

CHAPTER 2

DISCOURSE AND ORGANISATIONAL CHANGE

2.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses discourse and organisational change. In taking discourse analytic perspectives and methodologies the concept of organisational change and the inter-relationships or connections between change and discourse is explored. It thus examines organisational discourse(s) that may be used to describe and analyse the processes and practices that constitute organisational change (Barrett et al., 1995; Heracleous and Barrett, 2001; Heracleous, 2002; Marshak, 2002).

This study examines the use of discourse in organisational change management. The challenge facing organisations today is to embrace change to survive competition and remain profitable. “Organisations face multiple challenges and threats today – threats to effectiveness, efficiency, and profitability; challenges from turbulent environments, increased competition, and changing customer demands” (French and Bell, 1999, p. 10). The need for change is expressed as essential and unavoidable in a rapidly changing world.

The definition of organisational discourse, organisational change and the changes in organisational change discourse are given. Then five specific features of analytic approaches to the study of organisational discourse(s) that can contribute to the study of organisational change are identified.

2.2 Organisational discourse

Organisational discourse refers to all kinds of texts (oral and written) that bring organisationally related objects into being as these texts are produced, disseminated, and consumed (Grant and Hardy, 2004; Phillips and Hardy, 2002; Grant et al. 1998). The study of organisational discourse also relates to the social construction of reality (Berger and Luckmann; 1967). According to Hall (2001), “Discourse helps to construct reality through the way it ‘rules in’ certain ways of talking about a topic or defining an acceptable way to conduct oneself and also ‘rules out’ or limits unacceptable ways of conducting oneself or constructing knowledge about it” (p. 72). Discourse, thus, can act as a force in organisations through the way it constructs or brings into being or existence categorisations of people, objects of knowledge, identities or forms of self, relationships between people, and conceptual frameworks (Fairclough, 1992; Fairclough and Wodak, 1997).

Organisational discourse can embrace either or both a social constructionist and a critical perspective. The social constructionist orientation puts discourse at the centre of the sensemaking process and the creation of reality. According to Mumby and Clair (1997, p. 181):

Organisations exist only as far as their members create them through discourse. This is not to claim that organisations are ‘nothing but discourse’, but rather that discourse is the principle means by which organisation members create a coherent social reality that frames their sense of who they are.

The critical perspective describes the ways in which discourse is used as power and a power process to privilege certain ideas or ideologies, and beliefs that bring advantage to certain people. This is akin to what Mumby (2004) says; “In this sense, organisations are conceived as political sites, where various organisational actors and groups struggle to ‘fix’ meaning in ways that will serve their particular interests” (p. 237).

These perspectives address how discourse influences organisational behaviour and shapes organisational members’ mindsets. The processes through which mindsets and consciousness are influenced and changed are the principal methods to address change dynamics. They draw attention to the processes that construct common social meanings within organisations. Transformation of organisations requires a change in consciousness, which has to begin with the leadership and then targeting or cascading down to the organisational members. It eventually extends throughout the entire organisation.

2.3 Organisational change

Organisations continuously change in response to major shifts or changes in the environment and as a consequence of internal, planned efforts to achieve greater profitability, sustainability, quality, and effectiveness in order to survive. In the foreword of the book, *Managing Change to Reduce Resistance* (2005), the editor expresses the inevitability of change:

Like a living organism, companies operate within a constantly changing environment. New business realities – in the form of unexpected technologies, emerging markets, and radical innovations that rewrite the rules of competition – continually present fresh challenges. To survive and stay ahead of rivals, companies must adapt to those new realities quickly – and that requires managers to drive change effectively (p.1).

In spite of planned efforts to bring about change, organisational change efforts can fail or fail to accomplish the expressed goals or objectives of an organisation. This can result in a variety of negative outcomes, including high costs, organisational ineffectiveness, customer dissatisfaction, low morale, high turnover, and wasted resources. There is a need to fully understand organisational change processes to ensure the effective and efficient implementation of organisational change.

Tsoukas and Chia (2002) argue that:

Change must not be thought of as a property of organisation. Rather, organisation must be understood as an emergent property of change. Change is ontologically prior to organisation – it is the condition of possibility for organisation ... we argue that change is the reweaving of actor's webs of beliefs and habits of action as a result of new experiences obtained through interactions. ... Organisation is an attempt to order the intrinsic flux of human action, to channel it towards certain ends, to give it a particular shape, through generalising and institutionalising particular

meanings and rules. At the same time, organisation is a pattern that is constituted, shaped, and emerging from change (p. 570).

This means that change is essential and organisation is a manifestation of change – a way of dealing with change. Organisations are the result of change. Tsoukas & Chia (2002) talk about organisations as being both a way of dealing with change and something emerging from change.

Organisational change is a complex process which involves implementation and adoption of change initiatives at the organisational as well as at the individual level. At the organisational level, change initiatives would be implemented and adopted across departments, locations, or teams and this would inevitably affect individuals as well. Thus, the organisational-level change process inherently involves change at the group and the individual level change processes.

2.3.1 Change in ideology

Besides changes in practices and ways of doing things in an organisation as discussed earlier, organisational change also involves change in ideology or ways of thinking or perceiving. Various definitions of ideology are outlined as follows.

Norman Fairclough is influenced by Althusser's (1995) work in his definition of ideology. He declares that ideologies "are partial representations and misrepresentations" (Fairclough, 2001, p. 134) and adds that "the operation of

ideology can be seen in terms of ways of constructing texts which constantly and cumulatively ‘impose assumptions’ upon text interpreters and text producers, typically without being aware of it” (Fairclough, 2001, p. 69). The construction of ideology is therefore not direct but interpreters of texts are influenced to capture the underlying meaning through the way texts are constructed. Fairclough defines ideological commonsense as “commonsense in the service of sustaining unequal relations of power” and in “establishing and consolidating solidarity relations among members of a particular social grouping” (Fairclough, 2001, p. 70). Change in ideology to serve the interests of particular groups is made out to be “commonsense” and therefore efforts to resist it would seem to be irrational.

Wodak’s (2001) definition of ideology is closely related to John B. Thompson’s (1990) definition as well as an extension of Van Dijk’s work. To Thompson “to study ideology is to study the way in which meaning (symbolic forms) serves to establish and sustain relations of domination” (Thompson 1990, p. 56). The meaning or ‘symbolic form’ may not initially be ideological but can become ideological when it is used to maintain relations of domination such as gender, ethnic groups and others. Thus, in order to study ideology one also has to take into consideration the context or the social field in which these symbolic forms circulate.

Van Dijk (1997) says that the basic function of ideologies is “to manage the problem of coordination of the acts or practices of individual social members of a group. Once shared, ideologies make sure that members of a group will generally act in similar ways in similar situations ... and will thus contribute to group cohesion” and can “control what groups themselves hold to be true beliefs” (p. 23). Ideology thus

addresses the question of identity of a group which gives it a sense of cohesiveness. Van Dijk explains that ideologies describe this identity in terms of group membership where the activities that the group carries out is synchronised and similar values and norms are adopted by the group members.

Ideologies can also control the belief system of a group. Van Dijk (1998, p. 24) says “ideologies are the ‘axiomatic’ basis of the mental representations shared by the members of a social group.” They are the basis for judgment inside the social group. Ideologies rule what is evaluated as in or out of the social group, and what is acceptable or unacceptable. In that sense, they enable the establishment of an ‘us’ versus ‘them’ dichotomy, and regulates the ‘outgroup’ as well as the ‘ingroup’ (Van Dijk, 1998).

Discourse can bring about change in ideologies and thus is considered to do ideological work. Ideologies are often fashioned through discourse. To understand how ideologies are produced, it is insufficient to study texts alone. The discursive practice (how texts are interpreted and received and what social effects they have) must also be considered (Fairclough & Wodak, 1997).

An instance of the change in ideology is the change in perception of the way education is seen currently. A discussion of education as a business enterprise follows in the next section.

2.3.2 Education as a business enterprise

The Malaysian higher education system has undergone considerable transformation over the past decades. It commenced with efforts to corporatise public universities, and was then followed by the democratisation of higher education. The democratisation of higher education resulted in the establishment of many private universities and university colleges. The private higher education sector in Malaysia is currently acknowledged as a strong contributor towards fulfilling Malaysia's need for skilled manpower which would ensure nation building.

2.3.2.1 Higher Education in Malaysia

Higher education in Malaysia is delivered through both public and private education systems under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Higher Education. Public institutions cannot cater for the increasing demand for higher education in the country due to the limited number of public institutions. Following the amendment of the Education Act in 1995, and the introduction of the new Private Higher Education Act 1996, private higher education has flourished in the country. The enforcement of the Private Higher Educational Act (PHEIA) in 1996 enabled private colleges and university colleges to become more established. The private education sector has since then increasingly complemented the efforts of the government by offering opportunities to those who wish to pursue higher education at affordable fees.

As part of the changes brought about through the enforcement of the Private Higher Educational Act, leading corporations in the country were permitted to operate private universities. Among them were the Multimedia University, University Petronas and University Tenaga Malaysia (a university owned by the public utilities company). Two distance learning universities were also established namely, University Tun Abdul Razak and the Open University of Malaysia.

The National Higher Education Strategic Plan and the National Higher Education Action Plan, which were launched in 2007, set forth the direction for the transformation of higher education in Malaysia. The comprehensive plans which were put forward focus on the following levels:-

- Individual level: to develop human capital with advanced knowledge and a progressive mindset;
- Institutional level: to create a conducive environment in institutions that encourages academic and institutional excellence;
- National level: to achieve international recognition and sustainability; and
- International level: to position Malaysia as a hub for higher education in Asia as well as internationally.

The Malaysian Qualifications Agency (MQA) was established as a national regulatory body for assuring the quality of educational programmes in Malaysia. The formulation of these plans, as well as the establishment of the MQA has further shaped higher education in Malaysia.

Currently there are four hundred and sixty seven (467) private higher educational institutions, which include nineteen universities (19), eighteen university colleges (18), four branch campuses (4) and four hundred and twenty six (426) colleges and seventy two (72) public educational institutions which include universities, university colleges, polytechnics and community colleges.

As a result of globalisation and liberalisation of education, foreign universities have been licensed to set up campuses in Malaysia. The four branch campuses of foreign universities which have been established are the Monash University, Curtin University, Swinburne University and the University of Nottingham.

From a recent study on student mobility, Malaysia has been identified as one of the “emerging contenders” of higher education destinations for foreign students (Verbik and Lasanowski, 2007). Conventionally, Malaysia attracts foreign students from Asia, particularly neighbouring countries such as Indonesia, Thailand, and Singapore. However, of late, there has been a significant change in the mobility patterns of students to Malaysia. The number of students from China and the Middle Eastern countries has increased.

2.3.2.2 Public versus Private Higher Education

There are several distinct differences between public and private higher education institutions in Malaysia in the way they are managed, funded, equipped, and operate. Among them are the following:

1. Bureaucratic versus Entrepreneurial

Public and private institutions of higher learning are run quite differently. The financial strength of public institutions is backed by the government. Therefore they have more resources to be equipped with more state of the art facilities and equipment.

On the other hand, private institutions of higher learning are business-oriented. Some may not have the means to acquire sophisticated equipment or have good facilities. For private institutions, it becomes a question of survival to get students to sustain themselves. Marketing and branding become crucial in attracting students who cannot succeed to gain admission to public institutions. Due to the increasing numbers of private education institutions that have been set up, it has become increasingly difficult for private institutions to survive due to competition in getting student numbers.

2. Rules versus Innovation

Public universities can be restricted by many rules and procedures in terms of its management or administration. Private education institutions, on the other hand, are more innovative. The programmes developed are market-driven and skills based to meet the demands of society. Private institutions have to

continuously keep abreast of changes so as to design curriculum that is relevant and viable, otherwise they can be phased out.

3. Process versus Results

Public education institutions usually are process-driven. It may take time to implement changes due to bureaucracy. Private education institutions on the other hand are result- oriented. They are prone to take risks and adapt to changes quickly and speedily due to flexibility in their financial situations or management.

2.3.2.3 Private Higher Education

Private higher education institutions cater to both local and foreign students and the teaching is therefore conducted in the lingua franca of the world; the English language. Malaysia has become an ideal choice for foreign students to pursue higher education. Among the factors include a high quality of education, competitive yet affordable fees, diverse cultures, multi-religious society, reasonable cost of living and the extensive use of English as the medium of instruction in private institutions of higher learning.

Public universities are mainly for the local population and the medium of instruction is still predominantly Bahasa Malaysia (the national language of Malaysia) and this can therefore pose a language barrier for foreign students.

2.3.2.4 Contributions by the Private Higher Education Sector

Quoting the former Prime Minister of Malaysia, Dato Seri Abdullah bin Haji Ahmad Badawi (2007),

“the effort to educate our citizens, particularly the younger generation, must be borne by all quarters in the country. The government alone cannot produce the critical mass of knowledge workers needed to fuel the economy. We therefore appreciate and applaud the proactive approach of private education institutions which seek to offer high quality academic programmes and produce graduates equipped with the latest knowledge and skills...”

It can be concluded that the private education sector in Malaysia has a significant role to play in the arena of providing education to the masses.

Almost fifty percent of student enrolment in tertiary institutions in Malaysia is in private higher education institutions. This is due to the increasing demand for higher education in the country as well as abroad. Since public institutions are not able to cater to the increasing demand, private education institutions now play a major role as providers of higher education.

In the light of the current scenario in the higher education sector in Malaysia, there is now more keen competition among private institutions as well as between private and public institutions of higher learning. Private institutions are continuously challenged to attract students otherwise they would not be able to sustain themselves.

In contrast to previous preoccupations of private higher education institutions to emphasise solely on providing quality programmes and ensuring quality of academic staff, now these institutions are faced with innumerable challenges. There is a need for continual improvement in the offering of market-driven programmes, good facilities and infrastructure, competitive fees and other value-added factors. Thus, these changes in the arena of education in Malaysia call for a change in mindset among education providers.

A significant change in ideology is that of the understanding of education as a commodity. It has been stated that, “Globally, education is now a product in the same sense as a car in that it can be bought, sold and traded in the same way” (Anonymous). Education as an industry has witnessed a paradigm shift in recent years. There is a shift from the traditional academic discourse to a marketisation discourse. Education is regarded as none other than a business enterprise similar to other business organisations. This change in ideology that education is marketable brings with it a need to reorientate mindsets to embrace marketing as crucial for the survival of the educational institution. There is therefore an increased importance of institutional marketing.

2.4 Organisational change literature

The need for change as espoused in organisational change literature frames it as a necessary and unavoidable response to a rapidly changing world (David Grant et al, 2005). It has even been referred to as a “grammar of imperatives” (Collins, 2000, p.

380). The traditional discourse about change has gradually been replaced by a very different conceptualisation of the processes of organisational change. In David Grant et al's article entitled "*Looking forwards: discursive directions in organisational change*" (2005), a table encapsulating the characteristics of the traditional discourse and an emerging discourse of organisational change is given. This is reproduced in Table 2.1.

The discourse of organisational change which has emerged of late can be understood from several different aspects, namely; approach to change, environmental imperatives, key stakeholders, nature of the change process, the focus and targets of change, primary concern and the strategies adopted to effect change. The approach to change has moved from the macro to the micro level and is decentralised, making change efforts more effective. A rapidly changing turbulent world warrants immediate and continuous change to be made; otherwise an organisation might not be able to survive. From a problem-centric discourse, the emerging discourse of organisational change emphasises ways on how to adapt, adopt and improve work processes to ensure the effectiveness of organisations. From an emphasis on rules, procedures, organisational structures and such, the current discourse shows intangible phenomena such as identity, knowledge management, image and vision as important aspects that organisations are currently targeting. Even change strategy has evolved from being reactive and incremental to being proactive and emergent to ensure that effective changes are made.

Table 2.1
Two contrasting discourses of organisational change

	Traditional discourse of organisational change	Emerging discourse of organisational change
Approach to change	Macro-centralised (i.e organisational development or OD)	Micro-dispersed (i.e change management)
Environmental imperatives	Relatively stable and predictable world	Hyperturbulent and rapidly changing world
Key stakeholders	Consultants and client system representatives	Local managers and employees
Nature of the change process	Discrete change orientation	Continuous change orientation
Focus of change	Emphasis on problems	Emphasis on improvement
Targets of change	Tangible objects and artefacts (e.g rules, the design of work, aspects of organisational structure)	Intangible phenomena (e.g image, identity, knowledge management, organisational learning, vision)
Primary concern	Hard change – demonstrating the “actuality” of change	Soft change- managing the “rhetoric” of change
Change strategy	Reactive and incremental	Proactive and emergent

(Source: Grant et al., 2005, p. 385)

The emerging discourse of organisational change, in contrast with the traditional discourse of organisational change therefore emphasises change in identity, ideology or perception, and continuous improvement. Discourse is the instrument to effect change in an organisation. Discourse, thus is the means to the end. The power of discourse is to bring about change in mindsets among organisational members.

A similar exposition of the contrast in the transition from the old to new organisational paradigm was given by Senge, P. M. (1990). This is shown in the table as follows.

Table 2.2
The transition from old to new organisational paradigm

	<u>Old Paradigm</u>	<u>New Paradigm</u>
Forces on organisation		
Markets	Local, domestic	Global
Workforce	Homogeneous	Diverse
Technology	Mechanical	Electronic
Values	Stability, efficiency	Change, flexibility
Management Competencies		
Focus	Profits	Profits, employees, customers
Leadership	Autocratic	Distributed, empowerment
Approach to work	Individualistic	Team
Relationship	Competitive, conflict	Collaboration

(Source: Lon-ar, Postmodern organisation and new forms of organisational control, p. 110)

The new organisational paradigm by Senge, similar to Grant's (2005) exposition emphasises a paradigm shift in the way organisations function and how organisational members are to see themselves in the whole picture of the organisation. They are empowered to make decisions. Teamwork and collaborative relationships between departments, divisions or sections are promoted. These are the characteristics of the post-bureaucratic organisation as discussed in Chapter 1 (section 1.3.2).

Effective communication is a key tool to bring about this shift in paradigm. Discourse (spoken or written) is the means for managers seeking to drive successful change. In *'Communicating Change: A Dozen Tips from the Experts'*, business writer Saunders (2005) highlights twelve strategies for change-communication. The strategies are outlined as follows:

1. Specify what the change is expected to achieve
2. Explain the reasons behind change
3. Let the employees know the scope of the change
4. Frequently repeat the purpose of the change and the actions planned
5. Use graphics to simplify corporate restructures
6. Communication has to be two-way
7. Target supervisors to communicate change
8. Support change with new learning
9. Make reference to real progress
10. Communications should not be limited to meetings and print
11. Institutionalise information flow about change
12. Model the changes yourself

Harvard Business School Publishing newsletter editor, Herrin (2005) examines change communication from a different angle in *"You're ready for Top-Line Growth- Are your Employees?"* Herrin stresses the importance of using different communication strategies, for instance, when you're first introducing the idea that change is needed in the organisation, "sell the problem". Talk in "every forum

possible about the reasons for change and the cost of not addressing the problem” (p. 177).

Robbin (2005) in his article, “*Communication as a Change Tool*” stresses the theme of stories as a powerful tool for communicating about change. A compelling story can help motivate employees to enact change and to envision the organisation’s long-term future. The effective use of stories “makes information visible” (p. 190) to employees.

Managing change in an organisation is essentially managing people. It involves conceptualising, motivating and influencing the behaviour of organisational members, about breaking free of old habits, attitudes and perceptions, and about enabling or creating an environment that is conducive to embracing change.

2.4.1 From a negative to positive framing

Conventionally, organisational change initiatives have highlighted or concentrated on problems and so were problem-centred (i.e. data are gathered on a problem and solutions are offered). The emphasis is on identifying the problem and then finding a solution to fix it. Of late, there has been a paradigm shift in the way of thinking about how to effect change among organisational members. Instead of the problem-centred approach, the emphasis has now changed from highlighting the negatives to accentuating and foregrounding the positives. An approach referred to as ‘appreciative inquiry’ (AI) – developed in the 1980s by David Cooperrider is of particular interest and has gained momentum. This approach to organisational

change emphasises and builds on a company's strengths and potential (Cooperrider et al., 2000; Watkins and Cooperrider, 2000; Watkins and Mohr, 2002). It is based on social constructionism – the theory that people and organisations create their realities through their interpretations of and conversations about the world.

“The more you focus on problems, the more you slow yourself down,” says Jane Magruder Watkins (2002), a leading ‘appreciative inquiry’ (AI) practitioner and co-author of the book *Appreciative Inquiry: Change at the Speed of Imagination*. “The more you seek out what works and create images of where you want to go, the better able you will be to keep up with the ever-increasing rate of change” (Watkins, 2002, p. 102). Appreciative Inquiry is a theory that rationalises and reinforces the habit of seeking what is possible in spite of problems and therefore creates a generative and positive frame of mind.

Appreciative Inquiry seeks what is right, commendable or workable in an organisation. The approach capitalises on what the organisation is doing right and provides a frame for creating an image of the future for the organisation by describing the outcomes of the change. It is a powerful tool to create a shared vision among organisational members as it involves motivating change by developing commitment.

Kenneth Gergen (2001), a Swarthmore College psychology professor known for developing social constructionism says, “You can find problems everywhere... but if we could construct a world in which something is *possible*, we can talk about it together. Suddenly, you create a tremendous positive energy” (p. 51). Concentrating

on what is possible instead of the problems creates a positive energy within an organisation.

David Grant et al., (2005, p. 386) citing Cooperrider and Whitney (2000, p. 6-7), conclude that there are four basic components in an AI cycle:

1. Discovery – identifying “the best of what is” (appreciating)
2. Dream – highlighting “what might be?” (envisioning results)
3. Design – creating “what should be – the ideal?” (co-constructing)
4. Destiny – addressing “how to empower, learn and adjust/improvise?” (sustaining)

Watkins (2002), on the other hand, identifies five principles that have evolved into what she calls the ‘DNA of appreciative inquiry’. They are:

1. The constructionist principle –the survival of an organisation is bound up in people’s understanding of it. The first task in changing an organisation is to discover what its people think about it. Only then can change initiatives be introduced.
2. The principle of simultaneity - the most powerful vehicle for improving an organisation is the collective imagination about its future, about what it is becoming.
3. The poetic principle - an organisation’s ‘story’ is frequently rewritten by every member within an organisation and everyone who interacts with it. The organisation ‘story’, like a poem, is constantly interpreted and reinterpreted

4. The positive principle – emphasising the positive such as an organisation’s achievements, its hope, and inspiration has a better success rate than highlighting what is wrong.

2.5 Discourse and the study of organisational change

In understanding the meaning of organisational change; Tsoukas and Chia (2002) and Grant et al., (2002) suggest that there is a need to ‘re-think’ or ‘re-conceptualise’ the various forms of change that are adopted, the processes by which change is carried out and the consequences of change. In this respect, Collins (2003), has emphasised that there is a need to:

...provoke a “re-imagined” world of change: A world where change is understood not as an exception to the norm of stability; not as an outcome that is known in advance and discussed in retrospect; not as something that can be made to unfold to the rhythm of “clock-time”; but as the defining character of organisation; a fuzzy and deeply ambiguous process, which implicates both author and subject in the quest for new and different ways to understand one another (p. v).

Discourse analytic approaches are the best way to study this “re-imagined” world of change as expressed by Collins (2003). In order to comprehend organisational change, a researcher needs to be engaged with it as a discursively constructed object. In organisations, discourse can refer to both written and oral discourse,

representations of an organisation which are visual (for example, logos, emblems, taglines etcetera) and artifacts which bring organisational related objects into being or existence. The study of organisational change is carried out through the study of these texts as they are produced or articulated, disseminated and used (Phillips and Hardy, 2002; Grant et al., 2004).

According to Grant et al. (2005), discourse analytic approaches can contribute to our understanding of organisational change in five significant ways. Following are Grant et al.'s convictions.

a. Organisational change as a socially constructed reality

Discourse analysis helps in the study of identifying and analysing the discourses employed by management by which organisational change is articulated and promoted . Discourse plays a pivotal role in the social construction of reality for an organisation's members (Berger and Luckmann, 1967; Searle, 1995) and taking a discourse analytic approach demonstrates its importance. Through discourse an organisational change initiative can be brought into being or existence so that it becomes a reality in the form of the practices and activities that it invokes (Hardy, 2001, p. 27).

Discourse can 'rule in' or legitimise certain ways of communicating about the change initiative that are deemed as acceptable while also 'ruling out' or limiting the way one talks about it (Hall, 2001, p. 72). In this respect discourse "acts as a

powerful ordering force” in effecting organisational change (Alvesson and Karreman, 2000a, p. 1127).

b. Organisational change as a negotiated meaning

Second, discourse analysis contributes to the study of how through a variety of interactions and practices, certain discourses have the capacity or are able to shape and transform the attitudes and behaviour of organisational members in relation to change (Alvesson and Karreman, 2000a, pp. 1126-27). The meaning of change is created, negotiated, and promoted via particular discursive interactions among organisational members (Alvesson and Karreman, 2000b). The process of the negotiation of the meaning of change is constructive. It ultimately results in the emergence of a meaning that becomes dominant and can be taken as a particular discourse. This emergence of the dominant meaning ensures that all other alternative discourses are suppressed or marginalised and can indicate that power relationships are in place.

This is in line with what Fairclough (1995) elaborates; that the “power to control discourse is seen as the power to sustain particular discursive practices with particular ideological investments in dominance over other alternative (including oppositional) practices” (p. 2).

c. Organisational change as an intertextual phenomenon

Understanding the context helps to illuminate the reasons why particular discourses are produced, how they are produced and the meanings of the discourses which are promoted and privileged, as well as their effects within the context. This has resulted in “intertextual” (Bakhtin, 1986; Fairclough, 1995) analyses of organisational discourses. Such studies aim to locate and analyse specific circumstances of discursive practices at the micro-level or microcosm and then place them in the larger context of other macro-level, ‘meta or ‘grand’ discourses (Alvesson and Karreman, 2000a). As Fairclough and Wodak (1997, p. 277) assert:

Discourse is not produced without context and cannot be understood without taking context into consideration . . . Discourses are always connected to other discourses which were produced earlier, as well as those which are produced synchronically and subsequently.

The interplay of both socially and historically produced texts give rise to the negotiation of meaning according to Fairclough’s and Wodak’s assertion (Alvesson and Karreman, 2000a; Keenoy and Oswick, 2004). Thus, any text can be seen as “a link in a chain of texts, reacting to, drawing in and transforming other texts” (Fairclough and Wodak, 1997, p. 262). This approach enables us to understand the importance of “who uses language, how, why and when” (van Dijk, 1997, p. 2).

d. Organisational change as multi-disciplinary

Discourse analysis as an approach is multi-disciplinary. It encompasses studies in the fields or disciplines of sociology, anthropology, linguistics, philosophy, communications and literature (Alvesson and Kärreman, 2000; Grant et al., 2004). Therefore, various methodological approaches can be used in the study of discourses of change, for example, narrative analysis, (Boje, 2001; Czarniawska, 1998; Gabriel, 2004) and rhetorical analysis (Cheney et al., 2004) among others. The varied choice of methodologies available facilitates analysis of an enormous range of data types.

e. As an approach to the study of a variety of organisational change related issues

Discourse analysis offers an approach to the extensive study of issues related to organisational change. Discourse analytic approaches have enabled studies to be conducted that have aided the understanding of change with regards to phenomena such as organisational culture (Beech, 2000), downsizing (Palmer and Dunford, 1996) and organisational learning (Jackson, 2000; Oswick et al., 2000) among numerous other studies.

Thus, it can be seen that organisation discourse theories and approaches can be utilised to better illuminate the nature of organisational change in two important respects. First, it draws attention to the role that discourse plays in the social construction of concepts about organisational change, and second, it draws attention to the role played by discursive contexts in organisational change (Marshak and Heracleous, 2005).

Thus, it can be seen that in contrast to other approaches, discourse analysis offers unlimited possibilities to study change. Using a discourse analytical approach in the studies, the role of discourse in the social construction of the reality of organisational change has been able to be exposed. The meanings which emerge and become dominant are achieved as a result of a process of negotiation.

It can therefore be concluded that discourse analysis is the most appropriate approach to adopt to study organisational change. Therefore, in this study, a discourse analytical approach is also used because of its manifested possibilities.

2.6 Chapter conclusion

In this chapter, discourse and organisational change are discussed. The definition of organisational discourse and organisational change are given. Change in ideology or ways of perception is discussed. In particular, the change in understanding of education as a business enterprise is emphasised in the light of the present study. Paradigm shifts in the understanding of organisational change are then expounded as well as shifts in emphasis in organisational change literature. Discourse analysis as a research method which offers unlimited possibilities in the study of organisational change is established.