

Title of the contribution	<b><i>Policy Diffusion and Transfer and Teachers' Perceptions within the Bologna Reforms: the Armenia case of Higher Education Reforms</i></b>
Author 1	Susanna Karakhanyan
Contact Information	National Center for Professional Education Quality Assurance, Armenia
Author 2	Klaas van Veen
Contact information	Graduate School of Teaching ICLON Leiden University, the Netherlands
Author 3	T.C.M. (Theo) Bergen
Contact Information	Radboud Universiteit Nijmegen Instituut voor Leraar en School, the Netherlands
Publication Date	April 8, 2010

***Policy Diffusion and Transfer and Teachers' Perceptions within the Bologna Reforms:  
the Armenia case of Higher Education Reforms***

*When leaders and other participants are given opportunities to learn more deeply in context they have a chance of transforming the contexts that constrain them.  
- M. Fullan*

***Abstract***

The paper seeks to understand how higher education policy from the European Community is defused and transferred to Armenia, a developing country. Particularly, this study aims to delve deeper in the actual implementation process of higher education reforms in Armenia through teachers' perceptions. The findings mainly reveal that teachers do long for productive and effective changes to take place. What causes frustration and, consequently, distrust and resistance towards the reforms is the way the implementation of the reforms are organized and how the actual reforms unfold in the universities.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The aim of the article is two-fold. First, it aims to understand the nature of the reform implementation processes transferred from the developed countries to a developing country like Armenia. To explore this issue, first more context information about higher education in Armenia will be provided. The other aim of the article is to understand teacher sense-making of and reasoning about a reform, which is influenced by such constructs as their change knowledge, emotions, and attribution of outcomes, which are tightly dependent on the organizational culture.

Whether a reform is destined to a failure or success has been proved to largely depend on the context of reforms, existence of an active dialogue among the main stakeholders, the extent of their change knowledge, and the mode through which the change is diffused, transferred and put into a specific context (Marsh & Sharman, 2009; McLendon, 2003; Fullan, 2004). Of a particular importance is the extent to which teachers make sense of a change process, which largely determines its outcome. In the literature of educational change a distinction between the “instrumental” versus “agency” approaches to the role of teachers in educational reforms has been made (cf. Hargreaves, Lieberman, Fullan & Hopkins, 1998; Spillane, Reiser & Reimer, 2002; Goodson, 2000). The former defines reforms as being quasi-objective and supra-personal: an approach, which neglects the complexity of how reforms must unfold in the daily reality of the actual implementers. The latter is seen as subjective and intrapersonal: a notion, which underpins the role of the implementers’ “agency” and their own frame of reference in the success of a reform implementation.

Yet, most studies in the change literature tend to concentrate on one of the constructs leaving the interrelation open to debates. To begin with, the constructs underpinning teacher sense-making of and reasoning about reforms do not exist in isolation. Rather, they are interrelated and are influenced by each other. Next, more and more developing countries are involved in the global process of educational change. Still, hardly any publication has elaborated on teacher sense-making of and reasoning about higher education reforms in those countries so far.

Therefore, to get a holistic picture of a reform implementation in Armenia and teachers’ sense-making in the particular change context it is logical to look at the constructs in combination since each construct brings in a value added angle, which enables a deeper understanding of the situation, teachers’ “agency” and that of successful implementation strategies.

## **2. CONTEXT**

After joining the Bologna Process in May 2005, a three-tier system with bachelor, master and doctoral levels were introduced and became obligatory for all the universities beginning academic year 2006-2007 (Ministry of Education and Science decree of December 14, 2004). A priority is integration into the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) through following the Bologna Declaration principles. The undertaken reforms in higher and postgraduate professional education are actually three-fold aimed at the education structure, content and management. However, the points outlined in the Government Program were more or less introduced at leading universities in Armenia through pilot projects long before the Declaration was signed and found both approval and resistance on the part of the actual implementers.

The changes taking place in the Armenian higher education environment lay bare the problems particular to the higher education systems with a strong soviet legacy. The issues evolve around management, teaching and learning approaches, curriculum, human development, organizational culture and last but not least one implementation of the European integration reforms that are on government agenda.

Coupled with the latter are the tough economic situation, prevailing corruption and the meager salary rate the teachers are entitled to. The situation compels most of them to combine several positions and sometimes give private classes to earn their living. In case of failure of either of the stated outlets from the situation, most of them opt to leave the country, which adds up to the rise of the brain drain rate Armenia suffers from. It is in this complex and chaotic environment that the academics find themselves and it is this increased uncertainty, which makes effective reforms something beyond the vision of many. To add up, while implementing reforms, which is mainly in a top-down mode (Karakhanyan, et. al, in press), teachers' frames of reference are still hardly taken into account. Yet, they are the ones who are actually assumed to implement reforms and it is their level of buy in that determines the success of reform implementation.

## **3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

To analyze the nature of the Bologna reforms in a developing country, it seems useful to combine concepts of policy research and educational innovation literature to gain a deeper understanding of the complexity of such processes. Transferring reforms from other countries can be understood through such concepts as policy diffusion and policy transfer, derived from policy literature. Using these concepts provides a frame to analyze the complexities of implementing reform principles transferred from other countries. However, in the policy

research literature less attention is paid to the types of changes and how those reforms are implemented at a local level, especially in the developing countries, where different moral and social values prevail. More specific, the way the local actors make sense of the reforms, construct collective meanings, and actually implement the reforms can more adequately be studied using concepts from innovation literature.

The main argument put forth by recent innovation research is that the quality of the reform implementation is determined by the quality of the dialogue between the actors involved, such as policymakers, researchers, administrators, and especially teachers, being the ones who are the key players in implementing reforms in the daily practice (Hargreaves, Lieberman, Fullan & Hopkins, 1998; Spillane, Reiser & Reimer, 2002; Goodson, 2000). For understanding the underlying principles of change, concepts, such as change knowledge, emotions, and attribution of outcome, which are tightly dependent on the organizational culture and delve deeper into the actual implementers' perceptions are relevant. However, much of the innovation literature hardly discusses the policy issues as analyzed in policy literature. Often the content and principles of reforms are taken for granted or as quasi-objective (Hargreaves, Lieberman, Fullan & Hopkins, 1998).

Following Fullan's (2004, 2007) ideas, the concepts of policy diffusion and transfer, followed by teachers' change knowledge, emotions, attribution of outcome, and organizational culture will be discussed.

### ***3.1 Policy Diffusion and Policy Transfer***

To understand the quality of the implementation processes of reforms derived from another country, the concepts of policy diffusion and policy transfer are useful. Coupled together they provide a holistic picture of the implementation process, the relationship between the two complexities involved at its multiple levels and their potential consequences.

In innovation literature, the processes, which involve emulation of the policies and programs formerly adopted by other states, are defined as policy diffusion (McLendon, 2003). The diffusion literature identifies two ways in which policy innovation spreads: vertical and horizontal (Daun-Barnett and Perorazio, 2006). Policy diffusion research mainly focuses on exploring why some states either adopt or adapt policies more readily than others. Bache and Taylor (2003) elaborate on three hypotheses of reacting to external pressures: resistance, imitation and adaptation. Resistance may be an expression of strong organizational or national identity, which can develop into protection of established values seen as threatened by external ideas. From the imitation perspective, the organization is open for new fashions of organizational design and practice. Adaptation indicates that diffusion is by far more

complicated than the imitation hypothesis assumes (Bache and Olsson, 2001). Adaptation may occur on either conceptual level or in practice, or both. However, a distinction may emerge between conceptual adaptation and practice. In order to demonstrate agreement with dominating ideas or concepts in the surrounding world, an organization may simply accept adaptation conceptually. Yet, as Bache and Taylor (2003) argue, changes on conceptual level may ultimately affect practice. (p. 282).

Policy transfer, on the other hand, mainly stresses policy content and the role of agency in transferring ideas and practices from one time or space to another. Dolowitz and Marsh (1996) identify two types of policy transfer: voluntary and coercive. In its turn coercive type is further differentiated as direct and indirect policy transfer. Direct coercive transfer occurs when external powers create a condition obliging a state or an organization to comply. International institutions often play a key role in coercive policy transfer, which is particularly true in the case of Third World countries seeking financial assistance from abroad. Indirect coercive methods stem from a variety of factors: externalities, technological change, global economic pressures and international consensus.

Further, the potential for a policy transfer may be constrained by a number of factors, the major of which is policy environment. Bache and Taylor (2003) argue that each policy environment has its differences and any policy transfer is unavoidably planted into a different plot. Another major constraint is the stock of political, bureaucratic and financial resources available to the country or organization adopting a certain policy. Therefore, even where shared national goals across open up prospects for successful policy transfer, the environment with prevailing policies and practices still brings about constraints. Moreover, to a greater extent, the transfer effectiveness depends on the local implementers, even in the event of a most coercive incidence of policy transfer. The latter can develop a 'hidden agenda', which will ultimately have a significant impact on the outcomes.

### ***3.1.1 Types of Change***

As a result of any educational change, usually changes in structure, content, or behavior are anticipated. Depending on the attitude of the implementers the end result might turn to have yielded three possible scenarios: (1) no changes at all, leaving all the endeavors on a paper; (2) structural changes only; (3) or a sophisticated blend of structural, content and behavioral changes.

Back in 1974, Watzlawick et al. distinguished two types of changes, which they described as ‘first-order’ and ‘second-order’ changes (1974, pp. 10-11). Educationalists (Watzlawick et al., 1974; Fullan, 1991; Evans, 2001; Cuban 1988) who investigated the flaws with previous endeavors have come to the conclusion that most of the projects have failed because they were aimed at first-order changes rather than at second-order ones:

*First-order changes* are those that improve the efficiency and effectiveness of what is currently done, “without disturbing the basic organizational features, without substantially altering the way the children and adults perform their roles”. *Second-order changes* seek to alter the fundamental ways in which organizations are put together, including new goals, structures, and roles (e.g., collaborative work cultures). Most changes since the turn of the century have been first-order changes, aimed to improve the quality of what already existed. Second order reforms largely failed. (cf. Fullan, 1991, p.29)

What is actually underpinned by second-order changes is deep systemic change that would modify the very way the organization is put together through altering the beliefs and perceptions of the key players and therefore, their behavior. Thus, the new paradigm (strategic-systemic) supported by such keen leaders of organizational change as Michel Fullan, Matthew Miles, Philip Schlechty and Thomas Sergiovanni derives from system thinking and strategic approaches to organizational development (Evans, 2001) and puts change knowledge at the heart of innovation success.

While acknowledging the flaws that can occur in all possible dimensions of reform implementation it is nevertheless crucial to put an emphasis on congruence between individual implementer of change and organizational change. Explicitly demonstrated above is the fact that dilemmas of changes are often caused because of their lack of enough depth and comprehensiveness at the level of implementation. A prerequisite for successful reforms is, therefore, creating enough motivation and incentives for the implementers to learn in context. As Sparks and Hirsh (1997) argue unless individual learning and organizational changes are addressed simultaneously and support one another, the achievements made in one area may be canceled by continuing problems in the other.

### ***3.2 Teacher Perceptions***

In educational research, increasingly teachers’ perceptions about reforms are explored. In line with Pajares’ (1992) observation that many different terms and definitions can be found referring to beliefs, the same applies to teachers’ perceptions of reforms (cf. Corcoran Nielsen, Lundmark Barry, Trefz Staab, 2008; Darby, 2008; Day, Elliot & Kington, 2005; Fullan, 2007; Hargreaves, 2005; Schmidt & Datnow, 2005; Spillane et al, 2002; van Veen et al, 2005; Zembylas, 2005). Perceptions, beliefs, attitudes, knowledge, change knowledge,

organizational knowledge, emotions, they all refer somehow to how teachers perceive, experience, and react to reforms. As Miltenburg & Singer (1999) argue, such cognitive–affective processes refer to “complex synthesizing structures integrating cognition (in the form of appraisals, expectations, and beliefs) with motivation (in the form of needs, interests, goals, action tendencies), affect (in the shape of physiological arousal and sensory and bodily feeling) and actions (in the form of motor responses and procedures and methods for ‘acting’) (ibid, p. 6). Therefore, also in line with Pajares’ (1992) plea to be more specific about the issue at hand, we focus on specific forms of knowledge relevant in the context of reforms, such as change knowledge and knowledge about the organizational culture. Further, instead of only focusing on the cognitive aspects we concentrated on the aspects of emotions and attribution. Attribution will be used to gain an understanding of how teachers perceive the nature of the problems and pitfalls of the reforms.

Taken together, these sensitizing concepts, as each will be discussed in more detail in the following, constitute a more integrative way of analyzing how teachers perceive and experience reforms, enabling a deeper understanding of teachers’ perceptions.

### 3.2.1 *Sensitizing Concepts*

Change knowledge, as Fullan (2007) summarizes, is the driving force of any kind of change. Deep understanding of the concepts, processes, and the values it bears underpins the process of reforms since only through deep understanding can the endeavors be appreciated and followed. Fullan proposes to consider change from two perspectives – *the meaning of change* and *the process of change*. The crux of change, as he states, is how individuals come to grips with this reality since underestimation of either the meaning or process of change eventually results in dilemmas in most of the cases.

To deeper understand why the teachers behave the way they do it is imperative to first of all understand the culture in which they function and find out whether it is conducive to change and therefore learning and creating. In Schein’s words (1997) culture is a phenomenon that surrounds all of us, it helps to understand how it is created, embedded, developed, manipulated, managed, and changed.

Many leading scholars on school improvement have emphasized tight relationships between school climate and culture and organizational change process (Hargreaves, 1994; Hopkins, 2001). Evans (2001) outlines six key factors, occupational framework, politics, history, stress, finances and culture, which intertwined together shape the organizational setting of a school and determine its changeability potential. Yet other scholars propose

distributed leadership as one potential contributor to positive change and transformation of educational system (Elmore, 2004; Spillane et al, 2006; Fullan, 2007). Proponents of distributed leadership argue that it provides new insights about leadership and provides a powerful tool for transforming leadership practices (Spillane et al, 2006) consequently creating a favorable environment or culture conducive to learning and change. Therefore, the way teachers behave in classrooms and their motivations and incentives for change are tightly connected to the ambiance of culture prevailing at the given institution.

Further, moods and emotions can profoundly influence cognitive processes. Individuals may use their apparent affective response to a target as a basis of judgment. Considering the difficulty of distinguishing one's pre-existing feelings from one's response to the target in question, people tend to evaluate any target more positively when they are in a happy rather than sad mood (c.f. Schwarz, 2000). Within the emotions domain, which plays a central role in change process is ownership for reforms and desire to change (Hargreaves, 1994). Understanding what the teachers' drivers for change and preservation are, as Hargreaves argues, will reveal valuable insights about how change can be made most effectively, what should be changed and what should be not.

### 3.2.2 Attribution

In this study Weiner's *Attribution Theory* (1992; 2000) will be applied as a lens for understanding higher education teachers' behavior since any kind of change naturally brings about questions of *why*.

To explain everyday actions, people search for reasons, which are associated with desires, incentives, volitional choice and free will (Weiner, 2008). Weiner uses attributions for eliciting achievement outcomes that is in achievement setting he seeks to find the causes of success and failure. According to him, the most important factors affecting attributions are ability, effort, task difficulty, and luck. The basic principle of attribution theory with regards to motivation is that a person's own perceptions or attributions for success and failure determine the amount of effort the person will expend on that activity in the future. The theory per se emphasizes the idea that agents are strongly motivated by the pleasant outcome of being able to feel good about themselves. An important assumption of the theory is that people will interpret their environment in such a way so as to maintain a positive self-image. This means they attribute their successes and failures to the factors, which will make them feel as good as possible about themselves. When they succeed they tend to attribute this



success to their own efforts and abilities. In the contrary, when they fail they try to put the blame on the factors over which they have no control (Weiner, 1992, 2000).

In order to better understand the motivational consequences of causal beliefs, Weiner proposes to alter qualitative difference between causes such as effort and ability to make quantitative differences. However, he argues that it is only possible if we compare causes on some psychological dimensions. Research has documented only three underlying causal properties: (1) locus, (2) stability, and (3) controllability (ibid, p.4). Locus refers to the location of cause, which is either within or outside of the actor; causal stability to the duration of cause (stable causes – aptitude; unstable – chance); controllability refers to volitional alterations, such as causes like effort. Anyhow some causes cannot be willfully changed and luck and aptitude have this property.

According to Weiner all causes can be located within these three dimensions, although there might be some disagreement on the cause location since the latter depends on people's perceptions. Research shows that if a cause is stable then the same outcome will be anticipated following a success or failure. In case the cause is unstable it cannot be an indicator of whether the same outcome can be expected or not. Overall, attributional analyses provide a window for understanding of evaluation, reactions to the stigmatized, help, and aggression. In our context an attempt has been made to understand the teachers' behavior through attributional analysis since it is believed to reveal the spheres in which change policies are incongruent with the teachers' perceptions.

#### **4. RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

In this study an attempt has been made to deeper understand the nature of the Armenian higher education reforms in the light of teachers' perceptions through answering the following questions:

1. What are the characteristic features of the higher education reforms undertaken by the Armenian policymakers?
2. How do teachers in the Armenian higher education perceive the quality of the implementation processes of current reforms?

For answering the first research question the concepts of policy diffusion and policy transfer will be used based on the document analysis as will be described in the methods section. To answer the second question the concepts of teacher perceptions expressed through teacher change knowledge, emotions, organizational culture and attribution will be supported by a survey and interviews with teachers.

## 5. METHODS AND ANALYSES

In this study a mixed method design was developed: document analyses, a survey including 300 higher education teachers at eight leading universities in Armenia, and based on this survey, three groups of four teachers were interviewed.

### *5.1 Document analysis*

To better understand the way the Armenian policymakers steer the reforms transferred from the EU countries we examined the official documents, which provided a detailed description of the current state and the strategies foreseen for changing the existing educational system. The underlying principle for document selection was the extent to which they covered types of changes, namely first order (the structural ones) and second order changes (changes in the behavior and culture). As a result three documents were selected:

- **Strategic Vision for Education: *Restoring Armenia's Strength in Education*** – developed by the Ministry of Education and Science in 2007. The document covers the overall aims, principles and strategic approaches for the development of education and it became the foundation of Armenia's 2008-2015 National Development Program for Education. According to the document, reforms are to be based on strategies that achieve the greatest impact with limited investment.
- **National Human Development Report 2006, *Educational Transformations in Armenia***– developed by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). The Report provides professional coverage and comprehensive analyses of Armenia's education system and proposes certain solutions and concrete steps to be initiated to achieve significant changes and tangible outcomes for ongoing educational reforms.
- **Law on Higher and Post-Graduate Professional Education, December 14, 2004** – the document introduces the new ideas aimed at constructing a modern model of quality assurance, accreditation and the definition of ECTS system. It defines institutional autonomy, academic freedom, the three-tier degree structure with qualification degrees of the bachelor, master and researcher are also underpinned in the document.

#### *5.1.1 Analysis*

The documents reviewed are policy texts developed by MoES and different international organizations. The implied writers of the policy texts under review are the organizations that have developed it rather than individual authors. What is actually relevant

is that the documents in question bear the approval of the target organization and therefore, stem from their conceptions about higher education reforms.

Basically, first order changes target improvement of the existing practices without going deeper into the changes of behavior whereas second order ones bring about behavioral changes and thus affect the culture of the organizations (Fullan, 1991). In this study we consider a change to be first order change if it promotes structural changes such as move on to a two-tier degree system, integration of a system of credits, assessment. On the other hand, second order changes are considered the ones, which promote behavioral changes, such as professional development, Life Long Learning (LLL), and endeavors to change organizational culture. In the analysis of the policy documents we concentrate on the extent to which each of the documents promotes first and second order changes.

The documents were analyzed through content analysis (Denscombe, 2007) to decide the meaning of the texts using ATLAS.ti scientific software. The documents were first read with a focus on the policies projected, then the text was broken down into smaller units after which the major policies were categorized based on the underlying concepts for first and second order changes (Fullan, 1991). Considering the first part of analysis is a tally of the items when various units occur (Denscombe, 2007), the frequency analysis of the units was performed (see Table 1). To provide for validity of the content analysis peer-debriefing of the results was conducted. During the discussions some discrepancies with regards to coding were encountered. Anyhow it can be attributed to the different cultures the authors come from. In the end the authors came to a consensus.

As a result of content analysis, the following distribution surfaced.

**Table 1: Document analysis on first and second order changes**

<i>Documents</i>	<i>First order changes</i>	<i>Second order changes</i>
Strategic Vision for Education: Restoring Armenia's Strength in Education, 2007	43	17
National Human Development Report 2006, <i>Educational Transformations in Armenia</i> , (goals of the present stage of reforms)	34	14
Law on Higher and Post-Graduate Professional Education, December 14, 2004	24	2

While developing policies for educational change a major emphasis was put on promoting first order changes to create compliance with the Bologna principles. The overarching changes stressed in the documents were promotion of two-tier degree programmes,

establishment of a platform for Armenian degrees recognition, development of standards, ECTS integration and the like. To some extent changes directly connected with faculty development and LLL were mentioned, along with the omissions extant in the current approaches. As mentioned in the *National Human Development Report*:

The HEI faculty training and qualification improvement process is currently ad hoc; as a rule, it is initiated by either the trainees or individual HEIs. The situation is even worse in primary and secondary vocational institutions (p. 79).

However, the specialists that are trained in local or foreign training centres...rarely engage in a structural effort that would enable them to share with local colleagues the knowledge and experience obtained in such training programs (p. 79).

The Armenian legal provisions on supplementary education do not adequately reflect on the concept, goals, objectives, policy goals, and implementation mechanisms of either Life Long Learning or adult education (p. 94).

## **5.2 Survey**

### *Questionnaire development*

The initial questions for the questionnaire were derived from the literature and the emphasis was put on revealing teacher perceptions regarding the reforms in the Armenian higher education. To construct the questionnaire, a meeting with seven teachers was organized to review the questionnaire content to ensure its inclusion of all the concerns. Next, the questionnaire was commented upon by an expert in the field of education and two vice-rectors of education from two different universities. The overall opinion of the reviewers was that the questions stemmed out of their concerns and covered their attitude towards reforms. As a final point, the questionnaire items underwent discussions among the authors.

The questionnaire, *Teachers Perceptions within a Change Context*, was based upon the theoretical framework and explored five concepts: (A) Teacher Change Knowledge, (B) Beliefs about reforms, (C) Beliefs about Teaching and Learning, (D) Beliefs about organizational Culture, and (E) Emotions regarding Reforms. We used five point Likert scales (1- strongly agree to 5- strongly disagree). The questionnaire consisted of 79 items: 9 demographic questions, 3 questions with categorical values, 2 open-ended questions and 67 close-ended questions. The whole questionnaire took 20-25 minutes to be completed.

### *Try-out phase*

In order to reveal unanticipated problems with questionnaire design or wording, testing of the questionnaire with a small group of respondents was conducted at three different universities. 16 teachers were asked to fill in the questionnaire and there was 100 % response rate. Out of 16 respondents only 8 provided responses to the open ended questions and 8 provided their contact details. The try out phase contributed to the redevelopment of the questionnaire in the sense that it revealed some issues regarding the structure and content, which were considered in the final version and two main changes were made in the final version.

First, the structure of the questionnaire was changed. In the original one there was a division between student-centered and teacher-centered types of education, which made the respondents guess the desired response. Therefore, the two sub-groupings were integrated into one and the scale was renamed into Beliefs about Teaching and Learning. Next, the five-point Likert scales had a reverse order for each sub-grouping to make sure they are not filled in a slapdash fashion. However, this had to be changed as well since most of the respondents of the pilot version complained of wasting much time on reading the order and of having a difficulty to follow it through with each sub-grouping.

The final version of the questionnaire consisted of 77 questions. The distribution was as follows: 9 questions addressing teacher demographic status; 10 items – Change Knowledge (including 2 open-ended questions); 11 items addressing Beliefs about Reforms; 25 items – Beliefs about Teaching and Learning; 11 items – Organizational Culture; 11 items – Emotions regarding Reforms.

The five concepts explored are beyond the scope of the current paper, in which we concentrate only on teachers' change knowledge, organizational culture, emotions and attribution.

### *Sample Demographics*

The data were collected from the university teachers. The emphasis was given to the key universities in the republic that have complied, at least partly, with some elements of the Bologna process. Collectively, the approximate number of teachers at the eight universities in the sample comes to 3000. Our sample targeted 300 teachers, 10% of the overall population, and this provides for a background to state that the sample is representative of the population.

### *Response and Data Collection*

In December 2007, 300 teachers were approached to participate in the study. 279 responded (93%), 70%, 188 teachers, of which provided answers to two open-ended questions. 50 % provided their names and contact information for further inquiries. The

underlying principle for filling in the questionnaire was voluntarism and enthusiasm of the university management and the teachers. The high percentage of responses actually attests that teachers do care about the quality of the educational reforms.

The sex distribution of the sample was 45.3% males and 54.7% females. The age groupings had the following break up: 13.3% (37 cases) were in the group of 21-30 years old, 16.5% (46 cases) in the 31-40 age group, 22.9% (64 cases) in the 41-50 age group, 26.2% (73 cases) in the age group of 51-60, 15.8% (44 cases) in the age group of 61-80, and 5.4% (15 cases) were missing values for the specific item. The educational background distribution was 9.5% (26 cases) for the respondents holding a Master's degree, 9.5% (26 cases) were Full Professors, 56.7% (156 cases) holding a Candidate of Science degree, 24.4% (67 cases) had a Diploma Specialist (five-year degree) qualification.

### 5.2.1 Analysis

#### *Missing Value Analysis*

The data were analyzed through SPSS statistical program. With the aim to control for the non response, missing value variables analysis was conducted by using EM algorithm. The results revealed that missing values counted for less than 1% in total. Little's MCAR test showed the Chi-Square to be 2448.499; DF (degree of freedom) = 2428 with Sig. = .381. Consequently, taking into consideration the fact that no systematic missing pattern was encountered we argue that the missing values were completely at random. Therefore, with the help of the program they were counted for.

#### *Reliability Test*

Considering one of the aims of the questionnaire was to identify groups of teachers to be explored in the next research phase, the interview, the reliability tests were found reasonable for checking the internal consistency within the theoretical scales (see Table 2).

**Table 2: Reliability Test**

<i>Scales</i>	<i>Sample Question</i>	<i>Number of Items</i>	<i>Cronbach's Alpha</i>
Organizational Culture	The environment at our university is conducive to creating learning culture	11	.88
Emotions regarding reforms	I feel empowered by the new teaching methods	11	.85
Teacher Change Knowledge	I constantly build on my capacity (acquire new knowledge, skills and competences)	8	.79

Within the scale *Organizational Culture*, the 11 items explored the perceptions of teachers about the culture prevailing at the given institutions and whether it was conducive to successful changes.

For the *Emotions regarding reforms* domain, the 11 items were intended to reveal how the teachers felt within the change process and whether or not the reforms respond to their needs. Within the scale two items were reversed: item 57 (*I feel disappointed with the constraints reform puts over my work*) and item 58 (*I feel disappointed with reform implementation*).

The last scale, *Teacher Change Knowledge*, consisted of 8 items and the aim was to explore what the teacher knowledge about reforms was and how the teachers build on their capacity.

### **5.3 Interview**

#### *Participants*

The teachers in this study were selected based on the results of a previous survey study, including 279 teachers conducted in December 2007. As a result, three groups of teachers were formed: (1) positively oriented to reforms; (2) moderately oriented to reforms; (3) negatively oriented to reforms. Within each group distinctions in such factors as gender and age were considered.

The interviews of the 12 teachers took place in Armenia, Yerevan, in November and December 2008. The teachers came from four different universities. For confidentiality reasons we name the universities by letters A, B, C and D as well as assign fictitious names to the respondents. Below is the distribution of the teachers according to their groups and relevant background information about each. The teachers varied with regards to their background experience in teaching during soviet times, exposure to the Western educational system and culture.

Group 1: Positively tuned to the change process:

- Erik – University A, Assistant Professor, 15-year teaching experience, has background in educational change and exposure to the Western educational system
- Gor – University D, Assistant Professor, 23-year teaching experience, has exposure to the Western culture.
- Grethen – University B, Assistant Professor, 15-year teaching experience, has some exposure to the Western system
- Joan – University B, Assistant professor, 18-year teaching experience, has some exposure to the Western culture.

Group 2: Moderately tuned to the change process:

- Arthur – University A, Associate Professor, 12-year teaching experience, no exposure to the Western culture
- Galina- University C, Associate Professor, 40-year teaching experience, has exposure to the Western system.
- Koryun- University A, Associate Professor, 14-year teaching experience, has broad exposure to both the Western culture and educational system.
- Sima – University A, Assistant Professor, 33-year teaching experience, has no exposure to the Western culture.

Group 3: Negatively tuned to the change process:

- Ed – University B, Associate Professor, 39-year teaching experience, no exposure to the Western system.
- Kristine – University A, senior instructor, 25-year teaching experience, broad exposure to both the Western culture and educational system.
- Nina – University A, former senior instructor, 10-year teaching experience, no exposure to the Western culture, 7 months ago left teaching position because of the problems she encountered with the reforms.
- Roman – University A, senior instructor, 39-year teaching experience, has no exposure to the Western culture.

### *Interview Topics*

We conducted semi-structured interviews, the questions for which were developed based on the relevant literature and the questionnaire results. The questions were focused around the major topics outlined below:

- ***Emotions*** – to delve deeper into their feelings about reforms and new approaches.
- ***Change knowledge*** – to find out what facts about the reform goals, objectives, and implementation they are familiar with to have a better picture of their change knowledge
- ***Organizational culture*** – the aim was to find out the nature of the culture in which the teachers had to work and the mechanisms through which the reforms were steered.
- ***Attribution*** – considering the fact that there was a strong indication of attributing reform outcomes to external and uncontrollable factors, we focus on looking at teachers' causal attributions through Weiner's attribution theory to better understand the teachers' reasoning about reforms.

With the aim to voice out teachers' concerns we also provided them with an opportunity to provide any additional information they found relevant.

Seven interviews were conducted in English, which enabled the Dutch colleague to participate in them, the other five were in Armenian and only one researcher conducted them. All the interviews had standard lead questions, which were followed by clarification questions, discussions and sometimes explanations of different concepts on the researchers' part. The duration of the interviews varied from 1 hour up to 2 hours and 40 minutes. 6 teachers were asked for additional meetings with the aim to clarify the discrepancies of the former interviews. Overall, we conducted 18 semi-structured interviews of 12 teachers.



The interviews were tape-recorded, the ones conducted in the Armenian language were translated into English, transcribed to create written protocols and sent to the teachers for authorization. All the teachers agreed with the content of the transcripts. During each interview as well as afterwards notes were made, in which the researchers logged their feelings, comments on improving the interview questions, impressions of the interview process, openness of the respondents and prospective questions for the possible follow-up interviews. Strong points discussed at the interviews were also registered in the log.

### **5.3.1 Analysis**

The interview transcripts were analyzed based on the coding system proposed by Miles and Huberman (1994). To funnel the analysis of the data the coding process was carried out using ATLAS.ti 5.5 (2004) software program. To start with, the research questions, the structure of the data collection and coding system were derived from the questionnaire results as well as the existing theories. While coding the interview data we followed, as Charmaz (2000) calls it, a so-called logical deductive approach, which means coding based on preconceived concepts derived from different sources as well as free coding to observe the emergence of new concepts (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

The initial interview protocols were analyzed in a sequence of phases by first assigning descriptive codes to the interview segments related to the research questions. Next, we created code families, that is interpretive codes, to summarize the selected segments of the interview data and categorized the families according to the target concepts: (1) teacher emotions within the context of reforms, (2) teacher change knowledge, (3) organizational culture and (4) attribution, a concept that emerged during the analyses. To ensure reliability of the coding system both intra- and inter-rater reliability tests were conducted using SPSS statistical program. The intra-rater reliability, conducted in a three-week time span, was .96 (Cohen's kappa). Regarding the inter-rater reliability, another researcher coded a selection of 80 interview segments, which resulted in an inter-rater reliability of .82 (Cohen's kappa). A few disagreements were found, which could be explained mainly by a difference in understanding the cultural background of the respondents.

In order to have a better understanding of the data, disregard irrelevant information, focus and organize the information coherently a summary data matrix (Miles & Huberman, 1994) for each teacher, for each group of teachers as well as each university involved was created. This helped to link the data to the research questions and summarize the portion of the data necessary for answering them. Group data matrices as well as university matrices were first analyzed separately then compared with each other and summarized. Lastly, the

output summary with references to the written protocols, coded segments, code families and matrices were developed.

#### ***5.4 Attribution***

To analyze *teachers' attribution*, Weiner's three underlying causal properties were used: (1) locus (two poles: internal vs. external), (2) stability (do causes change over time or not?), and (3) controllability (causes one can control such as skills vs. causes one cannot control such as luck, others' actions, etc.). Although, as Weiner (2000) emphasizes, there might be some disagreement on the cause location since the latter depends on people's perceptions.

First we addressed the issue of recategorizing the interview codes. Teachers' responses in which they attributed causes to their lack of knowledge, information and skills were considered internal; the responses in which they attributed causes to students, administrators and policymakers were considered external. With regards to the causal stability, causes which had little potential for change over a short period of time such as, corruption, culture, mentality, aptitude were considered stable ones. Likewise, the causes that had potential to change over a short period of time such as competency, skills and knowledge about reforms, lack of resources, flaws in implementation were considered unstable. Given that controllability refers to volitional alterations, the causes that could be tackled by the teachers in the event they had access to the resources they needed were considered controllable. Similarly, the causes that were out of the locus of the teachers' control such as behavior of the management and policymakers, lack of capacity on the part of their colleagues and students to engage in student-centered education or be involved in the reforms, corruption, and peculiar mentality were considered uncontrollable. Overall, eight combinations with the three properties surfaced: (1) internal controllable, (2) external controllable, (3) internal non-controllable, (4) external non-controllable, (5) internal stable, (6) external stable, (7) internal unstable, (8) external unstable.

To ensure reliability of the coding system both intra- and inter-rater reliability tests were conducted using SPSS statistical program. The intra-rater reliability, conducted in a three-week time span, was .96 (Cohen's kappa). Regarding the inter-rater reliability, another researcher coded a selection of 95 responses, which resulted in an inter-rater reliability of .82 (Cohen's kappa). A few disagreements were found, which could be explained mainly by a difference in understanding of the system of higher education in Armenia.

## 6 RESULTS

Regarding research question one, *what are the characteristic features of the higher education reforms undertaken by the Armenian policymakers?* we look at the reform implementation in Armenia through the lenses of the literature on policy diffusion. To answer research question two, *how do higher education teachers perceive the reforms in the Armenian higher education system?*, the concepts referring to teachers' perceptions were analyzed (change knowledge, organizational culture, emotions, and attribution).

### ***Characteristic features of the higher education reforms undertaken by the Armenian policymakers***

The findings show that *the ways* the reforms are diffused are vertical since the reform signals are sent to universities from the MoES in the form of future actions or mandates, fiscal incentives or sanctions (Law on Higher and Post-Graduate Professional Education, 2004). Policy transfer routes actually correspond to both *direct* and *indirect coercive transfer* types. Prior to joining the Bologna process, direct coercive methods of policy transfer surfaced since such international organizations as the World Bank, Open Society Institute, IREX, US Department of State and Education endeavored to transfer the ideologies as well as the higher education policies characteristic of a democratic society:

The World Bank has been active in guiding and lending funds for education sector reforms in Armenia for close to a decade and is the only donor doing so at a systems level. The resulting Education Quality and Relevance Project aims to improve the national curriculum, general education standards and evaluation systems; integrate new technologies and methods into the teaching process; train teachers in modern teaching practices; and restructure the administration and financing of the education system (NHDP, p. 33).

Therefore, during the period of economic flux the policymakers found the financial contribution of such international organizations as a panacea for the problems encountered, which compelled them to follow the grant or loan requirements.

*Indirect coercive methods* of policy transfer came into play when driven by the global economic pressures, technological changes, and international consensus on higher education future, Armenia joined the Bologna Process in 2005. By this act Armenia agreed to comply with its policies in order to integrate into the EHEA and thus contribute to fostering democracy development, human rights protection and the rule of law in the country (Conference materials, 2004). The act was quite a challenging one for a developing country in transition period, which was still influenced by deeply rooted former ideologies.

In higher education integration into the EHEA and commitment to the Bologna process are at the basis of the agenda for reforms. The transition to a credit transfer system and a European university degree system are defining the course of progress in higher education (NHDP, p. 32)

With regards to the types of changes prevalent, they are mainly aimed at first-order changes, that is structural, the accurate implementation of which, in fact, creates promising prospects for second-order changes. The lacking component in the Armenian case is insufficient attention paid to second order changes that is changes in educational dimension aiming at the manner in which teachers really act, which stem from their sense making from and about reforms.

Albeit covered in the three documents reviewed, the sections which address developing a system of faculty training and qualification improvement, creating an environment promoting spontaneous reforms did not address questions of what is suggested (content) by qualification improvement or how (character) the faculty training and professional development will be offered to teachers. Actually, as mentioned in the *National Human Development Report* (2006), the changes proposed bear more of a declarative character rather than that of an elaborate action plan. In its turn, lack of explicitly developed mechanisms for second order changes results in neglecting the latter. These overlooked and nonetheless crucial measures thus become pitfalls on the change transfer route and create reasons for ambiguity, discord and therefore, resistance and failure of the reforms.

Further, while examining *Restoring Armenia's Strength in Education* (2007), the pattern of overlooking the second-order changes became striking especially in the section of the vision that outlines strategies with the three main directions being *Environment, Seeds, and Networks*. In the *Seeds* section the proposal is to implant centers of excellence as 'seeds of change' inside institutions and networks:

These centers of excellence or 'seeds of change' are not experimental pilots or parallel structures. They are micro versions of best practices and proven approaches implanted inside existing structures. One of their fundamental aspects is that they are designed to quickly grow within institutions or networks replacing or being absorbed into existing structure over time (p.9).

What lacks in the given strategic vision is a need for a systemic quest with the aim to provide more learning in the target context. This is especially fundamental if the policies developed are to promote a synchronized change of both individuals and systems, thus ensuring a holistic approach to reforms. To a certain extent, 'implanting the seeds of change' might even find itself in danger of the passé forces, which in most of the cases turn out to be more powerful in Armenian context, and thus 'die out'. As it has been proved it is far easier to

change institutions and structures than it is to change patterns of thought and behavior, ingrained over previous decades (Jones, 2000).

### ***Teachers' perceptions about the reforms in the Armenian higher education system***

Regarding research question two, *how do teachers in the Armenian higher education perceive the quality of the implementation processes of current reforms?*, the integrative framework of four sensitizing concepts exploring teachers' sense-making of reforms was used. The questionnaire was used as a selection tool for the interview sample.

The teachers in this study fell into three groups: (1) positively oriented towards changes; (2) moderately oriented towards changes; (3) negatively oriented towards changes. The groups differed with regards to their emotions about reforms, level of change knowledge and attributions. However with regards to their beliefs about organizational culture, reform implementation, emotions within the organizational culture, attribution and incentives for more involvement in the reform few differences were observed. The teachers were grouped according to the characteristics below:

#### *Group 1: Positively oriented towards changes.*

The teachers in this group strongly believe in the benefits of student-centered teaching and learning and strive to apply the new methods. However, their description of their classes shows incorporation of some techniques of innovative approaches and not full application of it. With regards to the structural changes they consider the new system to provide for more opportunities. They also see urgent need to change the system the right way and do their best to promote it; however they also see many problems impeding the reforms.

**Joan:** *What I do now is to deliver the lecture, and then I give them the necessary home assignments and the necessary reading materials. Students are supposed to work on the assignments independently and during the next class we try to solve problems through discussions. Sometimes we have arguments or sometimes they are passive, but through questioning the students become more active, which makes them eager to attend classes whereas previously they used to skip them. They became more interested and therefore more motivated. The competition started. I break up them into small groups and they do their teamwork. Because of the methods the students felt they were active learners, not only writing and reproducing but also thinking and analyzing. They also became more confident in their skills, which becomes obvious when we have site visits and they are supposed to conduct classes independently.*

#### *Group 2: Moderately oriented towards changes.*

The teachers in this group consider some elements of the new approaches to be appropriate and try to preserve the good soviet approaches while integrating some new ones. There is also

a conception that the new approaches provide nothing new but different wording for the old practices. Another belief was that the soviet approaches provided for broader and the new approaches provide for deeper learning. Consequently, the incorporation of the both is a sophisticated blend. As for the structural changes, these teachers consider the new system to provide for more opportunities. However, they mainly think that the teachers and the students are not ready for the change.

**Koryun:** *To say I have totally changed my approaches would be an overstatement. I would never say, and personally, to be honest, I would hate to use quite different methods. Because having had to certain extent soviet experience, I am using soviet methods as well and they do have good standing and their way even nowadays. Coming back from the USA naturally, one of my objectives of my US visit was to get acquainted with US teaching methods and what is going on in US classrooms. Actually, what I did upon my arrival was to combine the good side of the soviet methods and some American methods. I put them together and from my perspective I have a good combination of soviet methods side by side with American ones.*

### *Group 3: Negatively oriented towards changes.*

The teachers in this group consider the soviet approaches to teaching and learning to have more advantages over the new ones and provided for better quality. These teachers have made no changes in their teaching and learning practices since they see no need to do so. They consider to have been applying student-centered elements even since soviet times. With regards to the structural changes they consider the reform to be a superficial one, which is more likely to cause damages. Also they consider Armenian culture to have peculiarities and values that should be preserved and prevented from the Western influence. The teachers in this group see a lot of problems with the integration into the European family and reform implementation per se.

**Kristine:** *I do not want to be misunderstood; because I am not definitely I am not a fan of this new system. We see the destruction of a good system. We both know that finishing school we had really good basic knowledge. I am already 50 and at the age of fifty being a linguist being very far from sciences, I mean physics, chemistry, till now I keep in my brains all the knowledge I got at school. Later in my life I had no chance to contact with these subjects, very very rare, but till now I have the fundamental knowledge, which helps me in my life. In general I keep to the idea that now western, I speak about British system, for example, because I know UK education, they are already suffering... For example, I am absolutely against such stupid things as giving a student a chance to choose a subject they want to learn.*

This section will unfold by first reporting how teachers really make sense of the current state of reform implementation in general and in the respective organizational environment in

particular. Next, to answer research question two we look at teachers' reasoning about reform outcomes through Weiner's attribution theory.

### ***Emotions***

One viewpoint from which to look at the teachers' perceptions is through exploring their emotions, since emotions reveal what they have at stake (van Veen et al, 2005). As a result of the survey, the scale *Emotions about Reforms* revealed ( $mean=2.2$ ,  $SD=.52$ ) that the teachers mostly tend to feel good within the change process. 252 teachers (90.3%) stated they felt confident within the change process and welcomed the demands put on them. They also claimed holding ownership of the reforms and disagreed with the questions 57 and 58, which aimed to explore their disappointment about reforms. Only 27 teachers (9.8%) expressed their dissatisfaction with reforms and confessed lack of ownership on their part.

**Table 5: Emotions about Reforms**

Emotions about Reforms ( $mean=2.2$ , $SD=.52$ )		
	Frequency	Percent
Valid		
1	81	29.3
2	171	61.3
3	26	9.4
4	1	0.4
Total	279	100

With regards to interview results, all the teachers in the three groups grew quite emotional when asked about their emotions within the change context. Overall, the teachers claimed they implemented the changes imposed by the administration only because they had to and did it without a clear picture of what reform is about and what values it conveys. Another reason the teachers were forced to implement the reforms was the fear of being fired if they acted otherwise.

**Interviewer:** *What is the impact of reforms on your activities?*

**Kristine:** *Do you want me to be honest? No impact at all. I do not see any difference because at our university it is only about what we feel. We feel only irritation, because everything is imposed in a hysterical, shouting and humiliating way. We are always shivering from this fever, you know, it is very unpleasant; we are not given a chance to digest their ideas, to think it over. May be this is really something good?*

Frustration is stated to be mainly caused by the way the administration implements reforms:

**Interviewer:** *How do you feel within the context of reforms?*

**Arthur:** *Frustration is not with the reforms but the way they implement it, the attitude is frustrating...I opt for leaving the country; perhaps for the time being, for change, I am sick and tired. If I were sick and tired of the reforms I would not leave for the country that dictates the reforms. I am just frustrated with way it is implemented... Sometimes I want to stand up and cry out: "Guys, I want to learn, give me a chance!"*

The teachers in the positive group feel enthusiastic about the reforms and feel ownership for the job performed. However, they do not have the same emotions about the changes per se, since sometimes they feel they cannot be totally open to the administration. All they are encouraged with is the relationship with the student and the progress they make.

**Grethen:** *I share my problems with our Vice-Rector, who is a fearful person. I always tell him I am tired of his fear, and will act irrespective their understanding or reprimands. But now I deal with such problems with caution, since I know who surrounds me.*

The teachers in the neutrally oriented group mostly feel disappointed with the ways the reforms are handled. They also fear to be misunderstood by the administration if they come up with some initiative. The fear to be fired is also prevalent. These teachers mostly feel ownership for the subject but are not ready to do the same for the reforms in general.

**Interviewer:** *Do you hold ownership for the reforms?*

**Arthur:** *Not yet. I am trying my best to be involved in the process but not yet. I am trying to be frank.*

**Interviewer:** *What percentage of teachers, do you think, hold ownership?*

**Arthur:** *At my university may be 5 to 10 %, it sounds discouraging but this is the fact.*

The teachers in the negatively oriented group expressed fear, irritation, lack of ownership for the reforms, feeling being blamed for the reform outcome. However, they also stressed out their love for the job and feel ownership for the subject taught.

**Roman:** *First of all I should be very grateful to you, because up to now I have had no place to express my thoughts, because I do not want to be fired. It is terrible. Fear is the most terrible thing. With fear we will not be able to contribute wholly.*

Overall, all the teachers in the three groups expressed disappointed with the reform implementation, the attitude of the administration towards them and the reforms per se.

### **Change Knowledge**

If we look at the teachers' perception from the point of view of change knowledge, it provides more insights about their sensemaking of the reforms, namely their understanding of the *meaning* and *process of change*. The survey results demonstrate the high self-esteem of the teachers and their confidence in their constant capacity building through the mean score for the scale ( $mean=2.0$ ,  $SD=.48$ ). In total 97.5% (272 teachers) agreed with the statements



regarding their high capacity to be engaged in the change process and their readiness to constantly build on their capacity, that is acquire new knowledge, skills, and competences. The teachers also tend to believe that they have enough change knowledge about reforms and they consistently build on their capacity. Within this scale only 7 (2.7%) teachers disagreed with the statements and claimed lack of change knowledge to carry out the reforms.

**Table 6: Change Knowledge**

Change Knowledge ( <i>mean=2.0, SD=.48</i> )		
	Frequency	Percent
Valid		
1	94	33.9
2	178	64.2
3	7	2.7
Total	279	100

In the contrary, during the interviews the teachers mainly stated lack of appropriate practical knowledge about reforms.

**Eric:** *[the teachers] feel, they understand something is changing in their responsibilities, approaches, they understand they cannot be traditional teachers they should change, but how and when they can't understand since they do not know how to apply it in practice.*

To the questions about what changes have been undertaken and what their goals are the teachers' answers mainly explicated their lack of change knowledge:

**Sima:** *It is really difficult to assess the situation, since it is still in process, at least we have an impression it is in process. From my point of view I do not see either the beginning, the middle or the end. If we say reform it means change for the better, but we do not see it. I do not even have an idea what for they are doing that.*

**Kristine:** *First of all we do not really understand this Bologna agreement properly, may be it is not really bad, we must investigate, we can't just take it blindly because Europe takes...It is not right to impose reforms without knowing the culture.*

As a consequence the lack of knowledge about reforms brings about misperception about it and results in distortion. This is mainly the case with curricula design:

**Interviewer:** *do you think the steps undertaken are conducive to creating a change culture?*

**Roman:** *Some steps are not. What is module? I can't understand up today. What does it mean: 'we are having a module today'? Is it the same written test? Is it something different? The ideas are mixed, the meanings of the words,*

*the phenomena are mixed and they are mixed in a wrong way. I think the reforms are wrongly understood, misinterpreted, probably the innovations would have had positive influence, but they are misinterpreted and therefore we are having negative results.*

The teachers in the positively oriented group stated having some knowledge about the change process with regards to the vision, however, consider to be lacking practical knowledge about reforms and complain of vague conceptions about a lot of points of change.

**Gov:** *We are fully implementing the reforms and do hope to have better results in the years to come. However, lack of practical knowledge hinders complete understanding of the process and therefore it s success.*

The teachers in the neutrally oriented group demonstrated some understanding of the educational paradigm change. However, do not have a clear understanding of the need for change because of the lack of a deeper knowledge about the values of reforms.

**Interviewer:** *Can you briefly state the aims of the reforms?*

**Arthur:** *Learning is performed for the sake of market economy, not for the sake of learning per se, I would specify.*

**Interviewer:** *What other goals are there?*

**Arthur:** *I can't say. By the way, this system of education makes us more pragmatic, that is why I just mentioned matching market economy as of vital importance.*

The teachers in the negatively oriented group demonstrated lack of clear understanding of the reform reasons and goals and misconception about student-centered teaching and learning.

**Interviewer:** *Well, curricula problems you have are not because of the Bologna process.*

**Ed:** *Then what is the use of having the system?*

**Interviewer:** *Promoting mobility, transparency, employability...*

**Ed:** *Ah, now I get it.*

**Kristine:** *I think the reforms are misunderstood, misinterpreted. The innovations probable would have had a positive influence, if they were interpreted and implemented the right way.*

### ***Organizational Culture***

In the questionnaire, the scale *Organizational Culture* aimed at revealing the teachers perceptions of the organizations they work at. The main tenet was whether the organizations have a culture that is conducive to reform implementation. The mean of the scale ( $mean=2.4$ ,  $SD=.66$ ) revealed that teachers mostly agree that the organizational culture is conducive to learning. The frequency distribution revealed 77.8% (217 teachers) of the respondents found the milieu of their institutions to be favorable for reform implementation, whereas 22.5% (62

teachers) claimed of the inappropriateness of the work environment for successful change. No statistical significance between the two gender differences was found.

**Table 7: Organizational Culture**

Organizational Culture ( <i>mean=2.4, SD=.66</i> )		
	Frequency	Percent
Valid		
1	66	23.8
2	151	54.5
3	59	21.4
4	3	1.1
Total	279	100

Likewise, the pattern through the 12 interviews showed mainly lack of learning culture within the organization, which teachers mainly attribute to the management.

**Table 8: Organizational Culture**

Universities	Organizational Culture
1 University A	Lack of team work, learning culture, the environment is not conducive to staying with the position, isolation among the colleagues and chairs, negative attitude of the rector to the employees, the atmosphere is threatening and stressful, leadership is accumulated in the hands of few. Management is not supportive, the atmosphere is chaotic, the administration has no capacity to carry out the reforms
2 University B	Absence of learning culture, however, there are formal meetings, any teachers can have informal leadership, it is not fearsome, the administration is supportive, also there are good traditions preserved, collaboration among teachers is only at formal level. The reforms are top-down.
3 University C	The environment demands being cautious, lack of informal get together, no learning culture
4 University D	Learning culture is extant, administration has enough capacity to make changes, the administration is very supportive, and however there is lack of appropriate human resources.

With the exception of the University D all other universities reported on the environment being not conducive to having learning cultures. The causes are mainly attributed to the Armenian mentality:

**Nina:** *mostly they [the teachers] are self-centered. The idea of teamwork I practiced when I was outside the university at the language center. A group of teachers were a nice team. But here the idea of team work does not work. Everyone is focused on whatever they do, there is no cooperation.*

**Roman:** *No, no, no, we have no culture like this, because everyone considers himself Ferdinand de Souse, everybody thinks that they are the best. I can't say that I am the best, I have never said it, I am the one I am.*

**Arthur:** *It is a matter of culture, why not, we, the Armenians always consider ourselves superior, it is in our heart and mind and we are not up to learning from others, we think that we know better, we can do the same job better and we think we are the best.*

Yet another cause for the absence of the learning culture was attributed to the management practices:

**Kristine:** *A lot of people have already left and even more want to leave because the atmosphere is absolutely devastating here, we feel humiliated, we are not respected at all. We are not considered to be colleagues, we are his slaves. It is terrible.*

**Nina:** *I never wanted to enter the Chair. Whenever you enter the Chair you are given certain tasks that are never relevant to the position, you know that if you do the task your teaching will suffer and if you say no, then you will be treated accordingly. If you do not want to you can resign. This is frustrating.*

**Roman:** *they give me assignments to do and that's it. Nothing else. The encouragement would be the following: they say if something is wrong you lose your job, but I do not think this is a way of encouragement, this is a threat of course.*

Apart from the management attitude the respondents reported on the leadership being accumulated only in the hands of the administration:

**Nina:** *...basically, it is administration. Teachers are tools: the buttons to push. If you are appointed the head then you are the best, you have all the authority, you can instruct everybody whether you are competent or not, you are the head now.*

**Roman:** *Leadership is accumulated only in the administration, just there...no, only a ruler, a dictator. Top-down.*

In two out of four universities the teachers reported satisfaction with the administrative support they get.

### ***Attribution***

To get deeper insights on teachers' perceptions about the reforms we look at teachers' reasoning through Weiner's attribution theory.

The categories summarized in Table 2 attribute certain causes to internal, external, stable, unstable, controllable and non-controllable categories. The results demonstrate teachers' inclinations to attribute the pitfalls to the category, which is non-controllable and external (161 codes). This includes causes related to implementation flaws, negative impact of the Western reforms, corruption, mentality mismatch and incompetence of the policymakers and managers to implement reforms.

To a larger extent teachers were complaining of students' lack of motivation, which resulted in their own lackadaisical attitude towards teaching. While to some extent opposing to the new teaching and learning approaches, mostly the teachers emphasize the importance of arising interest in students, be it soviet method of transmission or student-centered approach.

**Ed:** *Students have no motivation to learn nowadays. If I put the diplomas on the table and sell them, they would take them happily and leave the university without any education. They realize they need education, but they also realize that nobody needs their education. They see different people buying diplomas and getting positions and get discouraged.*

Another concern the teachers expressed was that few teachers have respect for their students. Mostly the teachers ascribe that to the legacy of traditional soviet approach where the teacher was in the center imposing his/her ideas on the students and his/her word was “the last degree of truth”. Mostly the teachers interviewed agreed that approach should be eliminated stating that the students are mature enough to think and try to find the truth themselves.

**Kristine:** *Most teachers are not born to be teachers. In any case you must know how to respect students. They are human beings and have all the rights. Most teachers, because of their complex of inferiority, disrespect students. This means they are not competent enough to handle the class, they actually show it straight away and students, they are not vegetables, they are very shrewd and immediately figure out what is wrong. If you fail to communicate with your students then you turn teaching into dictatorship.*

15 codes explicated attribution to external but controllable category, causes such as lack of information and lack of resources. To a lesser extent, in 19 responses, teachers attributed the pitfalls to themselves, so the responses fell within the internal and controllable category. They are causes related to the lack of change knowledge, motivation to be engaged in reforms and lack of time. The table below shows the eight combinations with the three properties and the frequency of responses to each of the combinations.

**Table 9: Causal Attribution**

<i>Cause</i>	<i>Internal</i>	<i>External</i>
<i>Controllable</i>	19	15
<i>Non-controllable</i>	12	161
<i>Stable</i>	0	37
<i>Unstable</i>	29	153

With regards to the stability of the causes, mostly the teachers attributed problems (153 codes) to external and unstable causes such as implementation flaws, fast pace of reforms, and a lack of appropriate background on the part of the management to conduct reforms:

**Ed:** *In my opinion the administration and policymakers do not have the necessary capacity, even more, a desire to reform. They say well, Europe says so, let's do it, tick it out and report. They are not even interested in the impact of the changes on the teachers and students. There is a principle, if there is a system, any random change will sooner damage it than change for the better. This reform was done randomly, for the sake of check out.*

To a lesser extent (37 codes), problems like change in culture, mentality mismatch, and corruption were attributed to the external stable factors.

***Roman:*** *The policies and procedures promoting a learning culture are not really developed or they are developed through corruption. They are never honest, if there is a regulation it can be changed easily with money.*

29 codes were about attributing problems concerning teachers' lack of practical knowledge of the change process, lack of time, to the internal and unstable causes. No responses concerning internal and stable causes were reported, which means flexibility on the part of the teachers and willingness to change.

## **7. CONCLUSIONS AND DISCUSSIONS**

The aim of this study was to gain a deeper understanding of the nature of the current reforms in the Armenian higher education against the background of adopting the Bologna principles promoted in EU countries. The underlying reason for the inquiry is that despite the positive attitude to adopt the reforms, the implementation processes turned out to be rather complex. Based on the recent policy and innovation literature, this process of policy diffusion and transfer was explored by exploring the dialogue among change owners necessary to implement reforms successfully and the required change knowledge that determine the dialogue. The study also aimed to combine concepts of policy and innovation literature.

While examining the *characteristic features of the higher education reforms* undertaken by the Armenian policymakers, a particular attention was paid to the policy diffusion and transfer modes as well as the extent to which the stakeholders were involved in the change process. The results show that the changes are mainly vertical, done through conceptual adaptation and there is strong resistance on the part of the actual implementers, who try to preserve the good practices they had during the soviet times. Having deprived the teachers of the values they had cherished for so many years, the new system failed to substitute it with the valid ones to raise their trust. On the other hand the elements of direct and indirect coercive transfer methods are also explicit. Coupled together they make the prevalence of a top-down approach even stronger.

Both the documents reviewed and the interview results reveal the major areas within and between which the problems occur. First of all, the policy transfer driven by the globalization trends did not find a favorable environment to prosper, because all the policymakers were concerned about was adapting the policies to meet the global pressures without taking any real steps to deeply discern the meaning and process of change and successfully convey the values to the actual implementers. Next, the existing gaps between

the four groups of stakeholders brought about alienation of the teachers and therefore, their relinquishing the role of owners and bearers of change. As Bache and Taylor (2003) put it, even if the national goals open up prospects for success, the environment with prevailing policies, processes and people involved in the process still causes constraints.

Regarding teachers' perceptions about reforms, they are optimistic about changes if carried out while considering their direct input. The teachers' responsibilities within the change process are two-fold: teaching the students to become an active member of the society and implementing educational changes promoted by the government. Throughout the past 20 years higher education teachers on the initiatives of their supervisors have been trying to make changes to the teaching and learning practices inherited from the former soviet system. This endeavor has revealed the complex reality in which they have to make changes: lack of appropriate resources, lack of information and clear directives from the government on how to implement the changes, and the meager salary, which makes them engage in more than one jobs. Coupled with all of that lack of the organizational culture conducive to changes and in some cases even fear to lose the job, undermine the few incentives the initiators have.

Overall, the study revealed teachers' support for the reforms if implemented the right way. Frustration, fear to lose the position and non-appreciation of teachers' job and many other concerns with regards to the implementation process especially the way the administrators and policymakers steer it have surfaced. One striking feature is the teachers predominantly attribute the causes of reform failure and distortion to external, unstable and uncontrollable factors, which means the amount of energy they are going to expend on the reform implementation has little chances to increase unless appropriate conditions are provided for. As these conclusions also show, the integrative framework of beliefs, emotions, attitude, change knowledge, organizational culture and causal attributions provided for a deeper understanding of teachers' "agency" and ways of successful implementation strategies.

Regarding teachers' emotions within the particular change context, the data revealed the outcry of the actual implementers against the inaccurately developed policies and the careless attitude on the part of the policymakers and administrators toward the reform implementation. Actually, the stance of the policymakers and the administrators brings about frustration, fear to lose the job and be misunderstood, disappointment and lack of ownership prevailing throughout the three groups of teachers. Although enthusiastic towards change, the teachers even in the positive group feel ownership only for the individual courses and students. With regards to the reform implementation even the positive ones share the negative emotions expressed by the majority. Moreover, the results explicate teachers do have a lot to

contribute to the process; what hinders is underestimation of teacher capacity and insufficient appreciation of their active involvement in designing and implementing reforms.

Regarding teachers' perceptions about the organizational culture extant at their universities, the opinions turn to be two-fold. To some extent the respondents considered the milieu at their institutions to be conducive to change, while others claimed of the inappropriateness of the work environment for successful change. The split of opinions can be ascribed to differences in change process levels, cultures as well as leadership potentials at different institutions. However, lack of the learning culture was explicit in all the cases since mostly teachers complain of isolation, doing reforms just because they have to do it, and attributing the causes for failure to such external factors as incompetency of peers, administration, policymakers and immaturity of students.

Yet another factor of utmost importance is teacher change knowledge. It refers to the concept of what the teachers know about the meaning of reforms and change processes underlying it. The answers to the questions revealed only superficial understanding of the change process as well as dearth of good background to start the reforms. As Fullan (2007) states for a reform to be successful both subjective and objective meanings of reform should be understood to pinpoint the actions leading to success. With the isolation prevailing in the Armenian reality this very problem seems to be a major hindrance to reform implementation.

If we look at the outcomes from Weiner's attribution theory, the major concerns the teachers expressed mostly fell into external uncontrollable and external unstable factors, a strong indication of only superficial, structural changes or failure. The teachers mainly complain of the implementation flaws ascribing the causes to incompetence of the policymakers and administrators to implement reforms. Another major concern was scarcity of resources for effective functioning let alone making changes. This kind of attribution implies that the amount of efforts the teachers will expend on the activity in the future hardly has any potential for growth unless the external and uncontrollable factors change. Further, the results also imply lack of ownership for reforms on the part of the teachers, since by attributing the negative outcomes to external and uncontrollable factors teachers demonstrate lack of active involvement in the process and relinquish their responsibilities of carrying out the reforms. To some extent, the teachers attributed the problems with reform implementation to their lack of change knowledge.

To sum up, the implementation modes promoted by the policymakers and administration and, on top of that, lack of change knowledge on the part of all the implementers including the teachers, turn out to be the major hindrances for the reform



success. Coupled with that is distrust in the reforms transferred from the West since by depriving the teachers of the values they had cherished for so many years, the new system failed to provide for comparable ones to raise their trust.

## REFERENCES

- Atlas/ti 5.5 (2004). *The knowledge workbench. Visual qualitative Data*. Berlin: Scientific Software Development
- Bache, I., Taylor, A. (2003) *The Politics of Policy Resistance: Reconstructing Higher Education in Kosovo*, *Jnl Publ. Pol.*, 23 (3): 279–300, Cambridge University Press
- Bache, I., Olsson, J. (2001) *Legitimacy through Partnership? EU Policy Diffusion in Britain and Sweden*, *Scandinavian Political Studies*, 24 (3): 215-237
- Charmaz, C. (2000), *Grounded Theory: Objectivist and Constructivist Methods*. In Denzin, N. & Lincoln, Y. (Eds.) *Handbook of Qualitative Research*. 2nd ed. London, Sage.
- Corcoran, D. N., Barry, A. L., Staab, P. T., (2008), *Teachers' reflections of professional change during a literacy-reform initiative*, *Teaching and Teacher Education* 24 (2008) 1288–1303
- Cuban, L. (January, 1988), *Managerial Imperative and the Practice of Leadership in Schools*, Suny series in Educational Leadership, State University of New York
- Darby, A., (2008), *Teachers' emotions in the reconstruction of professional self-understanding*, *Teaching and Teacher Education* 24, 1160–1172
- Day, C. (2002), *School reform and transitions in teacher professionalism and identity*, *International Journal of Educational Research*, 37, 677–692
- Day<sup>a</sup>, C., Elliot<sup>b</sup>, B., Kington<sup>a</sup>, A., (2005), *Reform, standards and teacher identity: Challenges of sustaining commitment*, *Teaching and Teacher Education* 21, 563–577
- Day, C., Stobart, G., Sammons, P., Kington, A., Gu, Q., Smees, R., Mujtaba, T. (2006), *Variations in Teachers' Work Lives and Effectiveness*, Research Report RR743, University of Nottingham, London Institute of Education
- Daun-Barnett, N., Perorazio, T. (2006), *Infusion of Innovation: Catalyzing Policy Change Through Research*, Paper presented at the Association for Study of Higher Education (ASHE) Annual Meeting, Public Policy Forum, November 2 Anaheim, CA
- Denscombe, M. (2007) *The Good Research Guide for Small-Scale Social Research Projects*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, Open University Press
- Dolowitz, D., Marsh, D. (1996) *Who Learns What from Whom: a Review of the Policy Transfer Literature*, Blackwell Publishers, Political Studies, XLIV, pp. 343-357
- Elmore, R. F. (2004). *School reform from the inside out: Policy, practice, and performance*. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard Education Press.
- Evans, R. (2001) *The Human Side of School Change*, The Jossey-Bass Education Series, Jossey-Bass, the USA, Reprint edition
- Fullan, M. (1991) *The New Meaning of Educational Change*, 2nd edition, London
- Fullan, M., (2004), *Learning to Lead Change: Building System Capacity, Core Concepts*, Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto
- Fullan, M. (2007) *The New Meaning of Educational Change*, 4th edition, London and New York
- Goodson, I.F. (2000). *Social histories of educational change. Journal of Educational Change* 2(1), 1-26.
- Hargreaves, A., (1994), *Changing Teachers, Changing Times: Teachers' Work and Culture in the Postmodern Age*, Teachers College Press, Columbia University, New York, USA
- Hargreaves, A., Lieberman, A., Fullan, M. & Hopkins, D. (Eds.) (1998). *International Handbook of Educational Change*. Dordrecht/Boston/London: Kluwer Academic Publishers.
- Hargreaves, A. (2005), *Educational change takes ages: Life, career and generational factors in*

- teachers' emotional responses to educational change*, *Teaching and Teacher Education* 21 (2005) 967–983
- Higher Education II, *Inquiry Handbook*, (2007), RA Ministry of Education and Science, National Institute of Education, Yerevan
- Hopkins, D., (2001) *School Improvement for Real*, London: Routledge Falmer
- Jones, H. Richard, (2000), *Educating for an open society: higher education reform in Central and Eastern Europe as a catalyst for the emergence of a sustainable democratic market economy*, The Hague: WRR, Scientific Council for Government Policy.
- Karakhanyan, S., van Veen, K., Bergen, T., (in press), *Educational Policy Diffusion and Transfer: the case of Armenia*, Higher Education Policy
- Marsh D., Sharman, J. C., (2009), *Policy Diffusion and Transfer*, *Policy Studies*, 30(3): 269-288
- McLendon, M., (2003), *State Governance Reform of Higher Education*, *Higher education Handbook of theory and research*, XVIII, John C. Smart, William G. Tierney, Kluwer Academic Publishers, pp. 57-145
- Miles, M. B. & Huberman, A. M. (1994). *Qualitative data analysis* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Miltenburg, R., & Singer, E. (1999). *Culturally mediated learning and the development of self-regulation by survivors of child abuse: A Vygotskyan approach to the support of survivors of child abuse*. *Human Development*, 42, 1–17.
- MoES, (2007), *Education 2015: Restoring Armenia's Strength in Education*, Conference on Education Vision and Strategies, Armenia, 11-12 June, 2007
- Pajares, M. F. (1992). *Teacher's beliefs and educational research: Cleaning up a messy construct*. *Review of Educational Research*, 62, 307-322.
- Schein, E. (1997) 2nd Edn. *Organizational Culture and Leadership*, San Francisco, Jossey-Bass
- Schmidt, M., & Datnow A., (2005), *Teachers' sense-making about comprehensive school reform: The influence of emotions*. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 21 (8).
- Schwarz, Norbert (2000) *'Emotion, cognition, and decision making'*, *Cognition & Emotion*, 14:4, 433 – 440
- Sparks, D., & Hirsch, S. (1997). *A new vision for staff development*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.
- Spillane, J. P., Reiser, B. J. & Reimer, T. (2002). *Policy implementation and cognition: reframing and refocusing implementation research*. *Review of Educational Research*, 72(3), 387-431.
- Spillane, J., Camburn, E., Lewis, G., (2006), *Taking a Distributive Perspective in Studying School Leadership and Management: Epistemological and Methodological Trade-offs*, Paper prepared for presentation at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association, San Francisco, April 7 – 11
- SPSS Inc. (2008). *SPSS Base 16.0 for Windows User's Guide*. SPSS Inc., Chicago IL
- UNDP, *National Human Development Report 2006: 'Educational Transformations in Armenia'*
- Van Veen<sup>a</sup>, K., Slegers<sup>b</sup>, P., Van de Ven<sup>a</sup>, P., (2005), *One teacher's identity, emotions, and commitment to change: A case study into the cognitive–affective processes of a secondary school teacher in the context of reforms*, *Teaching and Teacher Education* 21, 917–934
- Watzlawick, P., Weakland, J., and Fisch, R. (1974), *Change: Principles of Problem Formulation and Problem Resolution*. New York: Norton.
- Weiner, B. (2008). *Reflections on the History of Attribution Theory and Research: People, Personalities, Publications, Problems*, *Social Psychology*, vol. 39, No. 3, pp. 151-156
- Weiner, B. (2000). *Intrapersonal and Interpersonal Theories of Motivation from an Attributional Perspective*, *Educational Psychology Review*, vol. 12, No. 1, 2000, pp. 1-14
- Weiner, B. (1992). *Human Motivation: Metaphors, Theories, and Research*, Sage, Newbury Park, CA.
- Zembylas, M. (2005). *Teaching with emotion: A postmodern enactment*, Greenwich, CT: Information Age Publishing.