of values, statements of 'prescriptive intent'."

Contrary to such mandatory purpose, texts are "… contested in and between the arenas of formation and implementation", as well as in "relation to [their] own understanding, desires, values and purposes" (Bowe *et al.,* 1992:22). Teachers' perceptions and prior experiences within particular contexts will reinform and

reinterpret the texts. These reinterpretations influence policy texts as they are processed into policy practice. Hence the instrumental role of teachers as policy implementors cannot be disputed or rejected. This is discussed in the following section.

2.6   Teachers' roles and education policy change

According to Tedesco (1997:1) teachers can no longer be overlooked, for policy change will not have the desired effect if they are "not accompanied by an integrated policy intended to strengthen the role of teachers."

2.6.1   Teachers' role as implementors of education policy change

This realisation that teachers are imperative as implementers of "new" policy in order to reform, restructure or transform[3] schools and classrooms calls for a focus on teachers who are often seen as either impervious or unaffected, or as resistant to education policy change. This notion reflects certain reservations about stances that place teachers in the role of implementers of policy change, discounting what Bowe *et al.* (1992:119) call *different "interpretational stances"*, implying an active role on the part of the teacher.

Implementation of policy poses many demands on teachers in terms of knowledge, skills and attitudes. These demands cannot be met without interpretation or re-creation of policy. These interpreted versions of policy are created from personal, subjective frames of references. Bowe *et al.* (1992:22) elaborate on this, saying:

> Practitioners do not confront policy texts as naïve readers; they come from histories, with experience, with values and purposes of their own, they have vested interests in the meaning of policy. Policies will be interpreted differently as the histories, experiences, values, purposes and interests which make up the arena differ. The simple

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[3] For the present study the terms educational change, reform and restructuring are used interchangeably. It is recognised, however, that all educational change does not necessarily generate reform, although reform cannot take place without change. Most planned educational change attempts to bring about reform. In turn, educational reform is largely dependent on individual teachers adapting, implementing and processing the changes and innovation to fit their circumstances.

> point is that policy writers cannot control the meanings of their texts. Part of their texts will be rejected, selected out, ignored, deliberately misunderstood, responses may be frivolous, etc.

This implies that policy initiatives inherently contain internal contradictions and tensions. The underlying assumptions of policy, the social and historic context and the degree to which policy is or is not compatible with teachers' existing beliefs, commitments and practices may influence the policy process, both in the context of policy text production and the context of policy practice.

Teachers' experiences and understandings of educational policy change impact educational practice since they are the most prominent persons mediating and implementing change. They become part of the interactive process of reflection and action with regard to the intentions of educational change via the education policy and their personal response to change within a particular historical context. This constitutes an important link for understanding the eventual effect of policy change.

2.6.2   Teachers' influence on education policy change

I have worked in an interpretive paradigm, which implies that selected aims are to construct understanding epistemologically and ontologically in a trustworthy and authentic manner. To stay true to this approach I assume that realities are varied, and that there are great differences in how different individuals know reality. This inquiry into education policy change from the perspective of teachers' experiences and understanding assumes my acceptance of different assumptions, perceptions and multiple realities (cf. Mouton, 1996:3-4). These presuppositions about education policy change are powerful and often unconscious sources of behaviour. Put differently, educational policy is filtered and those parts that "fit" with teachers' personal perspectives and intuition are selected. This suggests that pre-existing knowledge, attitudes and behaviour impact the responses, the meaning and the implementation of education policy. It is not surprising, therefore, that the realities of education policy change will also be diversely constructed.

In addition to the contested terrain of education policy change, the rhetoric and the reality of education policy change do undermine the sources of teachers' emotional and intellectual stances, which are inseparable (cf. Hargreaves & Evans, 1997:4). Such sources include, for example, the *emotional politics* of policy change, which are expressed as fear, anguish, emotional breakdown, despair, depression, grief, loss of confidence and weakened commitment. Emotional responses cannot be divorced from intellectual stances (cf. Hargreaves, 1998; Beatty, 2000), such as contestations, debates and other cognitive constructions of knowledge.

These emotional responses are evident in the empirical materials, which are supported by my review of the literature, although "emotions are virtually absent from the literature and advocacy of educational change" (Hargreaves 1998:559). My empirical data recounts teachers as powerful mediators in view of their interpretations and emotional responses to education policy change, which ultimately affect policy implementation. What policy shapers see as ideal, teachers may see as unreasonable (cf. Rousmaniere, 1997:355), and voicing such concerns about new policies may be conceptualised as disloyalty (cf. Reay, 1998:181). That is why their voices may fall silent and be silenced. Hargreaves (1998:560) argues that "another misconception about emotions is that they are somehow separate from reasoning", and cautions, "consistently dispassionate educators are highly dysfunctional ones".

Fullan (1991:117) emphasises this point: "Educational change depends on what teachers do and think – it's as simple and as complex as that." This implies that there are complex, contextual influences – such as text interpretations or recontextualisations and re-creations (Bowe *et al.,* 1992:21-23) – and text contestations that impact the education policy change process. A change in thinking and understanding cannot be legislated (cf. Sarason, 1971:193 cited by Fullan, 1991). Of course, emotional reactions and responses cannot be mandated either. This links to my initial claim that teachers experience and understand education policy differently and, unlike the intended, top-down linear policy process, this is a far more complex and constructed, contested process, which requires in turn a more

complex and deeper understanding.

I admit that this inquiry into education policy change may offer no quick-fix solutions to education policy implementation processes, or education policy change *per se*. However, some comprehension of the vastness and complexity may facilitate a deeper, more sophisticated and more complex understanding, enabling and supporting the education policy change process (also cf. Heneveld, 1994). Put differently, people, processes, practices, and policies evoke interwoven and complex dynamics in education, which cannot be viewed in a linear approach that sees the expected implementation automatically following policy initiation. Unlike some preconceptions, education policy change is not primarily classroom change, such as one teacher, one classroom, or one innovation (cf. Stiegelbauer, 1994). On the contrary, education policy change cannot be fully captured or grasped without its heterogeneous contexts, processes, and dynamics.

Furthermore, policy writers cannot control or impose the meanings of their texts. On the contrary, texts or parts of them may be rejected, selected, ignored, misunderstood; in short, they are interpreted within a subjective frame of thinking. Teachers' "responses will be the outcome of contested interpretations" (Bowe *et al*, 1992:23), or reinvented, contrary to forceful (cf. Lewis & Tsuchida, 1997:324 and 313) and bullied (cf. Hargreaves, 1991:251) stances of policy change.

As mentioned earlier, over and above the public discourse, the legislation and communication of policies for educational change depends on what teachers "think" and do, their personal disposition and feelings concerning change or policies proposing change. The manner in which they act on policy for educational change proposals impacts the eventual effects. According to Fullan (1982:120) an understanding of the subjective world of those involved in a change process is a necessary precondition. The subjective way in which teachers mediate meaning through assumptions and perceptions, and act with regard to educational change has an impact on the possibilities of realising the educational ideals represented by policy as initiation to educational change. This implies that teachers play an active

role in the education policy change process. They construct their own frame of thinking and their meaning. In this context Bruner (1996:19ff) argues that "the 'world' we inhabit is a constructed one. As such, reality is made or created and not found." And likewise, Fullan with Stiegelbauer (1991:43) cited by Corson (1995:158) clarifies this issue: "The real crunch comes in the relations between these new programs or policies and the thousands of subjective realities embedded in people's individual and organizational contexts and their personal histories."

2.6.3   Teachers' thinking and education policy change

This inquiry into education policy change from the perspectives of teachers assumes that their experiences and their understandings are constructed into particular meaning. Teachers give meaning or interpretation in that they experience the education policy change as they try to make sense out of their working life. In addition, the way in which policy makers view teachers in the policy process also influences their meaning, making projective identification and countertransferences (cf. Horwitz, 1985:30-33). In sum, this means that the way teachers are seen by policy makers also impacts the change process.

Teachers can be seen either as being on the receiving end of something that administrators do, or as being encouraged to participate and co-create their meaning. They may be so used to a barrage of top-down policy directives that are often unconnected to meaningful instructional practice that they may consciously choose not to implement certain types of change. This is particularly so for those policy changes in which they have had no input and/or training, or those which they think do not serve the learners with whom they work everyday (cf. Sikes, 1992:37).

Winslow and Solomon (1993:77-79) clarify how people – in this case, teachers – perceive and approach the world of change. People usually make decisions in the present based on their perception of the implications for future outcomes. People spend much of their lives focusing on the future, and much of their present behaviour is comprehensible only if it is known how they view the future. To some

extent people live in the future; this has the potential for being a source of great hope, but it may also be a source of great anxiety. However, the future only exits in the mind. Despite this, people do plan for the future and act as if they know what will happen, even attempt to predict and control the outcomes.

In the context of change and planning for future outcomes, Winslow and Solomon (1993: 77) contend that there is no such thing as resistance to change *per se*. What people appear to resist is not the (policy) change itself, but the perceived outcomes of the (policy) change. In fact, Winslow and Solomon infer that "people resist their fantasies of punishment and/or danger". Such responses are emotionally laden which makes change tough and risky, emotionally uncomfortable, dissonant and unsettling (this is evident in Chapter Four).

For reasons expressed in the previous section, it is meaningful to capture the thinking, the understanding, and the experiences of teachers about education policy change, because they act as filters for policy. They contest policy from various historical settings and contexts (cf. Raab, 1994:11-12 cited by Berkhout & Wielemans, 1999:413) and use the "inner eye" to reconstruct education policy (cf. Anderson, 1990:41). Marshall and Mitchell (1991:396-415) and Young and Mills (1980:27) use the term "assumptive worlds" – a perceptual screen consisting of beliefs, perceptions, and intentions to reality. Similarly, Hall and Hord (1987:53) state that "policymakers, administrators, and others have points of view that must be considered; but in the end, how teachers feel about and perceive [education policy] change will in large part determine whether or not change actually occurs in classrooms."

As such, teachers are subjective filters and mediators who construct and shape their educational practice accordingly and do not receive policy as empty vessels. Education policy change ultimately takes place in the classroom, where it matters most. However, according to Broadfoot *et al.* (1988:264), teachers' practice will not change unless their beliefs, ideas, and attitudes are taken into account. These beliefs and conceptions are rooted in national tradition as well as in the realities of the

classroom contexts in which they work. Broadfoot *et al.* (1988:265) hold that "if [policy] … attempts to change teachers' practice without regard to those conceptions … it will result in a lowering of morale and decreased effectiveness", a theme elicited from the empirical data. Still, a change in beliefs is not necessarily accompanied by change in instructional practices, such as a change in teaching practices which is imposed by policy change (cf. Mintrop, 1999:283).

The argument thus has two claims. One states that teachers' beliefs influence educational practice. The other holds that a change in teachers' beliefs does not necessarily change educational practice as intended by policy. The important assumption is simply that teachers are not naïve readers of policy; on the contrary, Bowe *et al.* (1992:22) maintain, "they bring their interpretative lenses, history, experience, values and purposes of their own, and a vested interest in meanings." The following section deals with teachers' emotional dimensions that are linked to their cognitive responses.

2.6.4   Teachers' emotions and education policy change

Emotional responses and cognitive contestations are intrinsically linked, as Fineman (1993:1) explains: "When we look more closely at cognitions, they are not fully comprehensible without a recognition of the feelings that drive and shape them." Unfortunately, though, "relatively few theoreticians dealing with the epistemological issues in education underscore the importance of feeling as a source of knowing" (cf. Eisner, 1998b:115). Beatty (2000:13) reminds us vividly: "Reason itself is not free of emotional foundation."

Hargreaves (1998:559) confirms that "emotions are virtually absent from the literature and advocacy of educational change … it is as if teachers think and act; but never really feel." Put differently, a misconception about emotions appears to be "that they are somehow separate from reasoning." On the contrary, "You can't judge if you can't feel! Consistently dispassionate teachers are therefore highly

dysfunctional ones" (Hargreaves, 1998:560). Fineman (1993:9-10) elaborates this point:

> People presented are emotionally anorexic. They have 'dissatisfactions' and 'satisfactions', they may be 'alienated' or 'stressed'. They will have 'preferences', 'attitudes' and 'interests'. Often these are noted as variables for managerial control…. We find little or no mention of how feeling individuals worry, envy, brood, become bored, play, despair, plot, hate, hurt, and so forth.

These volatile, passionate emotions are kept off the educational agenda in favour of those that encourage support, trust, sincerity, involvement, responsibility, and commitment (cf. Hargreaves, 1998:559). Thus, it becomes clear that education policy change initiatives do not only affect teachers' knowledge and skills, they influence relationships both at school and in the classroom which are emotionally driven. Also, such cognitive processes are emotionally driven, ranging from a variety of uncomfortable feelings such as fear and anxiety to apathy and indifference. There is amongst many academics "some suspicion that the presence of feelings, of passions, may not allow for objective consideration", which assumes that "education is neutral" (cf. hooks,[4] 1994:198). On the contrary, teachers live in an environment with innumerable emotions and "without attention to the emotions, educational reform efforts may ignore and even damage some of the most fundamental aspects of what teachers do" (Hargreaves, 1998:574).

The emotions that accompany change and the psychology of change (cf. McLagan & Nel, 1995:241) in terms of how people deal with loss as part of the change process has been researched extensively by Kübler-Ross (1969, 1995, 1997) and Bacal (1994). They suggest that experiencing change is similar to experiencing the death of someone close – through stages of denial, anger, blame, depression, acceptance and readjustment. Change does appear to elicit fear of the unknown, ambivalence, and anxiety (cf. Fullan in Hargreaves, 1997:226). More often than not, education policy change processes take fairly long and create hardened resistance, particularly

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[4] hooks is correctly typed in lower case.

if natural emotions such as fear and anxiety are suppressed, silenced and remain unexpressed (cf. McLagan & Nel, 1995:242ff). These reactions are informed using a psychoanalytic approach[5]   (Corey, 1995:139-155; Fineman, 1993:10), which suggests that humans are prisoners of personal histories and not as free in choices and behaviour as we would like to believe. Many feelings are repressed, pushed from the consciousness, due to anxiety, guilt, or shame arising from events with which they are associated. Importantly, repressed (restricted) feelings do not disappear from the psyche, but are held in check through a variety of defence mechanisms including rationalisation (elaborate justification of one's intentions), projections (attributing one's feelings which are uncomfortable) and regressions (adopting patterns of behaviour which were comforting in childhood).

It is important to note in this context that it is apparently not the nature of the education policy change but rather the recipient's concept of the policy change that impacts the educational practice. Whenever significant policy change is proposed, teachers are asked to "do things differently" with an immediate emphasis on changing attitudes and only later on changing education practices and procedures (cf. Huberman, 1973:3). These actions have an internal rationality which reflects their own personal hidden, emotional dramas. Some emotions may be in tension with the formal agenda, structure, and change process of the organisation (cf. Corey, 1995:145ff). Such tensions become visible through resistance to change, also evident from the empirical material. I sum up by citing Hargreaves (1997:108-109): "… if educational reformers ignore the emotional dimensions of educational change,

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[5] Cilliers (1997) comments that the assumptions underlying the psychodynamic and analytical paradigms as applied to the work done by the Tavistock Institute (UK) are as follows (cf. Colman & Geller, 1985:199; Obholzer, 1994:172):
- The quality of human behaviour is mixed – pessimistic and optimistic.
- The pessimistic represents the study of bad objects, the disturbing aspects of human nature.
- The optimistic represents the study of good objects, potential for growth and self-actualisation.
- Human behaviour is conscious and unconscious.
- Conscious behaviour is easily accessible to the mind.
- Unconscious behaviour consists of previously conscious material, which the individual stores in the unconscious.
- Painful experiences in the conscious are defended against by, for example, denying that it exists, repressing it to the unconscious, or projecting it onto other people and objects.
- The study of the unconscious information leads to deeper levels of understanding of

emotions and feelings will only re-enter the change process by the back door".

2.7   Concluding comments

In this chapter I have explained the unit of analysis from a theoretical perspective and claim that education policy development in South Africa focuses mainly on policy production and not on policy implementation. Throughout the argument of a tenuous connection between policy and practice, a disparate context is apparent. Within the context of this study, the focus is specifically on the perspectives of teachers, who are seen as the silent yet cardinal players in the education policy change process. Relevant literature into education policy change suggests a disjuncture between policy and practice. An inquiry into the impact of teachers on education policy change requires a more complex, nuanced, maybe deeper understanding from their perspective. This is what the following chapters attempt to offer – an inquiry into education policy change from the perspectives of teachers within the context of the education policy-practice debate. This chapter dealt with the research question theoretically. In the next chapter I report and describe the methodological processes of the inquiry, and how I intend to deal with the research question empirically.

To sum up, from an ontological and epistemological perspective, realities are many, and knowledge is constructed also in education policy. These perspectives impact and inform the education "reality" and guide the inquiry into education policy change. Therefore, a qualitative inquiry into education policy change from the perspectives of teachers' "varied reality", which is contextual and contested, appears significant.

Theoretical evidence from the literature clearly reveals that education policy change is not a simple process, as texts are reconstructed and re-created based on interpretations of interpretations (double hermeneutics). The empirical evidence, described in Chapter Four, also shows that the meanings of texts are seldom

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behaviour, the system and the organisation.

unequivocal or apparent, and for this reason it becomes difficult to predict the effects of policy. Interpretations are made through the inner dialogue, the inner voice within a particular context. Values and interests are captured in these interpreted understandings and meanings of policy texts, as they are translated into educational practices. If policy makers want successful education policy change, it is essential to elicit the underlying assumptions, the social and historic context, the degree to which these are congruent or not with teachers' beliefs, commitments and practices.