Chapter 3: Towards a Conceptual Framework for Understanding ECE Teachers' Responses to Curriculum Change

3.1 Introduction

The literature on education policy implementation highlights the role of teachers in any effort to improve instruction and conceptualises the relationship between teachers and curriculum change as a process of fidelity, adaptation or implementation. The success of change is therefore largely a function of teachers' responses to curriculum demands (Mager, Myers, Maresca, Rupp & Armstrong 1986:344) which are shaped by their individual conceptions of teaching and learning, knowledge and skills, and beliefs and interests (Smylie & Perry 2005:318). Therefore, the culture of teaching enables or limits curriculum change (Gitlin & Margonis 1995:378). These authors would agree with Keys and Bryan (2001:635) that teachers are active creators who make instructional decisions based on a complex system of beliefs and knowledge.

Teachers' knowledge of teaching and learning is the strongest determining factor in their educational practice. According to Hsu (2002:58) teachers' knowledge is formulated in concrete and context-related terms and develops from their experience and interpretations. In addition, teachers' knowledge is based on personal practical knowledge and is reflected in their professional attitudes.

Spillane, Reiser and Gomez (2006:47) note that even when teachers adopt policy implementation, failure may still result. This may be attributed to the complexity of human sense-making processes, rather than poor policy clarity or deliberate attempts to ignore or resist policy. From a cognitive perspective, implementation depends on local implementing agents' understanding of policy demands and the extent to which policy demands reinforce or alter their practice (Reiser and Gomez 2006:48). Therefore, a recurring question related to curriculum change is how to ensure that schools demonstrate significant changes in instructional practice. Rowan and Miller (2007:252) examine two conflicting strategies of implementation: (i) programmed approaches, which seek to promote conformity to a well-defined set of instructional practices to produce faithful implementation, and (ii) adaptive approaches to curriculum change, which rely strongly on enhanced coaching and implementation support by principals at school sites. However,

principals play a key role concerning implementation asymmetry because of their inability to monitor teachers' work.

3.2 Theoretical Approaches to the Study of Curriculum Change

The literature reveals several theoretical approaches to the study of curriculum change. Bailey (2000:119) contends that educational change efforts are underpinned by particular theories about the nature of teaching. Curriculum change is prevalent when society is changing rapidly, when educational practice is under pressure to respond, and differing reform ideologies compete with each other for influence. Although four conceptions of teaching are activated by policymakers: technical, intellectual, socio-emotional and socio-political, they are usually overlooked.

Change is a far more complex process in schools than had earlier been assumed (Mager *et al.* 1986:346) specifically because politically motivated reforms have neglected the problems of implementation (Gitlin & Margonis 1995:377; Jansen 1998:323). In response to the implementation problem, educational change theorists have developed three models (Rowan & Miller 2007:253). The first model, "cultural control", occurs within local professional communities. Teachers are encouraged to discover effective practices and they have the discretion to adapt these practices to suit their needs. The second model, "professional control", relies heavily on socialisation to professional standards by expert authorities to promote implementation of the favoured instructional regime. The third model, "procedural control", occurs within professional development programmes and relies heavily on scripted instruction to secure faithful implementation.

Richardson and Placier (2002:906) note that phenomenological and hermeneutic approaches could be useful in understanding how individuals make sense of and contribute to the situations in which they live and work. Such approaches could replace earlier empirical-rational change strategies that have been unsuccessful. The new thinking constitutes a normative/re-educative approach to change, which assumes that change may be enhanced through teachers' reflection on beliefs and practices (Richardson & Placier 2002:906). According to Ryan and Ackerman (2005:1), pressure and support are recurring themes in the school reform literature. Teachers as policy actors require motivation and adequate assistance, such as updated knowledge or financial resources, to implement curriculum change successfully. Furthermore, teachers use their prior knowledge and experience to make sense of policy. Policy to practice connections are

mediated by teacher sense which produces qualitatively different understandings among teachers, thus leading them to *ignore*, *resist*, *adopt* or *modify* policy (Spillane & Burch 2006:95).

Pinar (1999) contends that the thoughtful practice of everyday educational life requires a theoretical understanding of teachers' practice.

> So understood, curriculum becomes intensely historical, political, racial, gendered, phenomenological, postmodern, autobiographical, aesthetic, theological, and international. When we say that curriculum is a site on which the generations struggle to define themselves and the world, we are engaged in a theoretically enriched practice. When we say that curriculum is an extraordinarily complicated conversation, we are underscoring human agency and the volitional character of human action (Pinar 1999: xvii).

3.3 Research on Teachers' Responses to Curriculum Change

My research utilises the relational theory of change which enhances our understanding of how teachers address multiple voices in their work (Leander & Osborne 2008:44) in considering the demands made by parents, school principals, colleagues, departmental officials, policy makers and the public. Rowan and Miller (2007:256) draw upon cognitive theories of implementation to enhance our understanding of how teachers make decisions when they interpret and respond to change. Similarly, Paris (1993:15) notes that "teacher agency" provides an alternative conception of teachers and curriculum, since it involves personal initiative and intellectual engagement:

> Teacher agency therefore involves initiating the creation or critique of curriculum, an awareness of alternatives to established curriculum practices, the autonomy to make informed curriculum choices, an investment of self, and ongoing interaction with others (Paris 1993:16).

Paris' (1993) argument is extended by Bailey (2000) who notes that getting teachers deeply involved in envisioning and managing change means abandoning the idea of a preconceived outcome, as well as the notion that there is one best way to teach. It should also not be assumed that enough is known about particular school cultures or the needs of individual classrooms. It is therefore impossible to design a one-size-fits-all programme, which will repair the ills of school and society. This realisation may enhance our understanding of why some teachers resist research results or policy content. However, it

should also not be assumed that teachers have all the answers, or that local problems cannot be informed by a broader perspective and a more comprehensive knowledge base (Bailey 2000).

Teachers therefore play a pivotal role in school reform and are essential to the success of curriculum change. However, when teachers are viewed as technicians who implement carefully designed plans using teacher-proof materials prepared by 'experts', their effectiveness is limited. The "top-down process of mandating change sacrifices teacher autonomy in favour of managerial efficiency" (Bailey 2000:120). Such an approach essentially discourages teachers from developing the abilities to set goals, develop skills, respond to feedback, and become engaged in improving their practice. Instead, they are encouraged to become dependent on the latest innovation, alienating them from a sense of their own expertise and professionalism:

> While teachers should be asked, and be asking, the questions that drive educational reform, the process of mandating change is not in their hands. Even when a new curriculum is presumably teacher and student centred, teachers are seldom given the opportunity to help conceptualise the programme that they are expected to teach. There is neither time nor support for building the personal philosophies or communal reflection that might support teachers to work more effectively (Bailey 2000).

Much of the existing literature focuses on how affective factors such as motivation, job satisfaction and emotions of change, influence teachers' responses to curriculum change (Ballet & Kelchtermans 2008; Day 2008; Fullan 1993; Hargreaves 2005; Hsueh & Barton 2005; Levin 1998; Noble & Macfarlane 2005; Richardson & Placier 2002). The listed studies found that teachers often experience negative emotions such as fear and anxiety which influence their responses to curriculum change. Day (2008:244) argues that there are significant negative consequences of reform on teachers' work lives and well-being. Tensions are therefore inevitable if individual teachers' perceived needs for self-improvement differ from system demands on them for changes in curriculum and teaching approaches (Ashdown 2002:116).

A cognitive socio-psychological theory of emotions should therefore be employed to help researchers understand how individual teachers perceive themselves and their work, and how they experience their context (Van Veen & Sleegers 2006:108). Bailey (2000:123) cites empirical evidence that the context and process of mandated change often leads to

the marginalisation of teachers, especially when it is not rooted in their realities and expertise. Sometimes, because of the demands of curriculum change, teachers doubt their efficacy and thus their moral commitment to implementation is undermined. Bailey (2000) believes that disregarding teacher demoralisation, as well as teachers' knowledge about real and sustained change, underlies implementation failure.

When teachers are conceived as students of curriculum, who bring considerable intellect and skills to curriculum problem solving, they do not merely receive and implement curricula created by others (Darling-Hammond 2005). Instead, they make reasoned, self-conscious curriculum decisions in response to their evaluation of the needs and interests of their learners and a shared commitment to educational excellence.

Crump (2005:2) asserts that teachers need a clear and well-motivated reason for change, especially when it comes to the curriculum. If teachers disagree with the need for change, they often respond by resisting the change (Leander & Osborne 2008:28). Policy makers therefore need to be mindful that policy is not so much implemented as it is re-invented at each level of the system (Darling-Hammond 2005:363). Bell and Stevenson (2004:20) describe the "multiplicity of interpretations" as the effect of multiple readers' "decoding" of policy texts, since each reader has his/her own context, history and values. In addition, policy responses are shaped by the wider structural factors that have a cogent effect on individuals' capacity to influence and interpret policy. Teachers therefore rarely simply adopt and implement the curriculum; they have an active relationship with the curriculum and subsequently adapt it to suit their teaching practices (Paris 1993:36).

While policy change occurs because of collective action, it is essential to understand how individuals come together, organise themselves and constrain or promote change. Schlager provides the following insights into individual decision-making and action:

> The parts of the inner world that are empirically verified are a set of basic values, causal assumptions, and problem perceptions. Belief systems, not characteristics of the situation determine individual choices and actions. Belief systems, as well as limited information-processing abilities, affect how individuals acquire, use, and incorporate information (Schlager 1999:240).

The above viewpoint enriches our understanding of curriculum change by highlighting that the manner in which teachers respond to curriculum change is related to their information-processing capabilities.

Teachers adopt strategies and respond to curriculum change in order to improve their situation, in the sense of making them feel "better off" (Schlager 1999:241-243). They are constrained and guided by norms of behaviour, which affect how they perceive alternatives. The context of the situation and the information that is available at a particular point in time have a strong influence on how teachers respond. Teachers' preferences are relatively fixed and are activated by how they interpret their context (Schlager 1999:243). This combination of preferences and context offers a point of choice, resulting in action or response. Teachers' belief systems and preferences could change incrementally over time if they are persuaded to accept others' arguments, or as they gather information through their personal experience.

Since this study is focused on individual teachers, Ostrom's (1999:41) contention that individuals directly influence the physical world as they make operational decisions is pertinent. Ostrom suggests therefore, that the action arena should be utilised to analyse, predict and explain behaviour within institutional arrangements. This approach involves making assumptions about how and what the participants in my study value; what resources, information and beliefs they have; what their information-processing capabilities are; and what internal mechanisms they use to decide upon strategies (Ostrom 1999:44). In addition, teachers' engagement with curriculum change requires commitment and motivation to implement change in order to gain a sense of efficacy (Gitlin & Margonis 1995:380).

According to the fidelity perspective, it is presumed that teachers faithfully implement a curriculum designed by outside experts (Ryan 2004). Consequently, research from this orientation focuses on evaluating the extent to which a curriculum is implemented as intended and on the factors that hinder or support implementation. The majority of studies on ECE curriculum change have presumed a fidelity approach and focused on evaluating both the short and long-term impact of specific curriculum models (Ryan 2004:665). However, these studies do not focus specifically on the daily interactions of teachers as they practice the curriculum. By assuming fidelity, these studies provide insights into exemplary programmes, but little information on the kinds of practices and teaching actions that contribute to these outcomes. More often than not, teachers do not comply with top-down curriculum change. Instead, teachers either *resist* implementing the curriculum change, or *adapt* and shape the curriculum according to their particular contexts and the learners they teach.

McLaughlin (1987) notes that the successful implementation of change necessarily requires adaptation rather than "pure" implementation. Mutual adaptation occurs when proposals are adapted to accommodate local conditions and local conditions are adapted to accommodate reform proposals. While the mutual adaptation and fidelity approaches examine the ways teachers work and respond to a set of externally developed curriculum materials, the enactment perspective views curriculum as an emergent process created jointly by learners and teachers. This perspective views teachers as curriculum makers. Curriculum change is a process of observing over time how the curriculum is created and shaped by teachers through everyday classroom experiences (Ryan 2004:666). Smylie and Perry (2005:318) cite evidence that curriculum control alters the basic nature of teachers' classroom practice and while teachers do make some accommodations, change in practice is limited and occurs at the margins.

Referring to recent implementation research, Spillane and Burch (2006:93) contend that elementary teachers' response to the policy environment varies depending on the subject. For example, teachers' conceptions of themselves as teachers differ from languages, to the arts, to mathematics, thus also influencing how they respond to policy. The institutional environments, the activity formats teachers use, their conceptions of knowledge and instruction, the extent to which teachers cooperate with one another, and the ways leaders operate to manage instruction all depend on the subject area:

> Academic subjects organise instruction, shaping how the technical core operates and connects with the institutional environment even in elementary schools. Not only do norms of subject matter pervade schools, but they also work in and through policy making and governance at other levels. Implementation research suggests that the policy environment connects unevenly with instructional practice (Spillane & Burch 2006:94).

In addition, there appears to be a "loose" coupling of policy and practice around issues of teaching strategies and "tighter" coupling around issues of academic content (Spillane & Burch 2006:96). Teachers in particular are active agents in the development of the common meaning systems and symbolic processes that build up within and around particular aspects of the "technical core" (Spillane & Burch 2006:100).

Teachers need to balance multiple issues, including a host of new demands, their own ideologies, and past pedagogical practices, as they attempt to implement reforms. Therefore, school change is rarely a linear process, and variation in the implementation of

curriculum change is inevitable. Even policies regarded as "straight-forward" are often implemented very differently across localities, schools, and classrooms. This variation could be explained either in terms of the flexibility of policies or new curricula, or as a lack of accountability. In addition, teachers are strongly influenced by what they believe is required to practically respond to their students' needs and as a result, they adapt policies accordingly (Datnow & Castellano 2000:779). Policymakers should encourage teachers to identify school level problems and consider how various reforms could solve these problems. Such a critical inquiry process can play a meaningful role in selecting the most appropriate reform, creating teacher buy-in, and promoting long-term teacher development and empowerment for change. Policymakers should also consider how the process of building consensus for change among teachers could be more genuine.

Ryan (2004) argues that the tensions between policy and pedagogy have direct implications for practice. This opinion relates to the assumptions being made in the early childhood arena that curriculum policy can be pedagogically motivated. Instead of realising that any policy is dependent on teacher buy-in, the current emphasis in the USA on a standardised curriculum through the use of models is an attempt to bypass teachers and their professional interpretations of pedagogy. Paradoxically, although empirically validated curriculum frameworks can be justified given the underqualified nature of the ECE teaching workforce, it is also likely that these teachers will adapt the curriculum to suit their needs, but in doing so, may possibly implement less appropriate practice.

The main difference between ECE teachers in developed countries, as opposed to those in developing countries, is the voluminous academic literature in relation to standards and accountability. Teachers in developed countries are working in an "audit society" (Fenech, Sumsion, Robertson & Goodfellow 2008:2). In many cases, such ECE teachers have a high degree of access to professional development opportunities, resources and ongoing support which influences their capacity to implement curriculum change.

Although teachers do not have a choice between change and non-change, they do have a choice about how they respond and they have considerable discretion as to whether they implement change in their classrooms (Richardson & Placier 2002:909). For teachers to change their practices, they must believe in the process in which they are engaged (Crump 2005:9). Teachers either assimilate teaching strategies into their current repertoire with little substantive change, or they reject suggested changes altogether (Penuel *et al.* 2007:929). Teachers therefore filter policy demands and messages from professional

development about teaching through their own interpretive frames (Penuel *et al.* 2007:931). In addition, the social context of schooling has a strong influence on teachers' interpretive frames and thus their decisions about how to enact (or resist) particular innovations. Consequently:

> If teachers perceive the demands to be aligned with their district's goals and with the social pressures within their schools, they are more likely to perceive professional development focused on a particular innovation as congruent with their own goals and thus commit to adopting or adapting the innovation (Penuel *et al.* 2007:931).

Ballet and Kelchtermans (2008:62) argue that an analysis of teachers' complex and creative responses to curriculum change shows that each teacher copes with change in his/her own way. Each teacher is therefore involved in a unique experience (Mager *et al.* 1986:352). This diversity reflects differences in the way teachers give meaning to the demands made on them. Teachers' receptivity towards curriculum change depends to a large degree on their level of involvement and buy-in to the change effort. In particular, ECE teachers can respond to curriculum change by pushing or sustaining curriculum change, resisting, or actively subverting change. Teacher agency in curriculum change can be passive or active – teachers could decide to leave the profession or on a more positive note, use the reform as an opportunity for new career prospects. Furthermore, since teachers' ideologies are rooted in their life experiences and interactions, teachers' responses to change can be deeply embedded within a larger societal context (Datnow & Castellano 2000:777). It is therefore essential to focus on schools as units of change, as well as the external communities of which the schools form a part.

Lindblad (1990:169) notes that teachers respond to curriculum change in a number of different ways: (a) "the alienated" teacher regards him/herself as a victim of external forces of change; (b) "the independent" teacher believes that he/she should decide how to respond to externally imposed change; (c) "the spectator" feels that vested interests are inherent in the demand for change, and that change is imposed on teachers; (d) "the loyal official" feels that the reasons for change are very reasonable and that it is his/her duty to participate; (e) "the pioneer" believes that there is a mutual correspondence between the changes demanded and his/her existing teaching practices; and (f) "the partisan" feels that there are vested interests behind the demand for change, has chosen sides and decided to use the experiential scheme as an opportunity to do what he/she regards as right.

3.4 Conceptual Framework for this Study

According to existing research, teachers respond to curriculum change in the following ways: they (i) *ignore*; (ii) *resist*; (iii) *adopt*; or (iv) *adapt* the official curriculum / the change (Lindblad 1990; Richardson & Placier 2002).

Table 3.1: Conceptual Framework

		Attitude towards change		
		Negative	**Positive**	
Knowledge & Skill	**high**	resist	adapt	**high**
		ignore	adopt	
	low			**low**

As the table indicates, this framework brings together the context, characteristics, beliefs and practices of ECE teachers, which shape their responses to curriculum change. Since these factors are complex and dynamic, teachers' positioning (and their ability to move from one position to another) on the matrix depends on the levels of support they receive, their professional development opportunities, their motivation to change, and on the "point they have reached in their own lives and careers" (Hargreaves 2005b:ix). Consequently, change rarely occurs as a linear process and variation in curriculum implementation is therefore inevitable (Datnow & Castellano 2000:779). I therefore expect that the teachers in my case study might respond to curriculum change in the ways described below, as I discuss each of the four possible actions.

3.4.1 Ignoring Curriculum Change

Many studies, such as those conducted by Chirume (2007:45) in Zimbabwe, Mweemba and Chilala (2001:36) in Zambia, and Samuel (2004:162) in India found that limited resources and inadequate professional development constitute significant barriers to effective curriculum implementation. How teachers respond to and implement the official curriculum is significantly influenced by their experiences within the organisational culture of schools (Papanastasiou & Zembylas 2006:150). In addition, most developing countries fund ECE programmes at a lower rate than formal schooling (Kamerman 2006; Porteus 2004).

In developing countries, the emphasis of ECE programmes is to improve the survival, growth and development of young children, prevent the occurrence of risks and ameliorate the negative effects of risks. Most are directed toward disadvantaged children (Engle *et al.* 2007:229).

Although a major objective of reform in Nepal is institutionalisation of a school support system, 61% of teachers reported that their classes were never supervised, 19% were supervised once a year and 8.4% twice a year (Khaniya & Williams 2004:316). Therefore this aspect of curriculum change was largely ignored.

Montero-Smith *et al.* (2007:229) note that awareness of child development is increasing in developing countries. However, developing countries are far more focused on increasing access to ECE programmes than on the quality of such programmes (Myers 2006:7). Unlike developed countries, accountability demands are not institutionalised, although teachers are held accountable for children's learning. Since very limited research has been conducted on ECE teachers' responses to curriculum change, studies on teachers' responses in different education sectors (not just ECE) are referred to below.

Myers (2006) and Jambunathan and Caulfield (2008:257) note that there is a dearth of research on curriculum change in ECE in developing countries, particularly on teachers' responses to curriculum change. Sorour's (1997:643) study in Egypt, found that "teachers are the most important factor in making reform work, as long as they understand and assimilate it, are convinced by it and—most importantly—benefit from it". Mohammed and Harlech-Jones' (2008:48) examination of implementation failures in Pakistan, emphasises the need to understand the realities of the lives and professional environments of teachers as the implementers of curriculum change. Similarly, Cisneros-Cohernour, Merchant and Moreno's (1999:8) study on curriculum change in Mexico, notes that the design of the change had failed to consider the capacity of teachers or the context of implementation.

In 2000, Kenya introduced a mandated curriculum, which promotes active learning and play. Despite this, ECE teachers are teaching reading, writing and mathematics skills and using formal methods. ECE teachers felt compelled to ignore the guidelines because parents demand that their children be taught to read and write before entering Grade 1 (UNESCO Nairobi 2005:30). According to Cisneros-Cohernour, Moreno and Cisneros (2000), teachers face a dilemma when the curriculum emphasises values that are opposite to the cultural traditions of society. For example, the new Mexican curriculum emphasises

assertiveness and individualism. Since parents and teachers disagree about children learning these values, they elect to ignore these aspects of the curriculum (Cisneros-Cohernour *et al.* 2000:146). In addition, Cisneros-Cohernour *et al.* (2000) argue that policy borrowing has disregarded the local context.

Cleghorn and Prochner (1997:346) found that despite the Zimbabwean policy mandate for teachers to provide children with a gradual transition to school life in a play-based, child-centred environment, they ignored it. Teachers' responses were shaped by their large class sizes (average pupil:teacher ratio of 50:1), the shortage of materials to support a play-based curriculum, and pressure from departmental officials to achieve a certain amount of progress in academic subjects within the first three months of the academic year.

Significant disparities between policy and implementation emerged in Kallery and Psillos' (2002:59) study on how Grade R teachers in Greece responded to curriculum change. The teachers in their study ignored many of the official requirements. Datnow and Castellano (2000:777) found that the most common reaction of teachers to top-down mandates is to reject the change and carry on as before. This, Rowan and Miller (2007:256) argue, is the result of the failure of policy makers to obtain teacher buy-in or "moral purpose".

3.4.2 Resisting Curriculum Change

The power of teachers to resist change is substantial (Johnson 1969:146). Because most teachers perceive themselves to be professionals, they resent and resist having policymakers and administrators tell them how to teach. Johnson (1969) further notes that such resistance to directives on how to teach and the low visibility of teachers' classroom behaviour makes it possible for teachers to avoid implementing curriculum change.

Curriculum change in India is an example of a reversal of the international trend of standardised mandated curricula. India's national curriculum has changed from being centralised to what is now a decentralised arrangement (Nag, Perry, Seda & Rizvi 2007). Even so, teachers resisted the decentralised curriculum since they believed that consistency across the country was being compromised. Gvirtz (2002:454) found that Argentinian teachers' resistance of top-down, punitive supervision significantly influenced curriculum change.

If teachers believe that mandated change implies a criticism of what they are currently doing, they respond by resisting the change (Bailey 2000:12). Teachers are often recalcitrant, obstructionist, and resistant (Gitlin & Margonis 1995:386; Hargreaves 2005:11; Fink & Stoll 2005:19; McLaughlin 1987:173) when they decide not to implement mandated changes (Black and William 2005:259; Richardson & Placier 2002:906). However, Gitlin and Margonis (1995:389) argue that resistance to change could represent a quest for stability. Ballet and Kelchtermans (2008:59) and Hargreaves (2005:11) are in accord that resistance is the result of fear and loss of motivation. Similarly, Gitlin and Margonis (1995:385) note that low levels of motivation may lead to resistance. In addition, these authors argue that it is not just teachers' personal task-perception and job motivation that is at stake – they resist change because their self-esteem may be threatened. Self-doubt triggers many emotional responses and can be an immediate cause of resistance to change.

Rowan and Miller (2007:256) and Gitlin and Margonis (1995:387) argue that teachers who resist change often have insufficient time or energy, or get very little reward or support locally for exercising discretion or being innovative. Teachers need time to change their thinking, preparing for, and getting used to the change before administrators can realisticly expect them to implement it. Teachers experience feelings of uncertainty and insecurity when they doubt their capability to keep up with change (Ballet & Kelchtermans 2008:60). Furthermore, imposed change may create a mismatch between teachers' personal aims and purposes, and the aims and purposes in a school. Teachers resist change when the rhetoric of the change does not match the realities of their experiences (Datnow & Castellano 2000:778; Gitlin & Margonis 1995:377). Similarly Fink and Stoll (2005) argue that:

> Teachers who are constantly bombarded by an unrelenting plethora of changes over a short time period tend to be exhausted, and find it hard to keep up their energy, enthusiasm and, ultimately, willingness for change. It is therefore not necessarily the characteristics of teachers, per se, that cause resistance and the continuity it perpetuates, but the pressures on them and the limits placed on their involvement in making the decision to change (Fink & Stoll 2005:19).

Hargreaves (2005:11) asserts that a fear of change underlies teacher resistance. It is an especially common response to change by mid-career teachers. If teachers see through the "smoke and mirrors" of educational reform, they will resist the change (Hargreaves

2005:11). According to Fink and Stoll (2005) teachers resist ill-designed and poorly implemented reforms because they have been swamped by innovations and excluded from policy discussions. Resistance is therefore viewed as a natural and predictable response. Change is usually something others do to teachers, as opposed to something that teachers themselves embrace. Datnow and Castellano (2000:794) assert that attention should be paid to teachers who resist reforms, since "unhappy groups of teachers, however small, can derail reform efforts".

Bailey (2000:115) asserts that teachers who resist change may lead others to construct a "stigma-theory" against them – an ideology that implies the inferiority and possibly even danger represented by the person who dares to be different:

> Teachers who reject the ideas of the dominant culture can become labelled as problems in their school, resistant, intransigent, and too old to change. Marginalised teachers pay a price. Resistance is hard work. Teachers also suffer as a profession in terms of the marginalisation of teacher expertise and knowledge. The stigmatisation of teachers has powerful consequences for schools: marginalised teachers may retreat to their classrooms where their own ideas can be put in place and form professional liaisons only with people who share their values and concerns. When this occurs, teachers will be less willing to work collaboratively thus essentially reducing the potential for positive educational change (Bailey 2000:116).

Teacher resistance may therefore have several causes and result in various consequences for students (Bailey 2000:117). For example, resistant teachers may protect their own interests against those of their students or parents, or they may work to undermine educational equity for students and gender equity for teachers. Teachers may be placed in the position of violating their own deeply-felt beliefs about what children in their care need when they are told how and what to teach, especially if they believe that change requires them to abandon methods and materials that had previously been successful. With mandated change, their impulse to evaluate new methods before adopting them, is often disallowed. They view this as being denied their right to professional expertise (Bailey 2000:118). According to Gitlin and Margonis (1995:379), such an approach recognises that there is often "good sense embedded in teachers' resistant acts" which may result in fundamentally altering authority relations and

intensifying work conditions.[17] These authors note that resistance can signify good sense because of teachers' well-founded understanding of their institutional circumstances. They found that teachers resisted change because accountability was linked to learning results which increased their workload. Moreover, teachers resisted the lack of consultation and contrived collegiality that accompanied the process. Gitlin and Margonis (1995:403) therefore recommend that policymakers should focus on the preconditions for change and "afford teachers the authority and time they need to teach in ways they find educationally defensible".

3.4.3 Adopting Curriculum Change

One of the criteria for successful implementation relates to the degree to which teachers' adoption of the new curriculum conforms to policy makers' views of what it should look like (Richardson & Placier 2002:907). The change strategies for curriculum adoption are therefore "limited and unimaginative" (Hargreaves 2005:9). This, Day (2008:244) argues, causes teaching to become a technical activity. According to Johnson (1969:146) schools are bureaucratic organisations and teachers are bureaucratic functionaries since they have little power to initiate change. Squire *et al.* (2003:470) note that according to this view teachers are expected to preserve the integrity of externally developed education innovation through "wholecloth adoption".

Teachers' responses to curriculum change often demonstrate the typical pattern of initial improvement followed by saturation, thereby frustrating politicians' promises of continued improvement (Black & William 2005:259). In addition, compliance might mean that the behaviour of teachers may change, but their attitudes remain the same. This situation reinforces the view that "values and attitudes are important components of motivation and performance at work" (Crump 2005:9). Penuel *et al.* (2007:927) would concur with Ryan (2004) that the adoption approach constitutes implementation fidelity. Datnow and Castellano (2000:778) argue that a series of imposed changes creates a "culture of compliance" leading teachers to want to know how to implement the required change "as painlessly as possible".

According to Day (2008:244), performance agendas coupled with continuing monitoring of teachers' effectiveness, implicitly encourage teachers to comply uncritically with curriculum change. Policy makers want teachers to be faithful to the goals of reform-based curricula

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[17] For example, Stoffels (2004) notes that curriculum change intensifies teachers' workload.

(Drake & Sherin 2006:183). Although implementation fidelity is seen as a useful goal, when it is accompanied by tight restrictions on teacher autonomy and a corresponding narrow focus on teaching practices, there are many negative side-effects, such as: (i) decreased motivation among teachers whose professionalism would be undermined; (ii) a possible misfit between a change programme's narrowly prescribed teaching regime and the larger goals of teaching and learning (Rowan & Miller 2007:253). Furthermore, simply adopting curriculum change could be limited and unimaginative, especially if changes are made only "around the edges" of teaching and learning rather than affecting the classroom itself (Hargreaves 2005:9). Teacher buy-in would be far stronger if teachers created the reform themselves (Datnow & Castellano 2000:794). Gitlin and Margonis (1995:380) extend this view by noting that the most effective innovations are those which teachers have internalised because they satisfy their specific needs.

This teacher (who adopts curriculum change) is most like Lindblad's (1990) "loyal official", who exhibits a positive (or at least a compliant, non-negative) attitude towards curriculum change, but would not necessarily show much in the way of knowledge and skills. "Externally pre-specified lists of behaviourally defined competencies and objectives negate teachers' meaningful involvement in curriculum planning and diminish their extent of professional control" (Ballet *et al.* 2006:210).

Curriculum innovations must consider classroom conditions if teachers are expected to adopt them. Johnson (1969:147) notes that the "busy-ness" of classrooms is intensified by factors such as time pressures, overcrowding and the fast pace of classroom life, all of which impede teachers' ability to analyse, evaluate and modify what is happening in the classroom.

3.4.4 Adapting Curriculum Change

Teachers who embrace curriculum change and have considerable knowledge and skills do not simply adopt or passively undergo calls for change. Drake and Sherin (2008:183) note that no curriculum is "teacher-proof". Instead, teachers interpret, filter and modify curricula in order to safeguard their sense of professional autonomy (Ballet & Kelchtermans 2008:54). Policy makers therefore need to recognise that teachers develop, define and reinterpret the curriculum instead of merely delivering it (Hargreaves 1994:ix). Similarly, Osgood (2006:189) argues that teachers are actively involved in reproducing, interpreting and transforming policy through individual action or agency. Smylie and Perry (2005:320)

regard teachers as active agents when they adapt elements of curriculum change to their classrooms. Today teachers are encouraged to make adaptations to the national curriculum at school level (Gvirtz 2002:460).

When working with a complex, conceptually rich curriculum, different teachers make different choices and adaptations (Drake & Sherin 2006:182). Teachers need to balance multiple issues, including their own ideologies and past pedagogical practices, with a host of new demands as they attempt to incorporate curriculum change. Top-down curriculum change disregards this power of teachers to mediate the changes (Fink & Stoll 2005:25; Priestley & Sime 2005:476). Successful innovation is better achieved through a process of adaptation, which combines central impetus with active engagement by teachers. Change must reflect the dynamic two-way relationship between the initiative and the context for enactment, and therefore local change agents must be included in every step of the process.

Teachers are also bound by what they feel they must do to practically respond to their learners' needs and so they tend to adapt policies accordingly (Datnow & Castellano 2000:779). Antifaeff, Mitzel, Porowski and Sussex (2006) found that in order to accommodate their learners' needs and simultaneously meet accountability demands, teachers adapted the curriculum. Shepherd and Smith (1988:144) found that ECE teachers are more likely to respond positively to curriculum change if the school culture supports them in adapting the curriculum to a wide range of individual differences. Wien (2002:16), Goldstein (2006:2) and Antifaeff *et al.* (2006:3) are in accord that ECE teachers experience conflict (cognitive dissonance) when they have to implement a standardised, formal, academic curriculum. Because the ECE teachers in these studies were experienced, well-trained, and received ongoing support, they were able to balance the traditional approach of learning through play, with the academic demands of the new curriculum. Examples of curriculum adaptation towards formal approaches predominate in the literature. However, Ryan (2004:661) found that teachers in the USA were confused about their role as well as the content of the curriculum.

Adaptive approaches seek to create innovations that accommodate local settings by encouraging teachers to discover and disseminate locally effective teaching practices, while simultaneously giving them sufficient discretion and autonomy to adapt their practices to their own classroom strategies (Rowan & Miller 2007:255). Therefore, successful reform of both curriculum and practice requires mutual adaptation (Drake &

Sherin 2006:183). Datnow and Castellano (2000:795) contend that strong support from the principal, trainers and facilitators is not enough to guarantee fidelity of implementation.

> Inevitably, teachers closed the doors to their classrooms and made adaptations to the programme, despite vigilant monitoring on the part of in-school facilitators and trainers, and teacher accountability in the form of student assessments (Datnow & Castellan0 2000:795).

Leander and Osborne (2008:44) note that policy makers often misinterpret how teachers respond to change. In particular, policy makers may often view teachers' modifications or adaptations of externally-driven change as corrupting the change effort. However, only partial change is achieved if the teacher is construed as a "thoughtless and relationless appropriator of (curriculum) materials" (Leander & Osborne 2008:44). Leander and Osborne (2008:42) argue that teachers are not just responsive to their learners; their work is also highly responsive to many different audiences. In addition, as teachers respond to change, they borrow and redevelop "best ideas". According to Drake and Sherin (2006:154,182), teachers' narrative identities frame the ways in which they use, alter or adapt the curriculum, before, during and after instruction. As teachers work with a complex, conceptually rich curriculum, they make different choices and adaptations. Teachers' past experiences, their current identities, and their desire to re-create intergenerational learning found in their own homes, lead them to develop different ideas about how to reach curriculum goals (Drake & Sherin 2006:183). The role of adaptation is complex since teaching requires improvisation and adaptation on the one hand, while being faithful to the goals of curriculum change on the other.

Teachers adapt the curriculum to meet local constraints, match their pedagogical goals or fulfil the needs of their learners (Squire, MaKinster, Barnett, Luehmann & Barab 2003:469). However, teachers' necessity to adapt curricula ultimately presumes "one best way" of implementing a curriculum. These authors view teachers' adaptations as curriculum innovations created in response to their contexts:

> Teachers' adaptations of innovations are not phenomena to be avoided, but rather an ongoing process to be supported. As such, the goal of instructional designers might be not how to create "teacher-proof curriculum" or to even understand teachers' adaptations of curricula so that such repurposing of curricula can be avoided. Instead, designers might reconceptualize

"implementation" as supporting teachers in contextualizing curricula to meet their local needs (Squire *et al.* 2003:471).

3.5 Summary and Conclusion

The conceptual framework for my study is based on four main responses of teachers to curriculum change: they (i) ignore; (ii) resist; (iii) adopt; or (iv) adapt the curriculum change. I will therefore examine "policy as practitioner meanings" (McLaughlin, 2005:74). Mutual adaptation occurs when "local implementers would for better or worse, modify policy goals and strategies to suit local conditions" (McLaughlin 1987; 2005:82). Moreover, teachers do not simply implement curriculum change, they interpret and modified it according to their different frames of experience. This explains why 'change is ultimately a problem of the smallest unit'—teachers are regarded as 'street-level bureaucrats' who require both professional and personal motivation to implement change. but it also depends on the extent to which they grasp policy intentions.

I conclude this chapter by returning to Lindblad's (1990:169) types of teachers and matching them to the four main responses. Alienated teachers who view themselves as victims of external change forces may resist or ignore curriculum change. Independent teachers who decide how to respond to curriculum change may fall into any of the four areas of my conceptual framework. Spectators who regard curriculum change as an imposition may ignore it. Loyal officials who view the motivation for change as reasonable are likely to adopt the curriculum change. Pioneers who identify mutual correspondence between the changes required and their existing teaching practices redefine their existing practice as already compliant, and may adapt the curriculum change. Partisans interpret curriculum change as an opportunity to do what they think is right and may manifest a mixture of responses. It is therefore possible that teachers' responses to curriculum change are complex and mixed rather than straightforward. In this study I will examine the responses of the participating teachers to curriculum change in relation to the four main responses discussed above.