

**POLICY IMPLEMENTATION AND STREET-LEVEL
BUREAUCRATS' DISCRETION, AUTONOMY AND COPING
MECHANISMS: A CASE STUDY OF NATIONAL CURRICULUM
STATEMENTS AT A SCHOOL IN PIETERMARITZBURG**

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**Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree of
Master of Social Science (Policy and Development Studies) in the
Faculty of Humanities, Development and Social Sciences at the
University of KwaZulu-Natal, Pietermaritzburg.**

2009

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Declaration

I declare that this dissertation is my own unaided work. All citations, references and borrowed ideas have been duly acknowledged. None of the present work has been submitted previously for any degree or examination in any other University.

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Abstract

The link between public policies and their desired outcomes has remained an important subject among scholars and policy makers. Public policies made at the ‘top’ will have to be implemented at local level by street-level bureaucrats who enjoy a considerable degree of autonomy and discretion in the execution of their duties. The implementation of the National Curriculum Statement (NCS) by teachers (street-level bureaucrats) is one such case. Using Lipsky’s street-level bureaucracy as a theoretical framework, this study sought to explore the levels of discretion, autonomy and coping mechanisms employed by school teachers at a private Christian school in Pietermaritzburg in the implementation of the NCS.

The study sought to discover if the exercise of autonomy and discretion enhanced the implementation of NCS. Both qualitative and quantitative data were collected by the insider participant using interviews with school teachers and observational methods. Analyses revealed that school teachers have considerable discretion in determining the kind of task they assign their learners. However, there were no significant relationships according to the level of discretion and teaching experience or level of professional qualifications. Furthermore, the study shows that most teachers made discretionary choices to advance the goals of the Department of Education and to enhance the understating of learners.

Factors which forced these teachers to use their discretion are due to poorly defined goals, inadequate resources and excessive workloads. In the face of challenges associated with their work, the teachers employ coping mechanisms which include ‘creaming’, private goal definition, modification of the conception of work, ‘rubber stamping’, referrals and real or psychological withdrawal. The findings of this study also show that school management through routine supervision and the Department of Education’s Common Tasks Assessments (CTAs) as well as national examinations curtail the autonomy and discretion of teachers in the implementation of NCS.

The research reveals that the combination of individual decisions made by each street-level bureaucrat in effect constitute the policy of NCS through its implementation at school. The findings also underscore the need for management at all levels to find ways of harnessing the discretion of street-level bureaucrats which enhance the Department of Education’s goals and curb those which hamper policy implementation.

Acknowledgements

It is a pleasure to thank those who made this thesis possible. Firstly, I am heartily thankful to my supervisor, Professor Ralph Lawrence, whose encouragement, guidance and support from the initial to the final level enabled me to develop an understanding of the theory of Street-level bureaucracy and its application to public policy implementation. His motivation has encouraged me to come up with this project. My special thanks go to the principal of the school at which I undertook this study for granting me permission to do so. I am also indebted to my many colleagues who supported me through their participation in the study. Last but not least I wish to avail myself of this opportunity to express a sense of gratitude and love to my wife, Pamela and my beloved daughters, Kuda and Mufaro for their support, strength, and help.

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Abbreviations

ACSI	Association of Christian Schools International
ANC	African National Congress
CTA	Common Task Assessments
DoE	Department of Education
FET	Further Education and Training
GET	General Education and Training
NCS	National Curriculum Statement
OBE	Outcomes-Based Education
SACE	South African Council on Education
SADTU	South African Democratic Teachers Union
RNCS	Revised National Curriculum Statement

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Chapter One: Introduction

1.1 Background

Current scholarship shows that an important development in post-apartheid South Africa was a shift from apartheid education towards outcomes-based curriculum reform. This resulted in several structural and policy tensions within the system (Cross, Mungadi and Rouhani, 2002). One policy shift was the adoption of the National Curriculum Statements (NCS) commonly known as the Outcomes-Based Education system (OBE) (Department of Education, 2003b, Department of Education, 2003c, Department of Education, 2005a, Department of Education, 2005b). OBE has been seen in post-apartheid South Africa as a way to transform education and address the imbalances of the past (Joseph, 2002). OBE has been applauded by some scholars and educationists as an approach at the cutting edge of curriculum development, offering a powerful and appealing way of reforming and managing education (Harden, Crosby and Davis, 1999). Although it has been supported, there have been many debates over the OBE system in South Africa and the world over (Blust, 1995; Manno, 1995; Donnelly, 2007 and Schlafly, 1994).

The implementation of OBE created many challenges for educators in urban and rural schools, well resourced and poorly resourced schools, and in formerly black schools and formerly white schools (Cross *et al*, 2002). Some of the challenges include, but are not limited to, the capacity of conditions of implementation, the capacity of teachers to translate them into reality, and budget concerns. Since the implementation of OBE, very few systematic studies (Joseph, 2002) have been conducted to explore how the teachers (street-level bureaucrats) have been exercising their discretion and autonomy in the implementation processes and to understand how they cope with challenges. Street-level bureaucrats are people employed in a wide variety of occupations to dispense human services, primarily through face-to-face contact with clients (Lipsky, 1980, p.3). Lipsky went further to argue that street-level bureaucrats have enormous discretion in determining clients' eligibility. They also have considerable autonomy from their management. The enduring problem confronting human services agencies (the Department of Education included) is that of controlling street-level bureaucrats' discretion. In order to fine tune a policy or uphold good practices that promote better attainment of the intended goals of a policy, it is imperative that a study be carried out in order to inform the decisions of the policy makers. The focus of this study is to investigate the discretion, autonomy and coping mechanisms employed by the street-level bureaucrats in a particular school in Pietermaritzburg in the implementation of the National Curriculum Statement (NCS).

The critical question to be answered is to what extent does the policy being implemented by the teachers match the written National Curriculum Statement. It is hypothesised that the teachers, who play a pivotal role in the implementation of any educational policy reform, have a lot of discretion and autonomy which they exercise and thereby create a 'policy' which may not resemble the written National Curriculum Statements. In some cases, they are compelled to do so by pressure of work and the dearth of resources. It is further hypothesised that the capacities of different teachers make them uniquely able to exercise their discretion, autonomy and coping mechanisms in the implementation of OBE. Systematic research, therefore, is required to see whether the discretion practised by the operatives is cause for the criticism of NCS.

1.2 Significance of the study

Much of research on OBE has been done in the United States of America (Schlafly, 1994; Manno, 1995; Spady, 1994), in Australia (Donnelly, 2007), and in South Africa (Jansen, 1998; Aldridge, Rüdiger, Laugksch, Mampone, Seopa and Fraser, 2006; Wyk, 2008; Cross, Mungadi and Rouhani, 2002, and Joseph, 2002) as well as in other industrialised nations. Regardless of the many studies carried out on OBE, there seems to be no consensus among scholars, educators, policy makers and parents on a multiplicity of issues as evidenced by debates on this educational policy (Schlafly, 1994; Blust, 1995). The causes of these debates originate from the failure of the policies to produce the desired results. As a result of this, actors at each level of the policy process have been busy assigning blame to actors at the other levels (that is, if the policy is to be viewed as a linear process). Street-level bureaucrats blame the policy makers and vice versa. With all the divergent views on OBE, it is important to assess how the educators' discretion and autonomy affects the implementation of this policy. This is particularly important since these are the people who play the day-to-day roles of implementing the policy. Some researchers point out that some policy dysfunctional dynamics are explained by workers' efforts to cope with psychological distress arising from their work (Walkup, 1997, pp. 37-60). Research, therefore, is required to see how the street-level bureaucrats' autonomy and coping strategies is affecting this policy implementation.

When outcomes-based education was introduced in 1997 into the South African education system, teachers (street-level bureaucrats) were simply encouraged to make a paradigm shift – to question their assumptions and to adopt new ways of thinking about teaching and learning (Fleisch, 2002; Kraak and Young, 2001, cited in Vandeyar and Killen, 2005, p.462). Such top-down policy implementation has serious effects on implementation and impacts on policy as seen in the studies carried out by Lipsky (1980), Maynard-Moody and Musheno (2003) and Hupe and Hill (2007). In view of this, it is imperative that a study on the discretion, autonomy

and coping strategies be carried out in respect of the implementation of the National Curriculum Statements.

While the above may be some of the factors that affect the implementation of OBE, past research also indicates that difficulties in implementing the new curriculum could be a result of under-resourced schools and inadequately trained teachers. This study therefore, seeks to see how teachers of different educational and professional qualifications in Pietermaritzburg exercise their discretion and cope with work pressures in the implementation of NCS. Burns and Wood (1989 p.3) in Iowa, USA, looked at the perceptions of teachers pertaining to the institutional development system, assessment and monitoring procedures, instructional organisation and staff development processes in relation to OBE implementation. Their work also focused on whether teachers' perceptions and discretion on OBE issues differ in relation to their level of teaching experience and the education attained (Burns and Wood, 1989 p.4). These perceptions have direct implications of street-level bureaucrats' delivery of services. These variables were found to have a significant influence on teachers' perceptions of OBE at .05 level (Burns and Wood, 1989, p. 4). The impact of these factors in the USA (industrialised state) and South Africa (developing country) may not be the same due to contextual differences. This makes the study of teachers' perceptions worthy, and could inform the decisions of the policy makers in selecting appropriate ways of fine-tuning the policy.

The fact that OBE has been adopted in South Africa in line with international trends makes it very likely that many other African countries and the developing countries could do the same. This makes the study of how street-level bureaucrats exercise their autonomy and discretion in educational policy reform very important. On the academic front, this study is important to policy students as well as to policy practitioners.

1.3 Research problems and objectives

The purpose of the study is to find out how street-level bureaucrats in implementing the National Curriculum Statements exercise their discretion and autonomy and coping with daily pressures of their work. It further investigates how that discretion may be limited by management.

Key questions to be asked are:

1. How do teachers exercise their autonomy and discretion in the implementation of the RNCS?

2. Which coping strategies do street-level bureaucrats use when they face challenges in delivering services to their clients?
3. What informs the discretion and autonomy that is exercised by the street-level bureaucrats in implementing the RNCS?
4. To what extent is the exercise of discretion, autonomy and coping mechanisms related to the street-level bureaucrats' experience, age, educational and professional qualification and level of teaching assignments (elementary, middle or high school)?
5. What factors influence teachers to use discretion, autonomy and coping mechanisms in the implementation of National Curriculum Statement?
6. How do the Department of Education and the school management view and respond to the discretion, autonomy and coping mechanisms of their street-level bureaucrats?

1.4 Research problems and objectives: broader issues to be investigated

In policy implementation there is an increasing need to understand why policies do not achieve the desired results. Studies have shown that street-level bureaucrats, who are the final implementers of policy, have discretion, autonomy and coping mechanisms which they exercise to produce the final policy which might not resemble the written policy. This study explores the exercise of discretion, autonomy and coping strategies by teachers in Pietermaritzburg in the implementation of the NCS. In essence, the study focuses on how these street-level bureaucrats exercise their professional discretion in the implementation of the NCS. The recent reports in the media about debates over the appropriateness and the efficacy of the policy have aroused public attention and apprehension. Politicians, educationists and scholars do not agree on the importance and effects of the policy. The recent (2008) drop in the Matriculation pass rate suggests that the OBE is not effective and is not producing the desired results (The Witness, July 1, 2009). The reason for this might reside at macro implementation level by politicians and policy makers or at micro implementation level by principals and educators (street-level bureaucrats). The Department of Education through the Minister of Education, suggests that poor results were a result of poor performance by teachers and principals. Like in any programme or policy implementation, poor results may be attributed to a number of factors. The responsible factor can only be identified by a systematic formative or summative evaluation. One way of looking at this complicated issue is by looking at the exercise of discretion, autonomy and coping strategies by the street-level bureaucrats (teachers) on the implementation of NCS.

Broadly speaking, the questions to be answered are how do street-level bureaucrats exercise their discretion in the implementation of the Outcomes-Based Education system? Does this promote or hinder successful NCS policy implementation? Answering these questions is significant in a number of ways. Understanding how teachers exercise discretion in policy implementation is a vital tool to the policy makers and scholars alike. This can lead to fine-tuning of the policy where necessary.

1.5 Principal theories on which the research project is constructed

This study builds on and is informed by Michel Lipsky's 1980 seminal book on the role of street-level bureaucrats in policy implementation entitled *Street-Level Bureaucracy: Dilemmas of Individuals in Public Services*. He argues that 'although they are normally regarded as low-level employees, the actions of most public service employees constitute the services delivered by government' (Lipsky, 1980, p.3). He further asserts that 'when taken together the individual decisions of these workers become, or add up to, agency policy' (Lipsky 1980, p.3). In other words, the individual decisions of each teacher constitute the final 'national curriculum statement' delivered by government. One of Lipsky's key observations in street-level bureaucracy is that these low-level workers have considerable discretion in determining the nature, amount, and quality of benefits provided by their agencies. Furthermore, he argues that street-level bureaucrats have relative autonomy from organisational authority (Lipsky, 1980, pp.13-16).

In policy implementation this can pose critical problems. The autonomy of staff at the base of the government has been seen either as posing a control problem to the 'top' or as a justification for more direct forms of accountability to the 'street' (Hupe and Hill, 2007 p.279). Findings on street-level bureaucracy further demonstrate that professionals who are working in social organizations that are on the front lines of service delivery engage in adaptive behaviors to cope with the dilemmas posed by their positions in the system of service provision (Prottas, 1979). In the implementation of NCS, street-level bureaucrats (teachers) are said to consider having discretion in the execution of their duties. Even though there are government regulations, teachers are said to have relative autonomy from organizational authority. If this is the case, the failure by OBE to produce the desired outcomes cannot be squarely put on the content or nature of the policy.

A study by Bergen and While (2005 p.1) shows that the extent to which nurses, as street-level bureaucrats, adopted the case management role and the model of choice, depended on four major interrelated variables, namely: (1) the clarity of policy guidance; (2) the extent to which it coincided with professional (nursing) values; (3) local practices and policies; and (4) the

personal vision of the community nurse. This example, although not in education, shows that street-level bureaucrats do not simply take policies from the ‘top’ as ‘given’ but exercise their discretion and autonomy. This can have both either positive or negative effects.

To explore these issues, an empirical qualitative and quantitative study using primary data from observations, interviews and focus group discussions, has been conducted.

1.6 Research methodology

The study used qualitative and quantitative methodology to collect the data. The qualitative approach was selected because of its ability to provide complex textual descriptions of how people experience a given research issue (Pelto and Pelto, 1997, p.148). It also provides information about the “human” side of an issue – that is, the often contradictory behaviours, beliefs, opinions, emotions, and relationships of individuals in the implementation of NCS by street-level bureaucrats. The quantitative methodology was selected to complement the qualitative methodology. Quantitative and qualitative research methods complement each other despite their obvious difference (Reason and Rowan, 1981, p.17). They (ibid, p.17) argue that ‘in quantitative research, the emphasis is on collecting data that leads to dependable answers to important questions, reported in sufficient detail that it has meaning to the reader’(1981, p.17). The advantage of quantitative is that it is objective and can be measured so that comparisons can be made. Furthermore, quantitative methods are generally very easy to replicate and so have a high reliability (Sarantakos, 2002, p.45).

1.6.1 Sample

This study was carried out in Pietermaritzburg at a private Christian school where the researcher teaches. Permission to carry out this study was secured. The school has a total number of thirty-two academic staff. This number includes the principal, deputy principal, three senior teachers in management and two teaching assistants. The study interviewed teachers only (26) and left out the management and teaching assistants. The school enrolls students from Grade R to Grade 12. Its total enrolment was 432 in 2009. The school was chosen for two main reasons. Firstly, it was because this school implements both the NCS Grade R-9 and NCS Grade 10-12 (schools) unlike most other schools which implement either one or the other. The second reason was that the researcher teaches at this school. This makes the study feasible and reduces the time and costs involved. The study was carried out from September to November 2009.

1.6. 2 Research methods

Observation

Qualitative data was collected by observation of teachers' daily activities. Gorman and Clayton define observation studies as those that "involve the systematic recording of observable phenomena or behaviour in a natural setting" (Gorman and Clayton, 2005, p. 40). This method was preferred because it provides information about behavior of individuals and groups and permit evaluator to enter into and understand situation/context of the school environment and policy implementation (Mahoney, 1997). This method also provides opportunities for identifying unanticipated outcomes. Another advantage of observation is that, it exists in natural, unstructured, and flexible setting (Gorman and Clayton, 2005, p. 40). Unlike following teachers to their homes to solicit information, the researcher observed the street-level bureaucrats in their work environment, implementing the NCS. This technique also gave the researcher an opportunity to verify the statements given in the interviews with the actual behaviour of street-level bureaucrats in action.

In applying this technique, the researcher adopted an overt role, and made his presence and intentions known to the group. Field notes were taken to record the observations. This technique was chosen because it was advantageous in that the more familiar the researcher is with the language (including culture) of a social setting, the more accurate is the interpretation; and the greater the personal involvement with a social group and milieu, the greater the understanding of and feelings for meanings and actions. This was chosen because the researcher works at the institution under study and is also a street-level bureaucrat. This undoubtedly enhanced the reliability and validity of my data.

Although the method has some downsides such as time consuming, the researcher took advantage of being part of the staff under investigation. Huge expenses associated with this method were also mitigated in the same manner.

Survey

The survey method was used collect the quantitative data using questionnaire. The questionnaires were administered in face-to-face interviews. The questionnaires included closed questions and a space for open ended comments (see Appendix A). The space for open ended comments allowed the interviewees a degree of freedom to explain their thoughts and highlight

special areas in which they exercise discretion in the implementation of the NCS and to allow a certain responses to be questioned in greater depth (Honey, 1987, p. 55).

The researcher adopted triangulation of methods to improve the credibility, validity and reliability of the data. Triangulation refers to the use of more than one approach to the investigation of a research question in order to enhance confidence in the ensuing findings (Bogdan, and Biklen, 2006, p.56). The researcher used face-to-face interviews as well as observation techniques in order to facilitate validation of data through cross verification from more than two sources.

1.6.3 Data analysis

The responses from the closed questions in the questionnaires were analysed descriptively, using SPSS 15.0 for Windows. Frequency tables and bar graphs were used to present summary statistics. The Chi-Square tests were used to compare categorical data between teaching experience and the level of autonomy over tasks. Cross tabulation was used to explore relationships in the data. This choice has been made because cross tables are easy to understand and they also appeal to people who do not want to use more sophisticated measures.

Thematic content analysis was also used to analyse responses to the open ended comments in the questionnaires. The analysis of this transcribed data was based on pattern matching logic, which ‘compares an empirically-based pattern with a predicted one’ (Yin, 2003, p. 116). The ‘predicted pattern’ here comprised findings from the previous stages, together with the literature available (Bergen and While, 2005, p.4). Put another way, findings from other studies at times were used to compare the results.

Ethical approval was obtained for data collection from the school under study. All participants were clearly and properly informed of the study processes and objectives before obtaining informed consent from them. Their names were not mentioned in the write-up to ensure their confidentiality. The responses of the teachers are reflected in the report using the codes Tr1 to Tr26 for the different teacher responses.

1.7 Structure of the dissertation

This dissertation will be structured in five chapters as follows:

Chapter Two: Theoretical Framework

The chapter begins by outlining the theoretical framework on which the study is based. It briefly looks at different approaches to policy implementation, and then reviews literature on the

importance of street-level bureaucrats in policy implementation. This chapter will end with identifying the gaps that this research seeks to fill.

Chapter Three: Context of the Educational Policy in South Africa

This chapter explores the development of the NCS since 1994. It presents the major components of the policy and the way it directly influences street-level bureaucrats. Then it will discuss tenets of OBE as a philosophy for educational policy reform. The chapter ends with an analysis of literature on the current issues in the implementation of the NCS in South Africa.

Chapter Four: Case Study

This chapter begins by giving the organisational structure of the school. Then the chapter presents and analyses findings on the observations, interviews and focus group discussions.

Chapter Five: Conclusions

This chapter summarises the major findings of the study. It then draws conclusions and lessons learned on the basis of the analysed results. This chapter ends by suggesting further research.

1.8 Conclusion

This first chapter has outlined the main thrust of the study. It has outlined the general background of the study. The chapter has also explained the research problems and rationale of the study. The methodology as well as principal theories on which the research project is constructed were explained. The next chapter focuses on the theoretical issues on which the study hinges.

Chapter Two: The Theoretical Framework of the Study

2.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to outline the theoretical framework of this study. It will commence by looking at the concept of policy implementation. Factors which affect policy implementation are going to be discussed. Different approaches to policy implementation will be explored. It will end by investigating literature on the role of street-level bureaucrats in policy implementation with particular emphasis on teachers.

2.2 Policy Implementation

To put the whole study into perspective, this section will briefly discuss the theory and practice of public policy implementation. The discussion will commence with theoretical aspects of public policy implementation and then concentrate on educational policy implementation.

2.2.1 Policy implementation defined

By definition, implementation means to 'carry out, accomplish, fulfil, produce, complete' (Pressman and Wildavsky, 1973 in Cloete and Wissink, 2000, p.166). Van Meter and Van Horn (1975, pp. 447-448) [cited in Cloete and Wissink (2000, p.166)] perceive policy implementation as 'those actions by public or private individuals (or groups) that are directed at the achievement of objectives set forth in prior policy decisions'. In view of this, policy implementation entails carrying out, fulfilling, producing and completing a policy. In other words, policy implementation is a stage in the cycle of a policy. In essence, policy implementation encompasses actions directed at the attainment of the set objectives. This process is not as easy and as straightforward as it seems. These definitions suit the NCS in many respects. The decisions that were made at central government level are being implemented by public and private schools while individual home schools are also busy trying to achieve the same objectives. There has been a lot of research on this matter and different views have been adopted by different scholars and practitioners alike (Ben-Zadok, 2006; Palumbo and Calista, 1987; Robbertson, 1984; Supovitz, 2004; Vaquera, 2007; Yanow, 1987). Parsons (1995, p.461) asserts that a 'study of implementation is a study of change: how change occurs, possibly how it may be induced' (Parsons, 1995, p.461). In this view, the study of NCS policy implementation is a study of how change can occur in the behaviour of post-apartheid teachers (educators) and learners. It is also a study of how this change can be induced.

2.2.2 Factors influencing successful implementation

The literature is full of suggestions, advice and prescriptions on how to carry out a successful policy implementation (Cloete and Wissink, 2000; Parsons, 1995; Weimer and Vining, 2005; O'Sullivan, 2002) Most the authors agree on factors such as: the logic of the policy; the relevance of policy standards and objectives; policy resources; characteristics of the implementing agencies; and the disposition of implementers for carrying out the policy decisions (Cloete and Wissink, 2000, p.171, Weimer and Vining, 2005, p.275). This section will look at some of these factors.

This first and one of the most important factors is the logic of the policy (Weimer and Vining, 2005, p.275). This means looking at the logic of the policy as 'a chain of hypotheses'. For example, the chain of hypothesis for OBE could be that 'the apartheid education system was failing due to its delivery mode which regarded learners as "parrots" and it was content based'. Second, 'if the content based education system is replaced with outcomes-based education system the problem would cease'. Third, 'there are enough resources for the implementation of the policy'. It will be easy to tell whether the hypotheses are true or not. For instance, it would be wrong to assume that resources would be enough for OBE since most teachers were poorly equipped to implement the policy. Put another way, if all the hypotheses are correct, the policy implementation would be successful if there are other exogenous factors.

Most of the other factors are connected to the logic of the policy theory. Mazmanian and Sabatier (1981) [cited in Cloete and Wissink, (2000, p.172)] listed 16 factors which affect policy implementation. These are clustered into three broad categories:

- Tractability of the problems. That is, some problems are much easier to deal with than others. Parsons concurs with this assertion when he says 'it easy easier to put a man on the moon than to put a homeless family in a decent accommodation' (Parsons, 1995, p.480). The same applies to an education policy where different coalitions seek to have a say in it.
- The ability of policy decisions to structure implementation. This means that 'original policy-makers can substantially affect the attainment of legal objectives by utilising the levers at their disposal' (Cloete and Wissink, 2000, p.172). In other words, the Department of Education has many levers at its disposal to make sure that the policy is implemented. This could be in the form of sanctions and rewards for the street-level bureaucrats.

- No-statutory variables affecting policy implementation. That is implementation also has an inherent political dynamism of its own (Cloete and Wissink, 2000, p.172). Notions of power relations in implementation can also affect policy implementation in many respects. These could involve intra-organisation or inter-organisations politics. The implementation of Revised National Curriculum Statement was in some ways delayed due to some conflicts with religious organisations over faith issues in the new curriculum.

Another factor which is important for policy implementation is the content of the policy (Cloete and Wissink, 2000, p.178). Citing Lowi's (1963) categorisation of policy as distributive, regulatory or redistributive, Cloete and Wissink (2000, p.178) explain that each type of policy has a different level of difficulty in implementation. In my view, the NCS has some kernels of each of Lowi's typology. This makes it complex to implement.

The context of policy implementation is also important. Implementers and researchers should pay attention to the social, economic, political and legal settings of a policy (Cloete and Wissink, 2000, p.180) which give a policy its context. There is no policy which is context free. The context in which OBE was implemented in USA, Australia and other countries cannot be said to be similar to South Africa. At the time of implementation, South Africa was coming from an apartheid system with a dual economy. There was a complex education system based on racial considerations. The implementation of OBE would not be expected to yield the same results in the different systems.

With specific reference to the factors which affect educational policy implementation, O'Sullivan, (2002, p.222) points out that the literature abounds with references to the centrality of the influence of the teacher for the success or failure of reforms in both industrialised and developing countries; '... that the desired change was to take place in the classroom' was responsible for numerous failed reforms in the USA. Successful implementation will ultimately depend on the extent to which planners take 'classrooms realities' into account (Lockheed & Verspoor, 1991; Heneveld & Craig, 1996 [cited in O'Sullivan, 2002], p.222). The concept of 'classrooms' in planning implementation is very critical. Teachers as street-level bureaucrats play a critical role in the success or failure of OBE in South Africa.

Havelock and Huberman, (1977), Hurst, (1983), and Bishop, (1986) [all cited in O'Sullivan, (2002, p.222)] highlighted a number of factors at the 'classrooms realities' level that have

implications for implementation. They explain that the factors can be divided into objective and subjective factors. They state that:

Objective reality factors refer mainly to the physical and personal context within which teachers work. Subjective factors are concerned with a teacher's emotional and social context: their views and attitudes, relevance of the reforms and so on. (O'Sullivan, 2002, p.222).

This is in agreement with the factors already mentioned earlier. All this is related to commitment, skills, capacity of the street-level bureaucrats, resources, support services, communication network, learner capacity and culture. Many schools complain about some of these issues.

2.2.3 Different approaches to policy implementation

Many scholars agree that policy-making does not come to end once the policy is set out or approved (Parsons, 1995, p.462). Traditionally, policy processes are viewed as distinctive stages. Because of this, policy analysts tended, until the 1970s and 1980s, to bypass the impact of bureaucracy and service providers on the effectiveness of policy (p.462). Although this might have been so in the late twentieth century, many people and stakeholders of NCS and OBE have tended to bypass the bureaucracies and the street-level bureaucrats on important matters to do with policy formulation and implementation. Many have called for the streamlining or even abandonment of a whole policy. Parsons argues that a policy was judged in terms of 'the decision-makers rather than the street-level implementation and the fine-sounding ideas from national and local leaders' (1995, p.462). It is important, he argues, to note that bureaucrats are not just neutral civil servants, but also have ideas, values, beliefs, and interests which they also use to shape policy. The majority of street-level bureaucrats in the implementation of NCS have attitudes and values which were shaped by and in the apartheid education system. A total change of these values does not take place overnight.

In order to study how policies can induce change or how to induce change, scholars of policy implementation have different approaches to policy implementation. Parsons (1995, p.463) outlines the developments of major policy implementation approaches over the last decades. Parsons lists:

- The analysis of failure: Derthick (1972); Pressman and Wildavsky (1973); Bardach (1977).
- Rational (top-down) models to identify factors which affect successful implementation: Van Meter and Van Horn (1975); Hood (1976); Gunn (1978); Sabatier and Mazmanian (1979).

- Bottom-up critiques of top down model in terms of the importance of other actors and other organisational interactions: Lipsky (1971); Weatherly and Lipsky (1977); Elmore (1978, 1979) Hjern *et al.* (1978).
- Hybrid theories. Implementation as evolution (Majone and Wildavsky, 1978) as learning (Brown and Wildavsky, 1984); ... as part of policy sub-system (Sabatier, 1986) (Parsons 1995, p.463).

However, it is important to note that policy implementation does not follow or fit any individual approach. These models are very good heuristic tools used for studying policy implementation. Although this section will discuss some of these approaches in brief, it is the third one (Lipsky and the others) that this study hinges on. With time and learning some proponents of the top-down approaches changed their positions. For instance, Wildavsky writings in the 1980s are slightly different from those of the 1970s. Although he was a proponent of the top-down approach, in the 1980s he perceived implementation as evolution. These approaches are now discussed briefly in the next section.

2.2.4 The top-down rational systems approach

This was the first model on the scene (Parsons, 1995, p.463). It posits that democratically elected officials make unambiguous policy choices. Policies are then handed over to a hierarchically structured agency. Instructions are formulated at the top of the pyramid and passed down the chain of command to the line personnel who carry them out without discretion (Fox, 1987, p.129). The proponents of this model argue that effective implementation requires a good chain of command and capacity to co-ordinate and control.

This idea has much in common with Weber's construction of an ideal type of bureaucracy (Parsons, 1995, p.465). Pressman and Wildavsky (1973) [cited in Parsons (1995 p. 464)] posit that a policy is a 'hypothesis containing initial conditions and predicted consequences. If X is done at t_1 and then Y will happen at t_2 '. It can be inferred that the hypothesis for NCS would be that the change of teaching methods, subjects, and other teaching and learning in 1997 would result in better and well-informed Matriculants in 2008. Implementation, therefore, is a process of interaction between the setting of goals and actions geared to achieve them. Pressman and Wildavsky argue that goals have to be clearly defined and understood, and resources made available.

The chain of command has to be capable of assembling and controlling resources, and the system has to be able to communicate effectively and control those individuals and organisations involved in the performance of task (Parsons, 1995, p.464). The emphasis in this model is *controlling* resources, individuals and organisations. The policy makers should be in firm control of these aspects of policy.

The justification for this lies in the fact that the democratically elected policy-makers ought to have their way in policy implementation because only they can be held accountable to the people (Fox, 1987, p.130). The African National Congress (ANC) government was elected into office by the people to deliver services. To do this the top must be in control. If their policies fail, they will be thrown out of office by the people. Teachers and other organisations will not be thrown out of office if the NCS fails. In view of this, the Department of Education must be in firm control of the resources, the schools, the principals and the teachers in order to forge the links between causes and effects of the policy hypothesis. Put another way, it has to follow Weber's construction of an ideal bureaucracy.

The five conditions for perfect implementation in a top-down approach have been listed by Christopher Hood (1976) [cited in Parsons (1995, p.465)]. These are:

- That ideal implementation is a product of a unitary 'army'-like organisation, with clear lines of authority;
- That norms will be enforced and objectives given;
- That people would do what they are told and asked;
- That there should be perfect communication in between units of organisation;
- That there will be no pressure of time. (Parsons, 1995, p.465)

It is difficult to imagine that an educational policy can be implemented by teachers in such a fashion. Teachers as street-level bureaucrats enjoy a high degree of discretion and autonomy. Their supervision is different from other front-line workers with no or little discretion. In many respects, teachers do not do as they are told.

They have limited resources, and they work under pressure to finish the syllabus and to update their records. There is no perfect communication between various units of the Department of Education. In many cases schools are required to submit information that was needed three or more days earlier.

The top-down approach view of policy has been summed up by Rousseau [in Parsons (1995, p. 467)] as: 'Everything is good when it leaves the Creator's hands; everything degenerates in the hands of man.' Put another way, the policy is good when it leaves Pretoria and it degenerates in the hands of schools and street-level bureaucrats. Such a position does not question the logic and hypothesis of the policy. For instance it assumes that the NCS has no weaknesses. If the policy does not produce the desired outcomes the street-level bureaucrats are to blame.

Gunn (1978) [in Parsons (1995, p.465)] set out ten conditions (commandments) that are necessary for a top-down approach to achieve the desired policy outcomes. Some of them are:

- *Circumstances external to the implement agency do not impose crippling constraints.*

This is very important in that there might be conditions such as economic recession which can have impacts on the implementation of the educational policy. This is way beyond the Department of Education's control. This is despite the fact that it can cause policy failure.

- *Adequate time and sufficient resources are made available for the programme.*

The implementation of the NCS has in many respects been constrained by a dearth of resources. A shortage of teachers has meant that teachers are overloaded and classrooms are overcrowded. Mathematics and Science teachers are very scarce despite the fact that Mathematics is a compulsory subject for all learners.

- *The policy to be implemented is based on valid theory of cause and effect.*

This is important in that policy stakeholders may expend resources while there is no link between the cause and effect. The problems of the previous education system can disappear when the policy is changed. Whether the change is the desired one depends on the policy theory.

- *Those in authority can demand and obtain perfect obedience.*

In the contemporary South Africa it is difficult to expect perfect obedience from teachers due to factors like the unionisation of labour. The South African Democratic Teachers Union (SADTU) is a powerful organisation which can mobilise teachers to strike if they feel any actions of the Department of Education are not in their best interest.

These problems and many other policy variables led scholars and policy practitioners to revisit the top-down policy implementation approach. There were a lot of criticisms of the top-down model. In the late 1970s many scholars embraced the bottom-up approach which emerged as an antithesis of the top-down model.

2.2.5 The bottom-up models

Hill and Hupe (2002, p.51) present Michael Lipsky as the founding father of the bottom-up perspective. This follows Lipsky's analysis of the behaviour of front-line staff in policy delivery agencies. 'The decisions of street-level bureaucrats, the routines they establish, and the devices

they invent to cope with uncertainties and work pressure effectively become the public policies they implement' (Lipsky, 1980, p.xii). In this view, the NCS policy being implemented by teachers is not the one written in the policy documents but the one they modify to suit their interests, needs, values and the environment. This is because teachers as service deliverers modify policy to cope with pressures upon them. For Lipsky, the implementation of policy (NSC) is really about street-level workers (teachers) with high service ideals exercising discretion under intolerable pressures (Hill and Hupe, 2002, p.53).

Parsons (1995, p.468) points out that after Lipsky's 1977 study of institutional innovation in implementing special education reform, it was discovered how the rational top-down model was not effective in practice although it is convincing in theory. Hill and Hupe (2002, p.53) point out that the implementation of the policy depended on changing the attitudes and practices of micro-implementers. The implementation of the NCS is, in the same way, dependent on the practices and attitudes of educators. This is not to take away other important policy variables. In essence, Lipsky's study shows that control over people was not the best way forward for effective policy implementation. People cannot be regarded as chains in the line of command; policy makers should realise that policy is implemented by 'backward mapping' (Elmore, 1979, cited in Parsons, 1995, p.469). Teachers may develop ways of teaching or implementing 'government policy' which actually results in outcomes which are quite different from those intended or desired by policy makers (Parsons, 1995, p. 469). This could then exonerate the NCS policy makers on issues to do with policy design and policy theory deficiencies. The NCS failures can be blamed on the teachers who are modifying it to suit their interest and values.

Other scholars of bottom-up implementation, such Porter (1981) and Hjern and Hull (1982) argue that a more realistic understanding of policy implementation can be gained by looking at policy from the view of the target population and service deliverers (Matland, 1995, p.148). What is peculiar to this view is the inclusion of the target population in policy implementation. In case of NCS it would mean that the learners' input into policy implementation occurs at two levels. At macro-implementation level, policy makers design government programmes which are implemented at micro-implementation level by local organisations and individuals (Matland, 1995, p.148). At macro-implementation level government officers and education specialists formulated the NCS. This was sent to provinces, districts and schools for micro-implementation. At this micro-implementation level 'contextual factors within an implementing environment completely dominate rules created at the top implementing pyramid, and policy designers will be unable to control the process' (Matland, 1995, p.148). The contextual factors in the implementation of NCS include a shortage of human resources, overcrowded classrooms and a

lack of learning materials. Matland argues that if local implementers are not given the freedom to adapt the policy can fail. This explains why educators are encouraged to be resourceful.

It is important to note that both approaches to the study of policy implementation are powerful heuristic tools. Matland concludes that:

Under certain conditions it is most appropriate to hold either a top-down or bottom-up perspective, it is important to recognize that both schools contain kernels of truth relevant to policy implementation situation. For example, central authorities inevitably influence policy implementation through decisions on funding and jurisdiction, even when policies are vague and conflict is low. It is also clear that policies are not self-executing (Matland, 1995, p.171).

This understanding is very important since different policies require different implementation approaches. Central implementation is important in order to provide a monitoring and evaluation framework. Without such structures it is disastrous to wait until the end of the period of instruction has ended after twelve years. The Department of Education provides resources. Teachers are recruited and employed by the Department of Education. This is important for the equitable distribution of resources and effective policy implementation.

Some authors prefer to discuss when a model is appropriately applied (Matland, 1995, p.152). For instance, Dunsire (1978) [cited in Matland (1995, p.152)] argues that the two perspectives should apply at different times in the implementation process. The top-down approach is more appropriate in the early planning stages; the bottom-up view is more appropriate in later evaluation stages. It would have been difficult to consider the views of all street-level bureaucrats in the planning stages of the implementation of the NCS. But now that most of them are familiar with the policy, the bottom-up approach may be appropriate at this stage.

2.3 Lipsky and front-line workers

This section looks more particularly at the theoretical framework on which this study is based. The theory explains the role played by street-level bureaucrats in policy implementation. Briefly, the section will also explore some measures management employ to enhance and limit the way in which the street-level bureaucrats operate.

This study builds on and is informed by Michel Lipsky's 1980 seminal book on the role of street-level bureaucrats in policy implementation entitled *Street-Level Bureaucracy: Dilemmas of Individuals in Public Services*. Lipsky defines street-level bureaucrats as 'public workers who interact directly with citizens in the course of their jobs, and who have substantial discretion in the execution of their work' (Lipsky, 1980, p.13). Wong (2007) points out that 'superficially, street-level bureaucrats constitute a level of implementation of public policies—they are tasked

with ensuring policies are carried out. Yet as individuals, public service workers represent a small-scale level of policymaking' (Wong, 2007, p.2). Their views are rarely considered in policy formulation. Lipsky referred to teachers, police officers, social workers, judges and other court officials as 'typical street-level bureaucrats' (1980, p.3). However, for the purpose of this study, teachers are the street-level bureaucrats. The theory is a total departure from the classical model of public policy implementation process which suggests a top-down, hierarchical approach (Ricucci, 2005, p.4). Ricucci argues that this 'somewhat static view of policy implementation may illustrate the broad elements of the policy process, but it does not account for the important role of street-level bureaucrats' (Ricucci, 2005, p.4). This is in relation to Lipsky (1980) who argues that 'although they are normally regarded as low-level employees, the actions of most public service employees constitute the services delivered by government' (Ricucci, 2005, p.3). He further asserts that 'when taken together the individual decisions of these workers become, or add up to, agency policy'. Such a view rejects the notion of policy implementation depicted in figure 2.1.

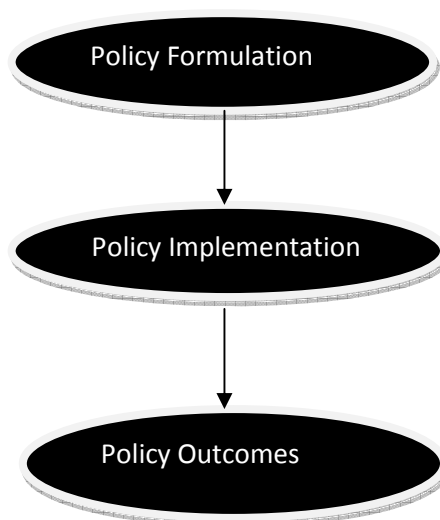


Figure 2.1 Classical model of the public policy implementation process.

(Source: Ricucci, 2005, p.5)

According to Lipsky (1980, p. 13) street-level bureaucrats influence policy in two related ways. The policy-making roles of street-level bureaucrats are built upon two interrelated facets of their position: relatively high degrees of discretion and relative autonomy from organisational authority (Lipsky, 1980, p.3). The exercise of discretion and autonomy in public policy implementation by street-level bureaucrats can affect the policy outcomes.

The concept of discretion is central to the theory of street-level bureaucracy as well as to this study. 'Discretion is the capacity and obligation to decide what actions are appropriate and the ability to take those actions' (Boote, 2006, p.465). Thus, a teacher's professional discretion is

centred on being able to decide what should be taught and being able to teach it; for teachers, curriculum is inseparable from instruction and improving their ability to make appropriate curricular decisions must always be tied to improving their ability to teach (Ben-Peretz, 1990) [cited in Boote, 2006]. ‘Unlike lower-level workers, street-level bureaucrats have considerable discretion in determining the nature and amount of and quality of benefits and sanctions provided by their agencies’ (Lipsky, 1980, p.13). Teachers decide how they can implement the NCS. According to Lipsky they also decide ‘who will be suspended and who will remain in school, and they make decisions on who is teachable and who is not’ (Lipsky, 1980, p.13). Wong observes that:

Their (street-level bureaucrats’) employment conditions bring the dual capacity for discretion and the ability to interpret policies to meet specific demands of work. In response to managing workloads and addressing the needs of clients, street-level bureaucrats possess urgency in making judgments and executing decisions (Wong, 2007, p.3).

It also important to note that discretion is a relative concept accorded to street-level bureaucrats, since their work often demands a human dimension and self-direction (Wong, 2007, p.3). In other words, there are some situations where teachers need to exercise professional discretion in dealing with individual cases according to their merits.

Another concept important to the street-level bureaucracy theory and to this study is autonomy. Lipsky (1980, p. 17) notes that most analysts take for granted that the work of lower-level participants will more or less conform to what is expected of them. Real life experiences have shown that there is always a slippage between orders and carrying them out. Street-level bureaucrats in the implementation of NCS might not do what is expected of them. This can have serious consequences for policy outcomes. This usually happens when workers do not share the same objectives as their superiors and hence in some respects cannot be seen to be working toward stated department goals (Lipsky, 1980, p.17). If teachers are not in agreement with their Department of Education superiors on the goals and theory upon which OBE is based then their commitment to the policy can be questionable. Under such circumstances Lipsky concludes that ‘discrepancies between policy declarations and actual policy will be expected and predictable’ (Lipsky, 1980, p.17).

Nevertheless, this theory does not put street-level bureaucrats on ‘top’ of the policy implementation process. Lipsky points out that ‘this is not to say that street-level bureaucrats are unrestrained by rules, regulations and directives from above or by norms and practices of their occupational group’ (Lipsky, 1980, p.15). The teachers in the implementation of the NCS are constrained by norms and practices they learnt during their training. The South African Council

of Educators and some orders from the Department of Education (DoE) also put a limit on their discretion and autonomy.

Lipsky asserts that ‘to the extent that street-level bureaucrats are professionals, the assertion that they exercise considerable discretion is fairly obvious’ (Lipsky, 1980, p.14). Teachers are expected to exercise discretionary judgements in their classrooms. The DoE employs these teachers on the basis of their professionalism. Because of this, they are relatively free from supervision by superiors and clients (learners).

In policy implementation this can pose critical problems. The autonomy of staff at the base of government has been seen as posing a control problem to the ‘top’ which can be seen as a justification for more direct forms of accountability to the ‘street’ (Hupe and Hill, 2007 p.279). This has resulted in more rules but rules may actually be an impediment to supervision (Lipsky, 1980, p.14). Lipsky notes that rules may be so voluminous and contradictory that they can only be enforced or invoked selectively. School managers are also bound by the same such rules. Furthermore, the long procedures of applying these rules may also deter school managers from using them.

The interests and priorities of managers and street-level workers are rarely the same. At the very least, workers have an interest in minimising the danger and discomfort of their job and maximising income and gratification (Lipsky, 1980, p.19). On the other hand, Lipsky argues that the interests of management are centred on productivity and effectiveness. This is quite peculiar to education policy implementation. The education managers expect outcomes like respectful citizens with *ubuntu* and people who are well prepared for further education in tertiary institutions. Street-level bureaucrats, on the other hand, are worried about conditions of service, a reduced work load and increased income. Furthermore, street-level bureaucrats seek to expand their autonomy while managers try to restrict workers’ discretion in order to secure certain results (Lipsky, 1980, p.19). Street-level bureaucrats (teachers) often complain when management increase their classroom visits. Teachers often view such visits with suspicion and dislike them since they are associated with reducing their discretion.

Street-level bureaucrats possess resources to resist management orders. Lipsky points out that ‘lower-level workers possess minimal resources with which they can resist managers’ orientation or achieve a modicum of response from managers in response for compliance’ (Lipsky, 1980, p.23). Some of the resources include the collective power of workers’ unions which strengthen their position considerably. In the implementation of NCS the street-level bureaucrats belong to a number of powerful teachers unions such as SADTU.

Street-level bureaucrats (teachers) command a degree of expertise, and indeed, of deference, in some policy areas (Lipsky, 1980, p.24). This is quite relevant for this study. Most teachers consider themselves experts in their own areas. Because of this, they become *de facto* policy makers at local level and managers depend on them. Wong (2007) agrees with this assertion. ‘Holding a relatively high degree of discretion enables street-level bureaucrats to make ad-hoc decisions and policy changes’ (Wong, 2007, p.3).

This does not mean that Lipsky says management has no control over street-level bureaucrats. He points out that although formal sanctions are costly for managers to invoke, they are also costly to workers, who thus try to avoid them (Lipsky, 1980, p.24; Riccucci, 2005, pp. 66-69). In other words, street-level bureaucrats avoid behaviour because they fear certain sanctions. For example, school managers are responsible for giving recommendations when a low-level worker is seeking promotion.

The street-level bureaucracy theory further indicates that ‘professionals who are working in social organizations that are on the front lines of service delivery engage in adaptive behaviours to cope with the dilemmas posed by their positions in the system of service provision’ (Prottas, 1979, p72). This is despite the fact that most people enter into teaching with some commitment to service, yet the very nature of the job prevents them from coming even close to the conception of their job (Lipsky, 1980, p.xii). Lipsky asserts that although teachers should respond to the needs of an individual child, in reality they must develop to recognize and respond to types of confrontations, and to process types of cases accordingly (Lipsky, 1980, p.xii). In doing this, he says, street-level bureaucrats invent modes of mass processing that permit them to deal with the clients successfully. Wong (2007, p.6) says that street-level bureaucrats make a conscious decision to utilize these methods to cope with the stresses of the job and the clients. Some coping mechanisms include favouritism, stereotyping and routinizing. Some street-level bureaucrats burn out and drop out early. Wong explains the importance of this adaptive behaviour to policy implementation and policy-making. He says:

The dilemmas posed to these actors force them to adopt reactionary strategies in order to cope with the challenges of the job—strategies range from rationing resources to screening and routinizing clients. Indirectly, however, those adaptive strategies in essence become a form of decision making in the public policy realm (Wong, 2007, p.1).

In essence, the policy that the clients experience is not the one in the policy documents but the one that is being implemented by the street-level bureaucrats. The parents and the learners only know the NCS that is being executed by the teachers. In the implementation of NCS, street-level

bureaucrats (teachers) are said to have discretion in the execution of their duties. Even though there are government regulations, teachers are said to have relative autonomy from organizational authority. If this is the case, blame for the failure by OBE to produce the desired outcomes cannot be squarely put on the content or nature of the policy. These issues are central to this study.

2.3.1 The study of street-level bureaucrats after Lipsky

Following Lipsky's seminal work, many scholars have conducted studies in different areas of public policy implementation to investigate the influence of street-level bureaucrats. This section explores such studies. Although the focus of this study is on education, it is important to note that this review will not be limited to education policy alone. This is because the nature of policy implementation is basically the same. As shown by Lipsky (1980), the behaviour of street-level bureaucrats tends to be similar among most street-level bureaucracies.

Studies conducted since the publication of Lipsky's seminal book in 1980 tend to concur with his views. Street-level bureaucrats do exercise a considerable amount of discretion in the discharge of their duties (Aldridge et al., 2006; Bergen and While, 2005; Boote, 2006; Clark-Daniels and Daniels, 1995; Ellermann, 2006; Eric and Michael, 2007; Fitzgerald et al., 2003; Kimball and Kropf, 2006; Lint, 1998; Maynard-Moody and Musheno, 2003; Maynard-Moody et al., 1990 and Plutzer and Berkman, 2007; Wong, 2007). Utilising ethnographic data from research into the continuing care of adults who had suffered a first acute stroke, Allen et al emphasised the role of service providers in making policy within contextual constraints accomplished through their sense-making activities and structures of practical action (Allen et al, 2004, p.429). Emphasising Lipsky's assertion about the importance of resources in street-level discretion, they note that:

Our findings indicate that where funding was not an issue, health and social services staff displayed an impressive capacity to work collaboratively in order to accommodate patient need and negotiate individually-tailored packages of care. In situations of severe resource constraint, collaborative outcomes are very difficult to effect (Allen et al, 2004, p.430).

Clearly this shows that a dearth of resources can force street-level bureaucrats to exercise their discretion. In emphasizing the importance of resources to street-level bureaucrats, Lipsky (1980, pp. 29-39) says resource inadequacy is both a theoretical and practical problem. For example, he points out that for teachers in overcrowded classrooms (with meager supplies) it means that they are unable to deliver effective lessons. This is very important since high student-teacher ratios also mean that teachers must attend to maintaining order and thus have less attention for learning activities (Lipsky, 1980, p.30). This is particularly important for the implementation of the National Curriculum Statement (NCS). Most classes are overcrowded with more than thirty

students per class. This problem is exacerbated by poor student discipline among most learners. Street-level bureaucrats are left with no choice but to use their discretion. Boote (2006, p.264) points out that 'when faced with many competing pressures, teachers will often decide that gathering the needed resources and learning to use them is simply not worth their time and effort'. They then 'make do' with what is there. Studies of social work practice similarly suggest that professional discretion was used largely protectively rather than to advance professional ideals or to respond flexibly to people's individual needs (Ellis et al, 1999, p.264). In other words street-level bureaucrats acted this way for their own advantage and not for the clients.

Checkland (2004) investigated the role of street-level bureaucrats in the implementation of National Service Framework clinical guidelines that health care providers are expected to follow. These were introduced by the United Kingdom government in 1997. He found out that General Practitioners (GP) did not use the guidelines as they were expected to. For instance, one respondent said that:

Ninety nine percent of guidelines passed down to primary care are never used, because they are unworkable or impractical, or they only deal with the first time a patient comes in (Checkland, 2004, p.961).

It is, however, important to note that in this study Checkland also found that the clinical aspects of the guidelines for the care of patients with coronary heart disease had generally been adopted because they were seen as 'making the job easier' (2004, p. 967). As Lipsky suggests, street-level bureaucrats are willing to reduce the pain of associated with their jobs (1980, p.13). This kind of behaviour is not restricted to GPs. Many street-level bureaucrats exercise this form of discretion. Even in educational policies teachers as street-level bureaucrats can reject or ignore certain policy guidelines that they find difficult to understand or those that they perceive to be 'unworkable'. Boote, who was studying the teachers' professional discretion and the curricula in the USA, found that 'most teachers enter the profession because they see teaching as an expression of their values and these values influence what teachers teach' (Boote, 2006, p.264). He added that, when there is a significant mismatch between what teachers value and what they are able to accomplish, they are much more likely to burn out or disengage (Boote, 2006, p.264)).

Vandeyar (2005), in his study of the adoption of the new assessment standards in South African schools, discovered that most teachers are reluctant to embrace these changes because they find themselves trying to cope with demands that conflict with their beliefs, assumptions, and value systems. The source of the conflict seems to stem from the fact that the new outcomes-based assessment policy represents a radical departure in the philosophy of assessment and its role and

relationship to learning. Another study by Bergen and While found that the extent to which nurses adopted the case management role, and the model of choice, depended on two major interrelated variables, namely: (1) the clarity of policy guidance; and (2) the extent to which it coincided with professional (nursing) values (Bergen and While 2005, p.1). So, it is clear here that the values of street-level bureaucrats are important in determining how and the extent to which they can exercise their discretion.

In their study entitled *Cops, Teachers, Counselors: Stories from the Front Lines of Public Service*, Maynard-Moody and Musheno discovered that the behaviours of street-level bureaucrats are influenced not by bureaucratic rules and regulations, but rather by ‘their own moral judgments, which are based on their personal knowledge of and constant interactions with clients’ (Maynard-Moody and Musheno, 2003, p.94). They explain that ‘moral judgments about citizen-clients infuse all aspects of street-level decision making.’ To street-level workers, fairness has little to do with the bureaucratic norm of treating everyone the same or even fairly implementing laws and regulations. ‘To our storytellers, fairness and justice mean responding to citizen-clients based on their perceived worth’ (Maynard-Moody and Musheno, 2003, pp.93-94). Riccucci points out that the findings by Maynard-Moody and Musheno are critical, and run counter to much of the Weberian school of thought which so permeates public administration (Riccucci,2005, p.243). Their research shows that street-level bureaucrats do not tend to treat citizen-clients as faceless, dehumanized cases. They are not ‘abstractions, “the disabled”, “the poor,” “the criminal”-but ... individuals with flaws and strengths who rarely fall within the one-size-fits-all approach of policies and laws’ (Maynard-Moody and Musheno, 2003, p. 94). In other words, teachers as street-level bureaucrats try to ‘make policies’ that suit the clients, the environment and the context of implementation. They may not implement the NCS as it is but modify it to suit their conditions. These findings are in line with Vandeyar’s study of NCS in South Africa, mentioned above.

Moody and Musheno’s (2003) findings concur with Boote’s. In analysing the teachers’ professional discretion and the curricula, Boote notes that teachers are frustrated. He points out that:

On one side, teachers face ever-increasing responsibilities for a greater variety of decisions affecting their students. In the dominant model of schooling with one teacher responsible for a group of students, they are *street-level bureaucrats* (Lipsky, 1980) who are the *de facto* curriculum designers. They decide what is taught, how it will be taught, how (and if) it will be modulated to meet diverse learning needs, how to maintain a productive learning environment, and how to deal with the myriad unexpected events that provide the texture of classroom life (Thornton, 1991). The numbers of issues that need

thoughtful consideration have greatly multiplied, as have the number of seemingly irreconcilable perspectives on those issues (Boote, 2006, p.461).

In this, Boote agrees with Lipsky that the street-level bureaucrats are 'policy designers'. It is during the process of delivering the services that the front-line workers encounter realities about the nature of clients and the context of policy implementation that they are forced to engage in *de facto* policy making. The statement that teachers decide 'what is to be taught and how it will be modulated to meet diverse learning needs,' negates the time and effort placed on policy formulation by legislators and technocrats.

One of the most important factors which influence the teachers' choices includes the role of major examinations. Boote (2006, pp.461-465) listed the factors which affect teachers in the way they exercise their discretion. These factors are mandated: curricula, relevant idiosyncrasies, community concerns, values, materials and resources, standard curriculum practices and other factors. He noted that teachers need to consider the mandated curricular first. However, he says that 'all curricula are inherently vague, requiring a teacher to interpret the intentions of the mandated curricula and infer at least some of what is to be taught' (Boote, 2006, p.463). This concurs with Lipsky who says that 'street-level bureaucrats characteristically work in jobs with conflicting and ambiguous goals' (1980, p.40). He further points out that public service goals tend to have an idealised dimension that make them difficult to achieve and confusing and complicated to approach (Lipsky, 1980, p.40). Two of the critical outcomes of the NCS require learners to 'be able to: organise and manage themselves and their activities responsibly and effectively and to demonstrate an understanding of the world as a set of related systems by recognising that problem-solving contexts do not exist in isolation' (Department of Education, 2003a, p.9). One of the developmental outcomes requires learners to be able to reflect on and explore a variety of strategies to learn more effectively (Department of Education, 2003a, p.10). The interpretation of these outcomes is left to the teachers. This led Boote to say 'even supposedly "teacher-proof curricula" require some degree of interpretation. The ambiguity of curricula leads teachers to teach different things differently since teachers are left to use their own discretion' (2006, p. 462).

Another factor which affects teachers' professional discretion is *relevant idiosyncrasies* (Boote, 2006, p.462). Boote notes that 'teachers must also consider relevant idiosyncrasies of their students, individually or collectively' (Boote, 2006, p.462). That is to say, if a student or a whole class is either developmentally unprepared or lacks requisite prior education it is simply foolish not to adjust the curriculum to their needs and ability to learn. The teachers by nature of their

training are required to cater for individual differences that exist among the learners. However, what they prepare for each individual learner is left to their discretion. Boote asserts that, 'we expect a good teacher to recognize the individual and collective attributes of students that will affect their abilities to learn the mandated curriculum. A teacher, who fails to account for these individual and collective differences, will be less effective in his or her teaching' (2006, p.462). When implementing policy, teachers are faced with a shortage of resources (Lipsky, 1980, p.81). In the end they treat the whole class as if they have the same abilities. This is despite the fact that the NCS policy expects teachers to make a base line assessment before planning an educational instruction.

Teachers as street-level bureaucrats are also affected by standardized tests, and special initiatives in a school or district, among others. Indeed, in many jurisdictions high-stakes tests are *the* major influence on teachers' curricula. While we might object to such policies or to teachers who are unthinkingly influenced by them, we cannot deny that a teacher must at least consider them as an influence. Taken together, these factors comprise the 'domain of curriculum practice' (Denning & Dargan, 1996 in Boote, 2006, p.465). These are the factors that teachers take into account when making curricular decisions and act as constraints on their professional discretion. In South Africa, there are local subject clusters which work as peer assessors of the implementation of the NCS. They meet once every term to moderate what is being taught by various schools. The provinces also give a common examination for Grade 11 and 12 classes to ensure that at least minimum standards are being met. At the end of General Education and Training (GET) learners write Common Task Assessments (CTA) and for the Further Education and Training (FET) phase they have the National Senior Examinations. This limits the discretion of the teachers in the implementation of the NCS. However, this seems to contradict NCS which discourages teachers from focusing on the examination (Department of Education, 2003d, p.10) and yet their effectiveness is measured on the pass rate in those very examinations. That is why teachers tend to rush to finish the syllabus although it is discouraged by the NCS policy.

2.3.2 Coping mechanisms

A study by Bergen and While (2005) highlights the importance of street-level bureaucrats. As shown in Figure 2.2 the practices of individuals (street-level bureaucrats) were found to be very critical in policy implementation. Like Lipsky (1980), their findings revealed that the coping mechanisms of front-line workers can affect policy implementation.

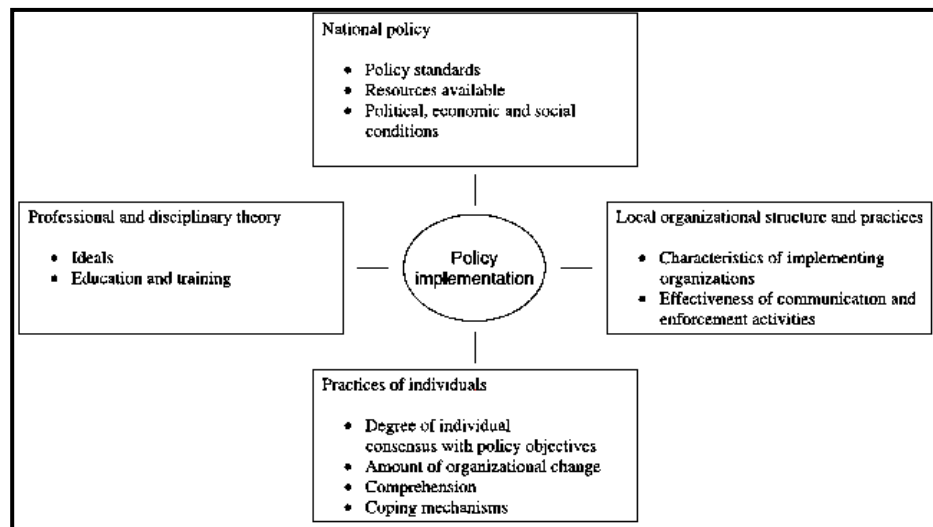


Figure 2.2 Implementation theory and street-level bureaucracy: combining the theories of Van Meter & Van Horn (1975) and Lipsky (1980).

(Source: Bergen and While, 2005, p.3.)

One of the issues they raise is the coping mechanisms of street-level bureaucrats. They concur with Lipsky (1980) that, to cope with daily demands, street-level bureaucrats devise coping mechanisms. Although teachers are encouraged to develop the learners' skills in working effectively with others as members of a team, group, organisation and community (Department of Education, 2003a, p.10) Aldridge *et al* (2006, p.60) found that co-operative work (e.g., group work) took place very seldom, if at all. One street-level bureaucrat gave them this response:

Considering the available time at my disposal [30 min per lesson], I feel that I won't be able to do justice to group work. Hence I decided to leave [the students] seated as they are. ... The length of my period is short and I think that, if students are to sit in groups, this is going to waste much of my time. ... Maybe, if the period length is changed, I will consider forming permanent groups (Aldridge *et al.*, 2006, p.60).

In this, the teacher was referring to the seating arrangement of the learners which reflected traditional rows at tables facing the teacher and chalkboard "in front". In the face of inadequate time this teacher finds it time wasting to change the seating arrangement now and again.

Another respondent in this study also revealed that many learners do not want to carry out investigations. This is despite the fact that one of the critical outcomes of the policy requires learners to be able to collect, analyse, organise and evaluate information critically (Department of Education, 2003a, p.10). The teacher's response was that he "... rarely involves ... [students]

... in investigations because ... they do not like searching for information” (Aldridge et al., 2006, p.62).

At times the coping mechanisms of the street-level bureaucrats are influenced by attitudes and beliefs of the clients. Aldridge et al report that one teacher said that: ‘I sometimes give students the responsibility of being in charge of their learning process, but I found out that they are not always keen mainly because they are in Grade 8 and still believe in the teacher “dishing” out the subject matter’ (2006, p.63). They went further to say that ‘this view was confirmed by the students who indicated that they liked “... the teacher to be in charge of the learning process” (Aldridge et al, 2006, p.63). So, because of the expectations of clients the front-line workers “make” policies at the bottom to suit their clients and the environment, as Lipsky (1980) suggests.

Lipsky asserts that street-level bureaucrats also work under conditions of inadequate resources (1980, p. 29). Most of the front line workers of NCS face a critical shortage of resources (Aldridge et al., 2006, p.64; Deventer, 2009, p.141). Life Orientation teachers in the GET (Grade R-9) Band and in Grades 10 and 11 reported that they did not have sufficient facilities and equipment to offer Physical Education, Sport and Recreation (Deventer, 2009, p.141) while Aldridge et al (2006, p.64) report that due to the shortage of text books teachers resorted to lecturing. Teachers argued that ‘... for them to be in charge of their learning process, they need to have the learning materials, which they don’t because they are sharing textbooks’(Harden, 2002, p.151 and Department of Education, 2003c, p.9). In such situations teachers as street-level bureaucrats need to devise coping mechanisms and use their discretion to implement policy.

It was shown in the preceding section that street-level bureaucrats enjoy considerable autonomy from their superiors in the implementation of public policy. There have been many attempts by government and local managers to curtail the freedom of front-line workers. The next section looks at the literature on such attempts in the public sector and specifically at the implementation of educational policy and OBE.

2.3.3 Coping with street-level bureaucrats

It was shown that street-level bureaucrats enjoy considerable autonomy and discretion in the execution of their duties as Lipsky suggests. However, the adaptations of policy are not always positive. Many street-level bureaucrats use their influence over policy to serve their own interests; they change policy to make their work easier and safer or thwart policy with which they do not agree rather than to serve the needs of the clients and the public (Maynard-Moody et

al, 1990, p.833). That is why bureaucracies need to find ways of improving accountability. This section reviews literature on the attempts and measures that have been adopted by bureaucracies to improve accountability by street-level bureaucrats. Although it will look at accountability in the implementation of public policy the main focus is accountability in the implementation of educational policy. Lipsky argues that 'bureaucratic accountability is virtually impossible to accomplish among lower-level workers who have high degrees of discretion' (1980, p. 159). However, 'public managers are pressured to secure or improve accountability through manipulation of rewards and other aspects of job structure immediately available to them' (Lipsky, 1980, p.13). The management here is called on to cope with street-level bureaucrats.

A great deal of research has demonstrated the importance of public management in the delivery of public policies, programmes and services (Ricucci, 2005, p.28). Ricucci says that most of these are qualitative case studies and represent critical empirical work on the impact of effective management on government performance. Most studies show that managers can cope with street-level bureaucrats (Aldridge et al, 2006; Nir, 2002; Aili and Brante, 2007; Lint, 1998; Jansen, 2004; Boote, 2006; and Fitzgerald et al., 2003).

The first method that management uses to influence behaviour and decisions of street-level bureaucrats is 'internal public relations' (Simon, 1997, p.13). By this, Simon is referring to the transmission of information and advice within an organisation. When decisions are made at any centre or level in an organisation, government department or school it is important to have proper channels of disseminating such orders or advice. Organisations usually use meetings, bulletins, or pigeon holes and, more recently, the GroupWise software to make sure that the street-level workers receive and implement policies from the centre or top.

The most important aspect of dealing with street-level bureaucrats is the *in-take* process (Ricucci, 2005, p.33). The in-take or recruitment of street-level bureaucrats is important. In the case of teachers as street-level bureaucrats it calls for employment of teachers who are qualified and registered professionals. Lipsky argues that 'the argument for professionalization comes down simply to the realisation that control of professional groups must come from within individual members of the group if it cannot be dictated from outside' (1980, p.201). A case in point is the SACE (South African Council on Education) in the implementation of NCS. Lipsky argues that:

The professionalization of street-level bureaucrats is commended by some analysts because standardised training in universities, seeking

training to get credentials, over occupational entry is already far advanced in teaching, nursing, social work, and other street-level occupations (Lipsky, 1980, p.201).

This is very true for the implementation of the NCS. Jansen (2004) says government supported the launch of the South African Council on Education—a statutory body specifically charged with regulating the teaching profession. The main objectives of SACE are to enhance and improve the quality and standards of the teaching profession through three broad actions:

- The promotion and development of the teaching profession (a development function).
- The registration of educators as one way of maintaining standards of practice (a registration function).
- The establishment and maintenance of a code of professional ethics for educators that will govern the behaviour of every teacher (a regulation function) (Jansen, 2004, p.55).

This is a very important professional council in improving the accountability of teachers. Jansen also argues that the Council has legislative powers to determine criteria for entry into the profession through the process of registration of educators (Jansen, 2004, p.55). SACE defines an educator as ‘any person who teaches, educates or trains other persons or provides professional therapy at any school, technical college or college of education...’ (www.sace.or.g.za, in Jansen, 2004, p.55). One of its mandates is to implement the Code of Conduct which carries with it disciplinary measures to be taken against educators registered under the Council, and who act inappropriately within the profession. This component seems to deal with misconduct. Most of the implementation of the OBE happens in the classroom where most of the time the teacher is alone with the clients.

Another study by Lint, entitled *Regulating Autonomy: Police discretion as a problem for training*, shows that training is important in limiting discretion by street-level bureaucrats. Lint says that:

While previous to the 1960s, training left police discretion under the purview of the occupational culture and 'common sense' approaches, subsequently attention has been paid to structuring discretionary decision-making through training. This training has taken two general policy approaches. The first has been to try to require a more educated police candidate, and thereby to compel decision-making towards liberal values. The second has been to use technical training devices in the aim of blending these values into practical training. The argument is that, by and large, it is technical training under the auspices of new managerial regulatory agendas which is winning out. This technical training tends to celebrate the police officer as a chooser, and is in this way consistent with neo-liberal policy direction (Lint, 1998, p.277).

This shows that training teachers can help reduce or structure their decision-making processes and in a way control discretion. Workers are reduced to 'choosers' of various options they get through training. Lint argues that 'academy professionalism seeks professionalization through the inculcation of a deeper commitment to institutional values' (Lint, 1988, p.283). This assertion concurs with Simon's argument in which he says training influences decisions 'from the inside outside' (Simon, 1997, p.13). Simon points out that training prepares the organisation member to reach satisfactory decisions himself, without the need for consistent authority or advice (Simon, 1997, p.13). Considering the number of years the teacher spends in training (three or more years), it can be inferred that most street-level bureaucrats have been influenced enough to make sound decisions with no or little use of authority. Training in this sense is not restricted to college or university tuition but also to in-service and staff development workshops. This is why the SACE insists on trained teachers.

However Lipsky argues that the 'problem with the "professional fix" in solving dilemmas of street-level accountability lies in the great gap between service orientation of professionals in theory and professional service in practice' (Lipsky, 1980, p. 202). Because of this, he suggests that even the leading professions of medicine and law have not lived up to their standards. The reasons for this are that usually these professionals work in isolation and are only accountable to their peers. Teachers in most cases work on their own with little or no supervision. Another problem is that 'the promotion of teacher professionalism does not negate the need for teachers to be accountable for their practice. The issue is more who they are accountable to, and who controls the standards, practices and procedures that make-up their professional accountability' (Fitzgerald et al, 2003, p.93).

No matter how difficult it is to make front line workers accountable, managers should find ways of coping with street-level bureaucrats. This is important for the implementation of any public policy, including the National Curriculum Statement. Lipsky lists four conditions that are necessary for accountability:

1. Agencies must know what they want their workers to do. Where the objectives are multiple and conflicting, agencies must be able to rank their preferences.
2. Agencies must know how to measure workers' outputs.
3. Agencies must be able to compare workers to one another to establish standards of judgement.
4. Agencies must have incentives and sanctions capable of disciplining workers. They must be able to prevail over the sanctions and incentives that may operate (Lipsky, 1980, p.161).

In line with these conditions, the South African government raised the symbolic and material visibility (Jansen, 2004, p.55) of the Grade 12 Matriculation examination. The end-of-school examination remains the most public and contested instrument for holding schools and teachers accountable for the performance of their learners and therefore the implementation of the NCS. In this case the teacher's discretion is limited and must consider the formal curricula that has been mandated by a nation, state, district and school (Boote, 2006, p.463). Jansen argues that for the first time in history, individual schools were held accountable for their results by the most senior politician concerned with education—the Minister (Jansen, 2004, p.55). He further says that school results appeared in the newspapers and schools with very low percentage passes in the Matriculation examination becoming the subject of 'blaming and shaming'. These schools are also put under official surveillance. On the positive side, Best Teacher Awards were distributed in the nine provinces and at a national gala evening—with schools making the most progress also receiving public attention at this ministerial function (Jansen, 2004, p.56). This is in line with Lipsky (1980, p.159) who suggests that the managers can manipulate the incentives and sanctions and other aspects of the job structure immediately available to them.

Furthermore, the South African government introduced a network of regulatory policies all intended—at least rhetorically—to measure and support improvements in both teacher performance and school development (Barasa and Mattson, 1998, p.47; Jansen, 2004, p.55). These policies include the Norms and Standards for Educators; the Code of Conduct (mentioned earlier); the Manual for Developmental Appraisal; and Duties and Responsibilities of Educators. Some of these policies are shown in Table 2.1.

Table 2.1 Summary of the symbolic, regulative and procedural functions of each policy document

Policy document	Symbolic function	Regulative function	Procedural function
COTEP (Committee on Teacher Education Policy) Norms and Standards for Teacher Education	Defines roles and competences of an effective educator as a self-directed professional with practical, foundational and reflexive competences	Defines employer requirements and norms and standards for evaluation of qualifications for the National Department of Education	Outlines processes of quality assurance of providers and programmes for teacher education
SACE Code of Conduct	Defines and promotes the ethical conduct of an educator as one who upholds the view of human rights embodied in the Constitution	Determines criteria for entry into the education profession; regulates the ethical conduct of professionals	Outlines the registration procedures and disciplinary mechanisms of SACE
ELRC (Education Labour Relations Council) Manual for Developmental Appraisal	Defines roles and competences (core criteria) of effective educators; encourages reflective practice, professional development and accountability	Sets in place a nationally unified system of appraisal to be followed in all schools	Outlines structures and procedures of appraisal systems within schools
National Department of Education Duties and Responsibilities of Educators	Defines day-to-day duties and responsibilities of educators, assuming the roles and competences outlined in the above documents	Provides job descriptions against which educators can be legally appointed, promoted and appraised	Provides job descriptions against which educators can be legally appointed, promoted and appraised

Source: Barasa and Mattson, 1998, p. 47.

The effective use of these policies can limit the discretion of street-level bureaucrats and enhance their accountability. Another policy was introduced in 2000. This was known as the Whole School Evaluation (Jansen, 2004, p.58). In the eyes of the largest teacher union (SADTU), these evaluation-focused policies were nothing more than the ‘Trojan horse of accountability infringing on and eroding the autonomy of the teaching profession’ (Jansen, 2004, p.58). Many teacher organisations resisted the implementation of this policy. This is in line with Lipsky who argues that the street-level bureaucrats enjoy benefits of collective resources and strengthen their position considerably (1980, p.23).

The policies and mechanism discussed in this section were mainly employed at national, provincial, district and cluster levels. The next section explores strategies that have been used at school level.

2.3.4 Controlling street-level bureaucrats at local level

At local level, a variety of mechanisms have been developed by managers to cope with street-level bureaucrats. In New Zealand, site-based management devolved responsibility and

accountability for teacher performance to the school level (Fitzgerald et al, 2003, p.92). Since 1997 schools' individual boards of trustees and principals have been required to have in place performance management systems and personnel policies to promote and sustain high levels of staff performance.

In trying to improve performance and accountability, performance appraisals have been used (Fitzgerald et al., 2003). Appraisers and appraisees were required to complete a number of activities. Some of the activities include the following:

- The development of written statements of performance expectations in consultation with the teacher;
- The identification and written specification of development objectives and indication of professional support needed to meet these expectations;
- A formal observation of the appraisee's teaching;
- At least two formal meetings (setting objectives and annual review of objectives); and
- The completion of a formal appraisal report that was prepared and discussed in consultation with the teacher (Fitzgerald et al, 2003, p.93).

This is quite similar to the performance management used in Zimbabwe's education sector (personal experience). Most teachers resent this form of management which is commonly known as KRAs (Key Result Areas). Fitzgerald et al (2003, p.93) argue that, in this model, the professional voices of teachers are not easily heard. They concur with Ker who suggests that bureaucratic forms of appraisal are primarily concerned with managers ensuring that teachers are complying with their requirements, and consequently this significantly 'proletarianises teachers' professional lives (Ker, 1992, p. 34).

This view reinforces the understanding that policies are made in a top-down fashion. In the bureaucratic organisation and management of schools, Darling-Hammond (1990, p.27) in Fitzgerald et al (2003, p.94) suggests that:

Schools are agents of government that can be administered by hierarchical decision-making and controls. Policies are made at the top of the system and handed down to administrators who translate them into rules and procedures. Teachers follow the rules and procedures (class schedules, curricula, textbooks, rules for promotion and assignment of students, etc.), and students are processed according to them (Fitzgerald et al, 2003, p.94).

In this, autonomy and discretion by street-level bureaucrats are absent. The teachers have little or no room to exercise their autonomy in the implementation of policy. The performance

management system works as a way of limiting the discretion of teachers and evaluates their work.

It is also important to note that Lipsky points out that those efforts to enhance bureaucratic rationality fail to produce organisational control of street-level employees. Instead, they often serve to further fracture relationships between street-level employees and their managers (Lipsky, 1980, p.53). Brown's (1981) findings reported in Maynard-Moody et al (1990, p.835) concur with Lipsky's assertion. Brown notes that 'in an attempt to rationalise police work, the reforms have done less to control discretion that allow latitude for the full play of most invidious prejudices...' (Maynard-Moody et al, 1990, p.835). This can force street-level workers to go 'underground' and worsen the accountability. In fact, Evans and Harris argue that the proliferation of rules and regulations should not automatically be equated with greater control over professional discretion; paradoxically, more rules may create more discretion (2004, p.871). In other cases it may be a cloak for political decision-makers to hide behind or it may be an opportunity for professional abuse of power (Evans and Harris, 2004, p.871).

This can explain the situation of the implementation of the NCS. The policy has not been implemented satisfactorily, judging from the responses from the stakeholders. Politicians and other stakeholders have expressed their displeasure in the way the policy has been implemented.

2.4 Conclusion

This chapter laid out the theoretical framework of the study which centres on street-level bureaucracy and teachers as street-level bureaucrats. The chapter examined different coping mechanisms employed by street-level bureaucrats in their day-to-day work. It also discussed different strategies employed by managers to cope with street-level bureaucrats. Performance measurement and other routine supervision are used to control the street-level bureaucrats. The next chapter will examine critical questions in the development of the NCS. First, it explains why it was imperative for the South African government to adopt educational policy reform and to select OBE or NCS as the desired path. It then investigates the assessment strategies of the NSC, as well as current issues in the implementation of the NCS.

Chapter Three: The Context of Educational Policy in South Africa

3.1 Introduction

This chapter is divided into three main subsections. This first one explores the background of the NCS, the second deals with the crafting of the NCS (Grades R-9) and NCS (Grades 10-12). The last section focuses on the Outcomes-Based Education's history until the present. The purpose of this is to put the whole study into perspective. In doing this a wide range of literature is surveyed. This includes journal articles, unpublished theses, books and newspaper articles, apart from official documents.

3.2 The background to the National Curriculum Statement (NCS)

This section briefly reviews the background of the NCS and the problems it seeks to correct. Although this is important in giving the policy a context, most scholars of this policy prefer to ignore this. Although a comprehensive review of the context is beyond the scope of this study, this section will present the highlights of the national NCS. Its purpose is not redo what a great number of scholars have already done (Abdullah et al., 2009, pp. 11-12; Donnelly et al., 1988, Aldridge et al., 2006; Botha, 2002; Chisholm, 2005; Jansen, 1998; Jansen, 2002; Jansen, 2004; and Naicker, 200) but to identify the main issues. In essence, this explanation will trace the main milestones, the factors and philosophies that informed the nature and form of the NCS. This will be followed by an outline of the policy. The section will end with an analysis of debates around the NCS.

Many scholars agree that following the defeat of apartheid, the 1994 South Africa has witnessed serious attempts to reconstruct their social institutions along democratic lines (Jansen, 1998; and Nekhwevha, 1999). Education was one policy area riddled by injustices. Since South Africa's first national democratic elections in 1994, the then Government of National Unity issued several curriculum-related reforms intended to democratise education and eliminate inequalities in the post-apartheid education system (Jansen, 1998). Some of the common issues that were addressed by the new government include but were not limited to:

A divided and unequal system of education that existed: under apartheid, South Africa had nineteen different educational departments separated by race, geography and ideology. This education system prepared children in different ways for the positions they were expected to occupy in social, economic and political life under apartheid. In each department, the curriculum played a powerful role in reinforcing inequality. What, how and whether children were taught differed according to the roles they were expected to play in the wider society (Department of Education, 2003d, Department of Education, 2003a)

Over and above this, the Department of Education (2003a) noted that the following problems were evident in the curricula:

- There were no clear educational outcomes for the curricula
- The plethora of subjects with little coherence between them
- The curricula did not respond to the needs of learners in the country
- The old curriculum was unwieldy, inefficient and consisted of 124 subjects of which only ten were taken by 90% of the candidates at only single sitting of the Senior Certificate
- There was limited mobility across pathways and institutions in the FET band (Department of Education, 2003a, pp.1-2).

These problems were enforced by way of acts and regulations. The Bantu Education Act (1953) introduced inferior education, unequal distribution of resources, poor teacher training and unacceptable teacher-learner ratios (Department of Education, 2003a, p. 3). These problems were exacerbated by large number of obsolete subjects as well as subjects taken by fewer than ten candidates for the National Senior Certificate (Department of Education, 2003a). The continued provision of such subjects proved to be costly and compromised quality.

One major problem was the mode in which the curriculum was delivered. The Department of Education stated that the way in which the curriculum was delivered needed an overhaul (Department of Education, 2003a, p.3). At the epicentre of this argument were the teaching methods that were used by teachers. Many educators relied on teaching methods that did not engage learners in active learning. Many of them were preoccupied with the race to complete the syllabus in preparation for examinations. Teaching was ‘exam centred’ with little regard for the preparation of learners for life (Department of Education, 2003a p.4). The teachers also regarded themselves as custodians of knowledge whose main task was filling the ‘empty heads’ of learners with knowledge. This perspective regards the learners as passive recipients of knowledge. The Department of Education (2003a, p. 4) noted that this resulted in insufficient acknowledgement of learners’ prior knowledge and uninspiring learning experiences.

Another problem of the old curriculum was its assessment strategies. Assessment practices taught learners to use rote learning and required them to regurgitate factual information (Department of Education, 2003a). This made it very difficult for them to apply what they had learned in real life situations (Department of Education, 2003a, p. 4). Furthermore, many employers did not regard the results from this examination as indicators of work-related competence.

Most of these problems were the consequences of the apartheid government which advocated separate development among the races of South Africa. For instance, the chief architect of apartheid education and Minister of Native Affairs, Dr. H. F. Verwoerd, had this to say:

My department's policy is that education should stand with both feet in the reserves and have its roots in the spirit and being of Bantu society . . . the Bantu must be guided to serve his own community in all respects. There is no place for him in the European community above the level of certain forms of labour. Within his own community, however, all doors are open. For that reason it is of no avail for him to receive a training which has as its aim absorption in the European community, where he cannot be absorbed. Until now he has been subjected to a school system which drew him away from his own community and misled him by showing him the green pastures of European society in which he is not allowed to graze (Verwoerd, 1954 in Nekhwevha, 1999, p. 494).

This shows how deep-seated the problem was. This old education system served different groups of people differently. The whites had better resources and facilities than their black counterparts. As has already been said, a comprehensive analysis of this is beyond the scope of this study. This has only been presented as background and to give context to the NCS.

The knowledge of this background is very important in order to understand the context within which the street-level bureaucrats are implementing the NCS. It is important to understand that the majority of the educators (street-level bureaucrats) are products of this questionable education system. If these assertions are true, it therefore means that these educators are products themselves of curricula with 'educational outcomes which were not clear', and were trained 'for the positions they were expected to occupy in social, economic and political life under apartheid.' Their skills, beliefs, attitudes and professional knowledge might be heavily influenced by such a background. This in the end can have an effect on how these street-level bureaucrats exercise their discretion and professional autonomy.

Considering the importance of education in all sectors of the society, it was therefore necessary to correct this problem. The symptoms of this cancerous problem can manifest themselves in all spheres of life for a considerable length of time perhaps for generations. It was not surprising that as soon as the democratic government came to power in 1994 it quickly embarked on educational reform among other reforms.

3.3 The crafting of the NCS

Many scholars view 1994 as a watershed for South African politics and policies. Political power peacefully passed from the white minority to the majority. With the opening of the policy

window the new government wasted no time in reforming all aspects of the educational system, including the curriculum (Rogan, 2007; Botha, 2002; Chisholm, 2005; Cross et al., 2002; Department of Education, 2003d; Fataar, 2006; Harden, 2002; Jansen, 1998; and Jansen, 2002). Jansen points out that since South Africa's first post-apartheid elections in April 1994, the Ministry of Education has introduced three national curriculum reform initiatives focussed on schools (Jansen, 1998, p.1). The first attempt was to purge the apartheid curriculum (school syllabuses) of 'racially offensive and outdated content' (Jansen, 1997, cited in Jansen, 1998, p.1), while the second introduced continuous assessment into schools (Lucen et al, 1988 cited in Jansen 1998, p.1). However, the most ambitious curriculum policy since the installation of a Government of National Unity has been referred to as Outcomes-Based Education (OBE).

What can be inferred from these three reform initiatives is that they are well linked to curriculum problems mentioned earlier on. It is clear that the first aimed at reversing the policy that was created by Dr. H. F. Verwoerd in 1953 when he was the Minister of Native Affairs in the apartheid government. The second attempt was in 1997 when the new national Department of Education (DoE) launched Curriculum 2005, informed by the principles of Outcomes-Based Education, as the foundation of the post-apartheid schools' curriculum (Chisholm, 2005). In her article entitled *The Making of South Africa's National Curriculum Statement* Chisholm chronicles the evolution of the NCS (Chisholm, 2005). Chisholm highlights the evolution of Curriculum 2005 (C2005), Outcomes-Based Education (OBE) to the NCS and to the Revised National Curriculum Statement (RNCS). The vehicle by which this new curriculum is delivered is "Outcomes-Based Education" (Department of Education, 1997a, b in Aldridge *et al*, 2006, p.46). Thus to the Department of Education, OBE is not a curriculum but a 'vehicle' through which the new curriculum is delivered. They point out that this new approach to teaching and learning requires radical changes in the learning environment and in the levels of responsibility given to teachers in South Africa (Aldridge *et al*. 2006, p.46). Because of this complex evolution, different scholars, practitioners, and politicians call this policy by different names. For the purpose of this study the terms of OBE and NCS are used interchangeably.

It is important to note that a detailed chronicle of the genesis and development of NCS falls outside of the scope of this study. However, it is imperative that an outline of this policy be given. The next section attempts to describe its major features.

3.4 The Revised National Curriculum Statement (Grade R-9)

This section briefly outlines the main tenets of the RNCS. This includes the constitution, values, nation building and the curriculum; the kind of the learner who is envisaged; the kind of teacher

envisaged; and the principles of the RNCS. The preface to this policy was written by Professor Kader Asmal, then Minister of Education. He pointed out that ‘... we must also be realistic about what a curriculum can and cannot achieve. Inequality and poverty still plague the educational experience of too many families and their children. The curriculum is and will be differently interpreted and enacted in diverse contexts. We will improve and implement it to the best of our ability’ (Department of Education 2003a, p. iii). This is very important considering the role of street-level bureaucrats in policy implementation. The mention of poverty by the Minister is important in the sense that it affects the resources available to the street-level bureaucrats for the perfect implementation of the policy. As noted in the previous chapter, in the absence of adequate resources street-level bureaucrats exercise coping mechanisms which can affect a policy’s implementation (Lipsky, 1980). The preface concludes by calling for the commitment and participation of all who work in education and the need for full co-operation of the Government, parents, teachers, learners and the community at large (Department of Education 2003a, p. iii).

The Director-General of the Department of Education Thami Mseleku wrote the foreword to the RNCS. He gave an account of the development of the this policy dating back to a special meeting of 12 September 1997 of the Heads of Education Department’s committee which recommended the Draft Statement of the National Curriculum for Grades R-9 for Ministerial approval. Some important dates in the development of RNCS (grade R-9) are as follows:

- The draft was referred to and approved by the Council of Education Ministers at its meeting of 29 September 1997.
- Report of the Review Committee recommended the revision of the draft (31 May 2000) to streamline and strengthen Curriculum 2005.
- At its meeting in June 2000, the Council of Education Ministers agreed that the Statement of the National Curriculum for Grades R-9 should be revised.
- The process of revision was begun in January 2001 with approximately 150 curriculum developers drawn from the educational community.
- On 30 July 2001, the Draft Revised National Curriculum Statement for Grades R-9 (Schools) was released for public comment for a period of three months.
- The Ministerial Project Committee was reconvened in December 2001 to incorporate suggested changes for improvement (Department of education 2003a, p. IV).

This account shows that there was a lot of interaction among the policy stakeholders. It can also be inferred that this policy process followed a linear approach (from formulation to implementation).

The Department of Education (2003a, p. 4) states that:

The first major curriculum statement of a democratic South Africa was *The Lifelong Learning through a National Curriculum Framework* document

(1996). It was informed by principles derived from the White Paper on education and Training (1995), the South African Qualifications Act (No 58 of 1995) and the National Education Policy Act (No 27 of 1996)... It also stressed the need for a shift from the traditional aims-and-objectives approach to outcomes-based education (The Department of Education 2003a, p. 4).

As can be seen here, this marks the genesis of the OBE system. Furthermore, The National Education Policy Act (No 27 of 1996) provided for the development of the following curriculum design tools to support an outcomes-based approach:

- Critical Cross-Field Outcomes (later to be known as the critical and developmental outcomes, and first formulated in the South African Qualifications Authority Act of 1995)
- Specific Outcomes
- Range Statements
- Assessment Criteria
- Performance Indicators
- Notional Time and Flexi-Time
- Continuous Assessment, Recording and Reporting

Additional curriculum design tools were formulated in succeeding years and included:

- Phase Organisers
- Programme Organisers
- Expected Levels of Performance
- Learning Programmes (Department of Education ,2003a, pp.4-5)

Another important change was that this document introduces and provides a background to the eight Learning Area Statements that form the foundation of the Revised National Curriculum Statement Grades R-9 (Schools) in the General Education and Training Band. This meant many changes for the school environment. All that happened under the auspices of the schools had to change. Many street-level bureaucrats did not find this an easy task, as will become apparent in subsequent chapters.

Educational reform in South Africa is rooted in the Constitution. The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996 (Act No 108 of 1996), provides the basis for curriculum transformation and development in South Africa. The preamble to the Constitution states that the aims of the Constitution are, among other things, to: heal the divisions of the past and establish a society based on democratic values, social justice and fundamental human rights (Department of Education, 2003a, p.6). The Manifesto on Values, Education and Democracy (Department of Education, 2003a, p.6) identifies ten fundamental values of the Constitution. Two of them are; ensuring that every South African is able to read, write, count and think; and infusing the classroom with a culture of human rights (Department of Education, 2003a, p.7). These two have

a direct bearing on the teaching environment and teaching methods employed by the street-level bureaucrats.

The NCS envisages a learner who is confident and independent, literate, numerate and multi-skilled, compassionate, with a respect for the environment and the ability to participate in society as a critical and active citizen (Department of Education, 2003a, p.8). To realise such an outcome requires radically different teaching and assessment methods. The prior knowledge of learners must be acknowledged.

The NCS values and acknowledges the role played by the street-level bureaucrats. The policy observes that educators at all levels are key contributors to the transformation of education in South Africa. The NCS states that:

Teachers have a particularly important role to play. The National Curriculum Statement envisions teachers who are qualified, competent, dedicated and caring and who will be able to fulfil the various roles outlined in the Norms and Standards for Educators of 2000 (Government Gazette No 20844). These see teachers as mediators of learning, interpreters and designers of Learning Programmes and materials, leaders, administrators and managers, scholars, researchers and lifelong learners, community members, citizens and pastors, assessors and teach area/phase specialists (Department of Education, 2003a, p.9).

These statements show that the street-level bureaucrats are regarded as highly educated with all the knowledge needed for them to undertake their administrative and tuition duties with little or no control. In other words, they have a lot of room for discretion and autonomy. Such terms as 'interpreters and designers,' show that teachers have been given considerable freedom in the execution of their normal tasks.

One of the most important aspects of this RNCS is the section on Principles of the Revised National Curriculum Statement (Department of Education, 2003a, p. 10). Five principles are central. The principle which is particularly important for this study is that of Outcomes-Based Education (OBE). In Outcomes-Based Education the process of learning is as important as the content. Both the process and the content of education are emphasised by spelling out the outcomes to be achieved at the end of the process (Department of Education, 2003a, pp. 10-11). Harden et al., (1999, p.8) point out that the development of Outcomes-Based Education owes much to the work of Spady (1988). This work was done in the United States of America. The South African version of Outcomes-Based Education is aimed at stimulating the minds of young people so that they are able to participate fully in economic and social life (Department of Education, 2003d, p. 11). The policy further intends to ensure that all learners are able to develop

and achieve to their maximum ability and are equipped for lifelong learning. The critical outcomes envisage learners who will be able to:

- Identify and solve problems and make decisions using critical and creative thinking.
- Work effectively with others as members of a team, group, organisation and community.
- Organise and manage themselves and their activities responsibly and effectively.
- Collect, analyse, organise and critically evaluate information.
- Communicate effectively using visual, symbolic and/or language skills in various modes.
- Use Science and Technology effectively and critically showing responsibility towards the environment and the health of others.
- Demonstrate an understanding of the world as a set of related systems by recognising that problem-solving contexts do not exist in isolation (Department of Education, 2003d, pp. 11-12).

These outcomes require a different approach to teaching. The outcomes and assessment standards emphasise participatory, learner-centred and activity-based education (Department of Education, 2003d, p.10, Department of Education, 2003a, p. 11). However, the policy leaves considerable room for creativity and innovation on the part of teachers in interpreting what and how to teach (Department of Education, 2003a, p. 11). This shows that the street-level bureaucrats are given room to exercise their professional discretion.

Another issue of particular importance to the street-level bureaucrats which is raised in RNCS is the allocation of time. The policy notes that, in terms of Section 4 of the Employment of Educators Act, (1998), the formal school day for teachers will be seven hours. In terms of the National Education Policy Act, (1996), the formal teaching time per school week is 35 hours (Department of Education, 2003d, p. 17). For Grades, R-9 the time allocation is shown in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1 Time allocation for Grades R-9: hours per week

Phase	Grade	Time	
Foundation Phase	R, 1 and 2	22 hrs	30 mins
	3	25 hrs	
Intermediate Phase	4, 5 and 6	26 hrs	30 mins
Senior Phase	7	26 hrs	30 mins
	8 and 9	27 hrs	30 mins

Source: Department of Education, 2003b, p. 17.

This policy stipulates *the formal teaching time per school week* but it is silent on the time that is allocated for other *non-formal teaching time* for other administrative duties performed by these street-level bureaucrats. Teachers are involved in many activities which do not involve face to face tuition with the learners. At times they are required to prepare official records and any other clerical work.

In brief, these are some highlights of the RNCS (Grades R-9) which are important for this study. The next section looks at the National Curriculum Statement Grades 10 - 12 (Schools) Overview. This policy is similar to the RNCS (Grades R-9). Owing to this, most of the aspects that are similar and have been discussed in the preceding section will not be repeated.

3.5 National Curriculum Statement Grades 10 - 12 (Schools): Overview

In terms of structure and principles, the curriculum statement for Grades 10-12 is similar to the NCS for Grades R-9. In his statement, on the release of the Draft National Curriculum Statement Grades 10 - 12 (schools), former Minister of Education, Professor Kader Asmal, highlighted that ‘the curriculum draws on the principles that underpin the Revised National Curriculum Statement Grades R - 9 (Schools) and keeps firmly to the fundamental principles of outcomes-based education’ (Department of Education, 2002). In trying to solve the problem of obsolete subjects, the Minister stated that the policy was designed to replace the old curriculum policy for schools, which listed a total of 124 subjects, which translated into 264 examinations encompassing both Higher Grade and Standard Grade. Now the new policy lists a total of 35 subjects including the 11 official languages (Department of Education, 2002, Department of Education, 2003a, p. 12). Each subject has a Subject Statement. In each subject statement there are three chapters which are: introduction; key features of the subject; and assessment. The first chapter is a generic chapter which introduces the National Curriculum Statement and is similar in all subject statements (Department of Education, 2002, p.13). The third chapter, on assessment, is of particular significance to the street-level bureaucrats who are the focus of this study. The next subsection will briefly outline assessment according to the NCS for Grades R-12.

3.6 Assessment

According to the Revised NCS, assessment is a continuous planned process of gathering information on learner achievement and is based on the principles of Outcomes-Based Education (Department of Education, 2003d, p.19; Department of Education, 2003a, p.9). Outcomes-Based Education makes clear what learners are expected to achieve. The Revised NCS states that assessment should be:

- . transparent and clearly focused
- . integrated with teaching and learning
- . based on predetermined criteria or standards
- . varied in terms of methods and contexts
- . valid, reliable, fair, learner-paced, and flexible enough to allow for expanded opportunities (Department of Education, 2003a, p.9).

The NCS also emphasises the importance of continuous assessment. The policy defines continuous assessment as a model of assessment that ‘encourages integration of assessment into teaching and the development of learners through ongoing feedback’ (Department of Education, 2003a, p.10) . Continuous assessment is the chief method by which assessment takes place in the revised NCS. The main purpose of assessment should be to enhance individual growth and development and to monitor the progress of learners and to facilitate learning (Department of Education, 2003d, p. 19, Department of Education, 2003a, p.9). Towards this goal, assessment is used in the following ways:

- Baseline assessment of prior learning takes place at the beginning of a grade or phase and establishes what learners already know. It assists in planning learning programmes and learning activities.
- Diagnostic assessment is used to find out the nature and cause of barriers to learning that specific learners might be experiencing.
- Formative assessment is used to inform learners and teachers about learners’ progress so as to improve learning. Constructive feedback is given.
- Summative assessment gives an overall picture of learners’ progress at a given time, for example, at the end of a term or year or on transfer to another school (Department of Education, 2003d, p.19, Department of Education, 2003a, p.11).

This is very critical for street-level bureaucrats who usually run short of resources. Most teachers find doing all these forms of assessment time consuming. Some even argue that this kind of assessment takes up teaching time. The manner in which these street-level bureaucrats cope with the demands of the policy is the object of this study. However, the choice of assessment strategies is subjective and will be unique to each teacher, grade and school, depending on the teacher’s professional judgement. Factors such as space and resources available may influence the decisions a teacher makes. However, even when resources are similar, teachers may make different choices since the street-level bureaucrats are given room to exercise professional discretion (Department of Education, 2003d, p.19; Department of Education, 2003a, p.11). Nevertheless, the methods chosen for assessing activities must be appropriate to the assessment standards to be assessed.

Records of assessment and progress must be kept and updated regularly. The NCS state that the school assessment programme should provide details on what records are kept and how these

records must be kept (Department of Education, 2003a, p.10). Record keeping should include a record book or file, progression schedules, learner portfolios and learner profiles. At the end of each term the school should provide reports to each learner. One of the main purposes of reporting is the accountability of teachers in assessing learners, to the parents, the education system and the broader community (Department of Education, 2003a, p.11). It can be seen here that the autonomy and discretion of street-level bureaucrats is being checked.

3.7 Current issues with implementation of the Outcomes-Based Education System

Having considered all the benefits of an OBE education system, many governments implemented this policy. Some of these countries apart from South Africa include Scotland, USA, Australia, New Zealand, the UK, Pakistan, and Singapore (Davis et al., 2007; Burns and Wood, 1989; and Botha, 2002). South Africa, after dismantling apartheid, then adopted this education system. The implementation of such a radical policy has not been without problems. Berlach and O'Neill (2008, p. 50) point out that 'when Spady's principles first surfaced, they appeared to be such common sense and so compelling that many education authorities wholeheartedly embraced Spady's (1988) challenge of 'organising for results'. They did this often naively, believing that matters such as content, assessment and implementation would, by and large, take care of themselves as schools interpreted and implemented OBE in their local context (Berlach and O'Neill, 2008). Because of this there have been some negative reactions from some quarters. For instance Botha highlighted that:

Negative reactions and pessimism from the South African communities, educationists, teachers and the press against certain elements of the model can already be observed. Such reactions can contribute towards denying the OBE model a chance, which could result in its early demise. The misunderstandings of the theoretical bases and tensions among philosophical underpinnings can be viewed as possible reasons for concern in the South African scenario (Botha, 2002, p.363).

These reactions have persisted to this day. Teachers, politicians, academics and labour movements query the effectiveness of the policy to address the problem of the quality of education. Universities are complaining about the under-preparedness of students enrolled for degree programmes. The government has insisted that the policy is effective but that the street-level bureaucrats are not implementing it correctly. Rogan is of the view that the policy might be good but little emphasis has been placed on implementation. Citing Verspoor (1989, p.133), in his analysis of 21 World Bank-supported educational change programmes, Rogan points out that:

Large-scale programmes tend to emphasize adoption and neglect implementation. He adds that, 'in nearly all instances low outcomes resulted from poor implementation of what was essentially a good idea'. In South Africa, this lack of foresight was particularly unfortunate. The high ideals of

C2005 were to be implemented in a system that was already under considerable stress (Rogan, 2007, p.98).

It can be discerned from this that many policy makers put their effort into policy formulation and adoption phases. They ignore the implementation phase and wait for results. They forget to take into consideration the context within which the policy was being implemented. Unlike in some other countries where this policy was implemented, the South African environment was under considerable stress. It seems that the government made simple assumptions that when the policy was in place everything would flow naturally. One of the assumptions underlying this nationally directed educational reform process was that teachers would be both willing and able to adapt their teaching and assessment practices accordingly. Yet, there is considerable evidence to suggest that this is not so (Vandeyar, 2005, p.461). In reality, many street-level bureaucrats have not been able to adapt due to a number of factors which may include their capacity to interpret the policy.

Most of the issues that affect South Africa's policy implementation of NCS are akin to other developing countries. Issues to do with financial resources, human resources, political will, physical resources, and the attitudes and beliefs of street-level bureaucrats can all combine to affect policy implementation. Of all these factors, attitudes and values are very critical. Botha points out that 'the attitudes and values of most of the adult South Africans of this decade were formed in the apartheid era' (Botha, 2002, p. 363). As a result, learners were not taught to appreciate the different aspirations and perspectives of people from other races. This is very important since attitudes take long to learn and they do not change overnight. As indicated previously, the majority of our street-level bureaucrats fall into the age group of people who were socialised under apartheid. Cross et al (2002) made an impressive summary of these issues. They remark that:

As in many other developing countries, curriculum reform in South Africa has resulted in several structural and policy tensions within the system. These tensions include: the vision *vis-à-vis* the country's realities; symbolism *vis-à-vis* mass expectations; the curriculum framework *vis-à-vis* applicability, conditions of implementation and actual practice in schools; expected outcomes *vis-à-vis* the capacity of teachers to translate them into reality; and budget concerns *vis-à-vis* commitment to values such as equity, redress and massification, and so on (Cross et al., 2002, p.172).

Some issues which are critical for street-level bureaucrats include the applicability of the policy of NCS, the conditions of implementation and actual practice in schools. It can be inferred from this that the actual practice in schools might reflect the discretion of the street-level bureaucrats.

Of great importance again is the capacity of teachers to translate the outcomes into reality. The implementation of NCS required retraining teachers (Department of Education, 2003d; Department of Education, 2003a). However, there is a lack of commitment from some policy stakeholders. Botha laments the lack of responsibility, dedication and commitment on the part of many teachers and learners in South Africa (2002, p.368). He argues that achieving the required knowledge, skills and habits of mind to promote a prosperous and democratic country with a quality education system will take very hard work from teachers and learners. This statement has two implications. First, it seems to suggest that street-level bureaucrats have autonomy from school management and are using their discretion in a way that hampers policy implementation. Secondly, Botha is one of the few scholars to mention the importance of learners' (clients') commitment. He mentions that 'learners will have to take greater responsibility for their learning (Botha, 2002, p. 368). In my personal experience as a street-level bureaucrat implementing OBE I have learned that the majority of learners do not take responsibility for their learning.

3.8 Conclusion

This chapter has given a background to the NCS. Its development from 1994 onwards was examined. It has also discussed the NCS policy as well as the current issues in its implementation. Assessment was seen to be one of critical issues with regard to street-level bureaucrats. The next chapter looks at these significant issues. It explores the teachers' discretion and autonomy in the implementation of the Revised National Curriculum Statements. Questions on the coping strategies that are employed by street-level bureaucrats when they face challenges in delivering services to their clients are addressed through a detailed case study. Other issues to be explored in this case study are the causes of discretion among the teachers and the roles played by government and school management in controlling the autonomy and discretion of teachers.

Chapter Four: The Case Study

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents and analyses the information from the case study. It will commence with outlining the profile of the school. Data collected from the field are going to be presented and analysed. Tables, graphs and box-plots will be used to illustrate information. A general comprehensive qualitative and quantitative overview of the school will emerge.

4.2 The profile of the School

This is an independent school. In order to understand the context of this study it is important to attempt a definition of an independent school. 'Independent schooling' is often referred to as 'private schooling' (du Toit, 2004, p.2). Kitaev (1999, p.43) in du Toit (2004) defines independent schools as:

All formal schools that are not public, and may be founded, owned, managed and financed by actors other than the state, even when the state provides most of the funding and has considerable control over these schools (Kitaev, 1999, p.43 cited in du Toit 2004, p.2).

In relation to this definition the school under study is 'the result of the vision and foresight of a small group of people who, late in 1989, acted on a strong belief that the time had come for the establishment of an independent evangelical high school to serve the wider evangelical community in Pietermaritzburg' (found on its website). The website states that the school opened at the beginning of 1990 with a small multiracial student body in a building situated in Boom Street. Later that year it moved to premises in Loop Street, and then at the beginning of 1992 to the premises it now occupies.

4.2.1 The mission statement and philosophy of the School

The mission statement of the school states that 'The overall goal is that of preparing young achievers for excellence through self-esteem enlargement, sparking the growth of tangible results in preparation for the real world and releasing them to impact the nations for Christ' (school website).

The school's philosophy is that:

All education, whether secular or Christian, is religious, in this sense: Both by what it says, teaches or does, and by what it does not say, teach or do, it promotes allegiance to a god or kingdom, and promotes a way of thinking and of living. There is no such thing as neutrality. Education is always the education of some kingdom, by that kingdom, for that kingdom.

... (name of school) stands and exists for a Christ-centred education which rests on the basic premise that Christian schooling should have as its object to glorify God, to equip

young people to disciple the nations for Christ and so to build His Kingdom, and to integrate all aspects of learning into a coherent whole that will set young people free from a yoke of meaninglessness and despair (school website).

To accomplish this, the school caters for boys and girls from Grade R to Grade 12. It enrolls learners from all walks of life regardless of their religious backgrounds. The learners are also from different countries in the region and abroad. Its teachers are Christians although they do not belong to a single church or denomination. It runs a boarding establishment (BE) for all learners. However not all learners are boarders. The total number of learners for 2009 is 432. Thirty-six percent of these learners are in the primary school. Only 15% of all the learners are in boarding.

The school is a member of Association of Christian Schools International (ACSI), Umalusi (a statutory organization which sets and monitors standards for general and further education and training in South Africa) and Independent Schools Association (ISA). These organisations hold the school to certain standards or expectations. Mostly, these expectations have to do with the delivery of quality Christian education.

4.2.2 The School's organisational structure

Through observation and interaction the researcher found that the school is run by the Board of Directors who is elected by the members of the school (teachers and parents). The Board is ultimately responsible for the governance and performance of the school. The Board consists of an elected Chairman, and other Directors. All Directors operate in a voluntary capacity. They meet at school or another location at least once a month and more frequently if needed. In addition, some Board Members concentrate on specific areas of operation or issues such as finance. The principal, two deputy principals and members of the school management are ex officio members of the Board. Under them are the teachers and the non-academic staff. The teachers are the focal point of this study as they are the street-level bureaucrats who implement the policies of the school and government. Table 4.1 shows information on the level of teaching assignment and educational qualification of the respondents to the study.

Table 4.1 Level of teaching assignment by educational qualification

Highest educational qualification of teachers	Level of teaching assignment				Total
	primary elementary (Grade R-3)	primary intermediate (Grade 4-5)	middle school (Grade 6 - 8)	high school (Grade 9 -12)	
National Senior certificate	2	0	2	0	4
Professional certificate	1	0	0	1	2
Diploma	2	2	4	6	14
BSc/BA	0	1	4	7	12
Total	5	3	10	14	32

Since the school’s founding it has grown significantly from catering for the primary school learners to include Grade R up to Grade 12. In tandem with growing student population, the teaching personnel have also increased to meet the demand. Figure 4.1 shows the profile of teachers by sex, educational qualification and teaching experience.

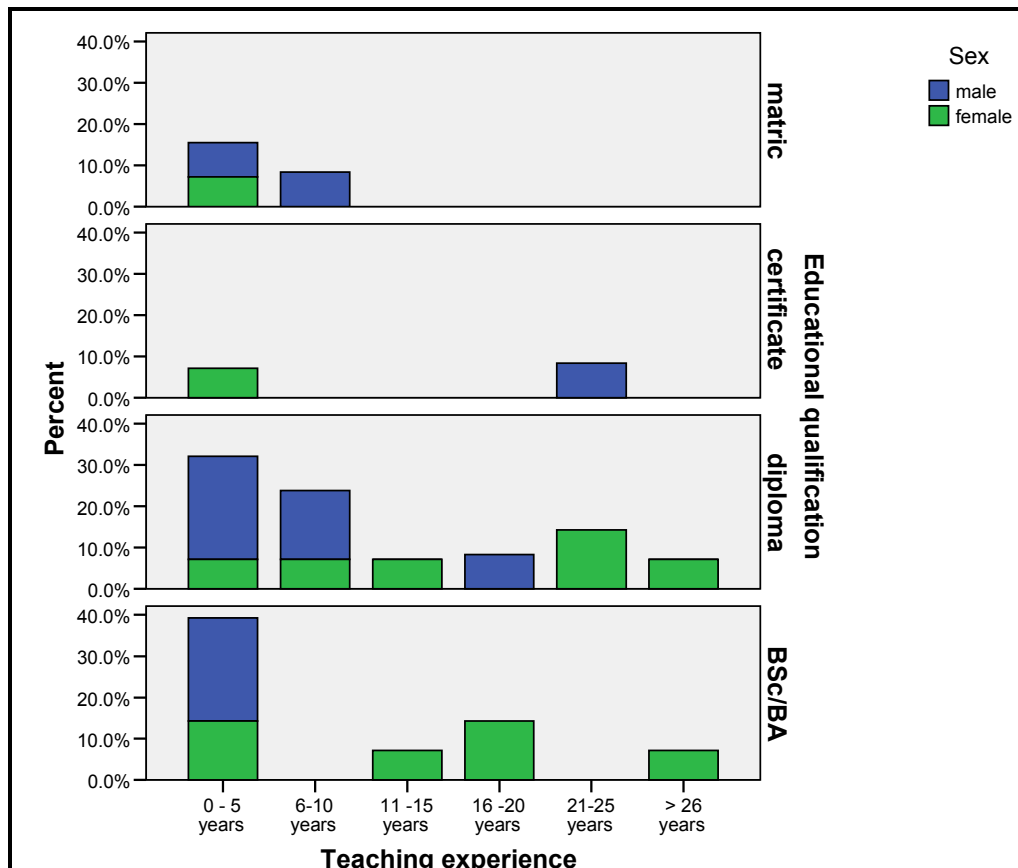


Figure 4.1 Profile of the teaching staff by sex, educational qualification and teaching experience (n=32)

The majority of the teachers (46.2%) have less than five years' teaching experience. The middle school (Grades 6-9) has the most teachers (50%) who have less than five years teaching experience. The primary school has the fewest (16%) of the least experienced teachers. The problem of the high school can be explained by the shortage of high school teachers, especially in scientific subjects. There are very few teachers (7.7%) who have more than twenty-five years of teaching experience. All of these teachers are semi-retired.

The majority (50%) of the teachers in the primary elementary school (Grade R-3) are diploma holders. The other fifty percent of the primary elementary (Grade R-3) school teachers is shared equally between Matriculants and certificate holders. Some of them are assistant teachers. The high school has forty percent of those who hold a bachelor's degree. The middle school (Grade 6-8) has the largest (44.4%) portion of the degree holders. The educational variable in this study is very critical since it is assumed that street-level bureaucrats who have better education have a better understanding of the policy than those with the least education. Figure 4.2 shows the professional education of the teachers. The majority (46.2%) of the school teachers are diploma holders followed by degree holders (34.6%).

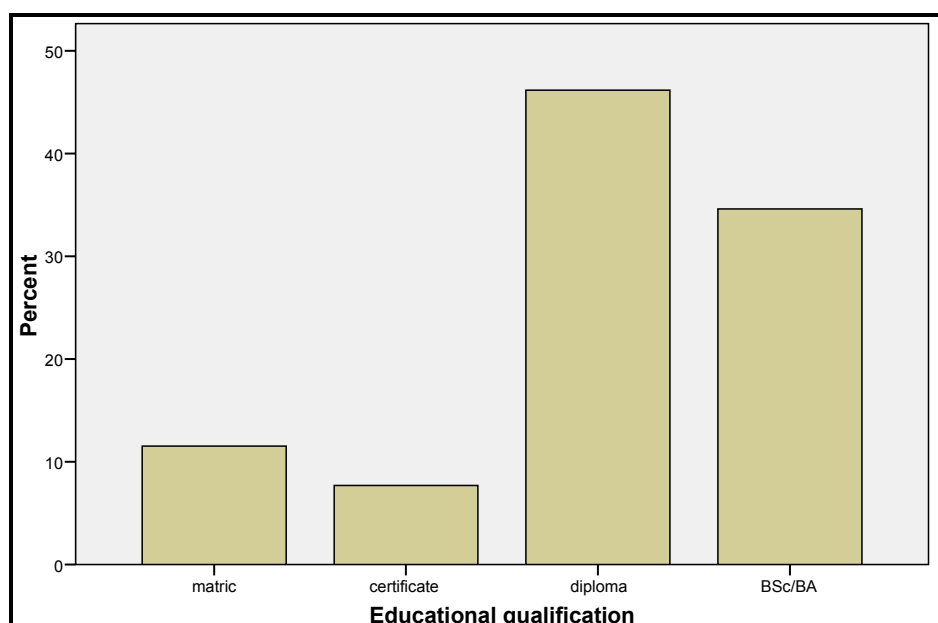


Figure 4.2 Educational qualifications of the teachers

These variables are important because of their perceived effect on the way different street-level bureaucrats exercise discretion and cope with the daily pressure of their work load which may depend on educational qualifications, experience, and at times gender.

The next section explores the exercise of discretion by teachers in the implementation of the NCS by street-level bureaucrats (school teachers) as they try to cope with the pressure of their work. It will analyse this data in relation to some of the variables outlined above. Some issues to

be analysed include the relationship between the exercise of discretion and the autonomy of teachers and their experience, educational qualifications and level of teaching assignment. The data was collected through a combination of observation and interviews.

4.3 Street-level bureaucrats at the front-line

The first attempt made in the study was to find out if the teachers have discretion and autonomy in the implementation of the Revised National Curriculum Statements (RNCS).

4.3.1 The exercise discretion and have autonomy in the implementation of the NSC

The findings on the exercise of discretion show that the majority of teachers do exercise discretion in different areas of their duties. The level of discretion differed according to other variables. It was noted that the level of discretion was in some cases dependent on the level of the teaching assignment, the qualification of teachers and their teaching experience. Figure 4.3 shows the responses from teachers when they were asked if they have any discretion in choosing the tasks they do in class. The level of discretion is tallied with the level of teaching assignment. On a scale of one (representing no discretion) to five (very much discretion) 11.5% of the teachers said they have no discretion while 26.9% said they have ‘very much’ discretion over their tasks. There were no significant differences in the level of discretion among the teachers who teach different levels.

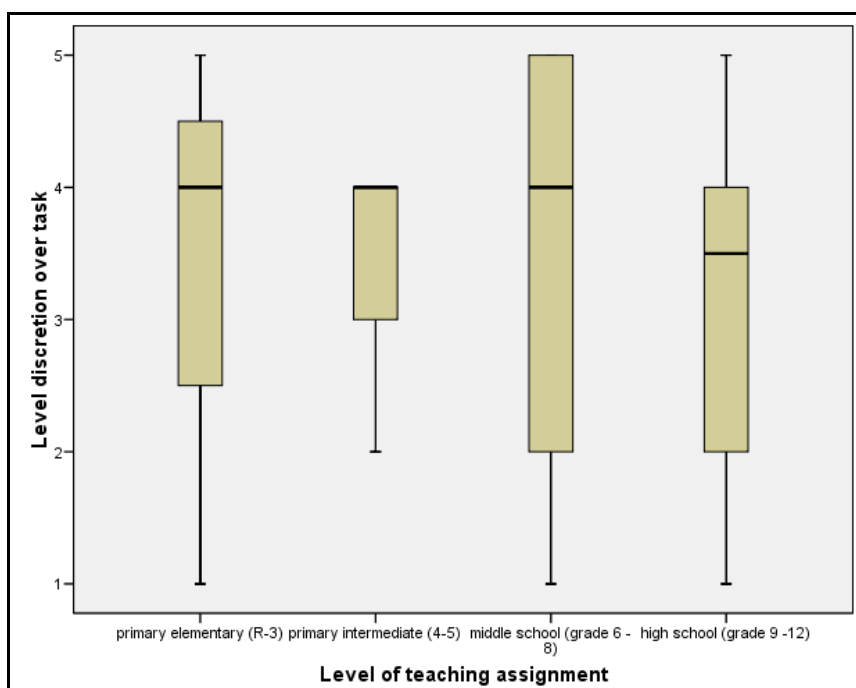


Figure 4.3 Level of discretion and level of teaching assignment

Those who said they have no authority over their tasks say they follow everything that the Department of Education says they should do. One respondent said:

The Department outlines the type of tasks that we should give to our learners. They even tell you that this term you should give an assignment and a test, the other term a project and so on ... we don't choose the tasks we give our learners, where is the authority? (Tr10).

These sentiments were echoed by many teachers who said that they have little or no discretion. Assistant teachers also said the same since they only do what their class teachers assign them to do. This was found mostly in the elementary primary school (grade R-3). The teachers who said they have great discretion admitted that the Department of Education gives them some tasks to be covered over a period of a year but that was just the minimum. One respondent said that:

We are given seven formal tasks to be covered over a period of a year with the Grade 12. You have discretion to decide other tasks that you can do with the learners. The requirements of the Department are just formal assessments. As a teacher I need to plan my own (Tr4).

We have little discretion because we have to follow those documents that are given by the Department that state how many tasks we need to do, what type of task we need to do, etcetera. ... Each task has a specific percentage of marks. For example I would like to do a project with my children; I am confined to 15%, since only 15% of my marks should come from that project even though it covers a lot of aspects (Tr15).

I don't have much discretion because the Umalusi, the school, the ACSI and the Department have a lot of control over what we do. These organisations leave very little room for discretion (Tr2).

In addition to this evidence, Figure 4.4 shows that a large proportion (30.8%) of teachers have 'quite a bit' of discretion. Only 11% of respondents said that they have no discretion compared to 57.7% who said they have very much or quite a bit of discretion in the tasks they do.

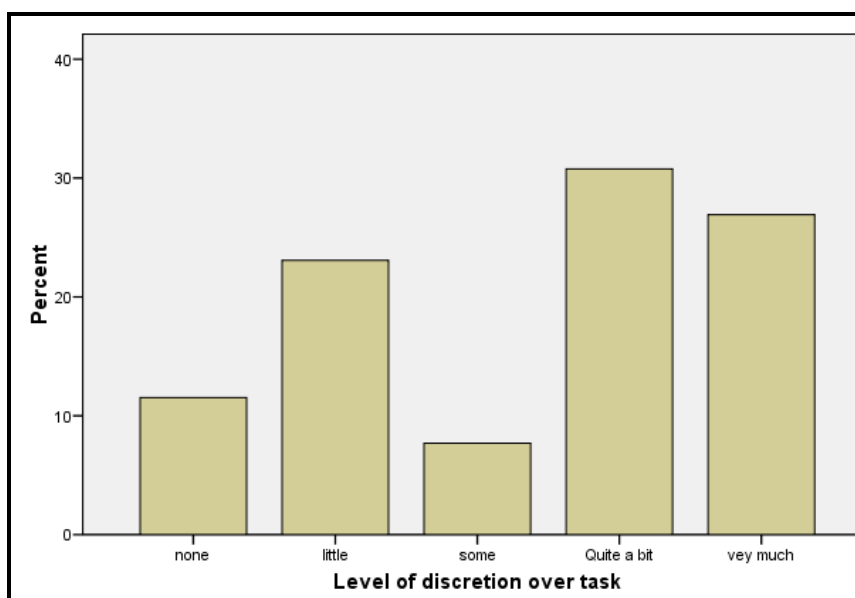


Figure 4.4 Level of discretion on the tasks done by teachers

It was clear that, although the Department of Education gives policy to schools for final implementation by street-level bureaucrats, teachers have a considerable level of discretion and autonomy. At the same time, it is important to note that the room for discretion is not very large.

Teachers are given policy guidelines they are supposed to follow under the supervision of school management.

Teachers were also asked to rate the level of discretion in the way they implement the given policies. Put another way, they were asked whether they have any discretion on how they do the tasks that come from the Department. A large number (42.3%) of the teachers say they have a great deal of discretion on 'how to implement' tasks although they did not have much discretion on the curriculum. Only three percent of the respondents said they have no discretion in the way they deliver the policy. Most of these were assistant teachers who depended on their class teachers for direction and guidance. Some respondents said that:

Although I have very little discretion in determining what to teach, the assessment standards and the learning outcomes, it is my duty to see how best I can make those outcomes a reality (Tr3).

I have to follow the assessment guidelines. According to my subject assessment guidelines, you have to have two tests, two practical tasks and two other, but they are very vague. Within that you have to provide your own direction to meet these requirements. In other words, how you do it is all up to you (Tr4).

The assessment tasks we go according to the NCS documents but the totals and the number of questions I do the way I feel my learners can understand. Because I can't set what I think is above their ability and understanding (Tr11).

The policy is made in Pretoria for all learners, all provinces and all schools. But all provinces, schools and learners are not the same. It is my responsibility to see how best I can implement it in my school class with my learners (Tr17).

Simply put, most respondents expressed that they have a great deal of discretion in how they can implement the policy. The main reason for this may be found in that although the policy documents on NCS say much about what must be done and when it should be done, they say little or nothing on how it should be executed. Everything is left to the discretion of the teacher. Figure 4.5 shows that most teachers (92.4%) have at least some discretion, with 42.3% having very much discretion.

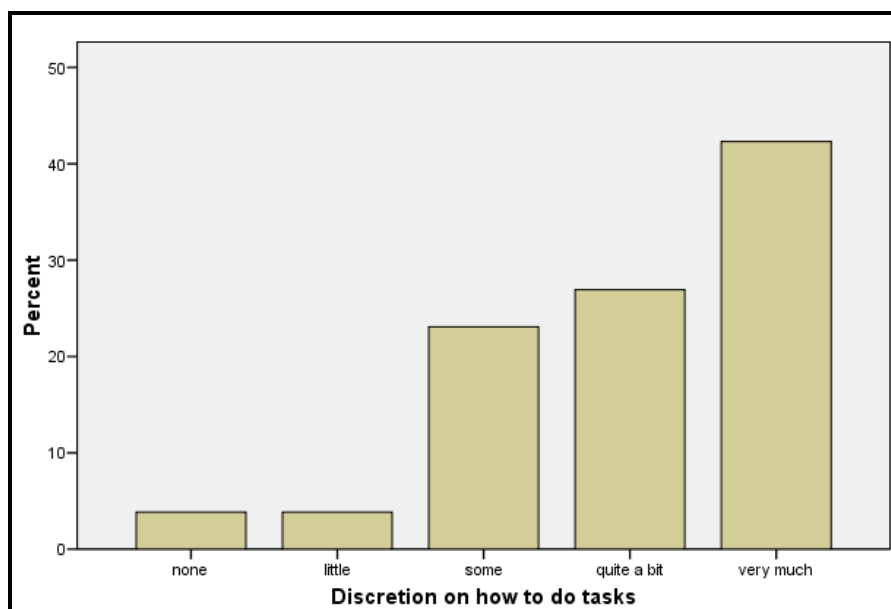


Figure 4.5 Level of discretion on how to do tasks

Teachers were asked to rate their level of discretion in obeying the school rules on classroom procedures. Most street-level bureaucrats said that they enjoyed a great deal of discretion in the way they do business in their classes. There was very little interference from the school management on the day-to-day classroom procedures. Only 7.7% of the respondents said they had no discretion in the way the classrooms are managed. These were largely the assistant teachers. The majority (61.6%) of teachers said they have some or quite a bit of discretion in the way the class is run. Another big portion of teachers (30.8%) said they have ‘very much’ discretion in the way they run their classes. Some teachers said that:

I am the principal of everything in my class. I run it the way I know will produce the best results for the learners (Tr22).

I am the boss here (the class). Everything that is done here is done my way (Tr6).

The classroom is my domain. I don’t think that there is anyone who can come here to tell me what and how I must do my thing here (Tr23).

You know this is a Christian School. There are some things that I am not supposed to do even though they are culturally acceptable. For instance, in cultural dance, in our culture breasts are not significant. But if your learners expose their breasts here it is an issue here. My discretion there is limited (Tr11).

My classroom is my office. Even though the OBE discourages learning memorisation, I still do that with my learners. There are things like formulas in Maths and Geometry, I make my learners memorise that (Tr17).

In addition to this the observations revealed that many teachers are not using the policy documents as prescribed by the NCS and the Department of Education. The NCS has basic

policy documents which must be used by teachers on a daily, weekly or termly basis. These are listed in Table 4.2. This table shows that only 4.2% of the respondents use the document on Foundations for Learning. The policy documents that have the highest frequency are the Teacher Guides (29%) and the Learning Area Assessment Guides (26%). Considering the fact that these are the documents that guide the teacher in the implementation of the NCS these numbers are notably low. If the teachers are not using these documents from where are they getting their information?

Table 4.2 Percentages of teachers who use policy documents in their work

Policy documents	Number	Percent
National Protocol on Assessment	17	23.9%
Learning Area Assessment Guides	19	26.8%
Teacher Guides	21	29.6%
Learning Area Statements	11	15.5%
Foundations for learning	3	4.2%

n= 26

Some teachers said that:

We do it according to the way our principal wants it to be done. I believe that the principal has all these documents. The principal only gives us what we need to know and do that is in line with the policy. Our principal understands the NSC policy so much. (He/She) will not leave us to do the wrong things. That is the principal's duty to get information on what the policy needs (Tr9).

To be honest, I have seen the policy documents you are talking about. But I have never had time to read or use them. But I think what I am doing comes from there because the principal likes it (Tr11).

In our subject don't use any policy document. We plan everything according to what we know. I have never been given any document ... may be Tr25 was given but I am not aware of it (Tr14).

I only read the page that I need to use, I cannot read the whole policy documents, and there are too many policy documents plus they are too long (Tr4).

Teachers were asked to rate the percentage of time they are guided by the NCS policy. This also shows the percentage of time the teachers use their own professional discretion. For instance, if a teacher is guided by policy in 100% of his or her duties it means there is no room for discretion. Figure 4.6 shows the percentage of time the teachers are guided by NCS policy. Only 23.1% are guided by policy in 20% or less of their daily work. These are the teachers who are teaching non-examinable subjects. These teachers said they have never received any policy document. A large proportion of teachers (34.6%) are guided by the NCS policy between 61% and 80% of the time

and 7.7% are guided by the policy in 81% to 100% of their work. This is mainly because of school management supervision and the Department of Education's requirements on issues of continuous assessment (CASS).

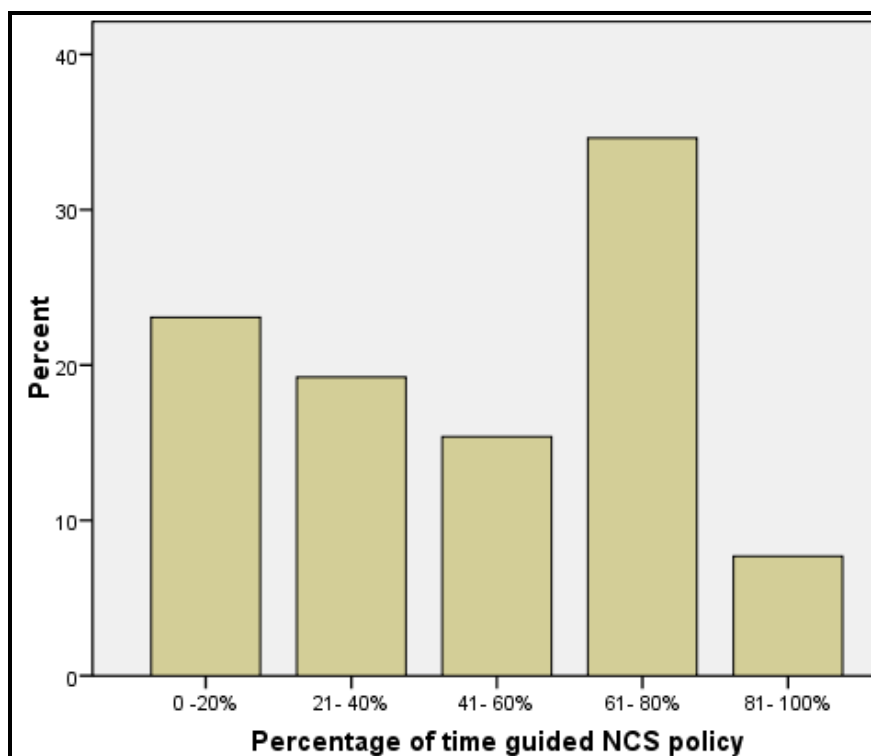


Figure 4.6 Percentage of time teachers are guided by the NCS

It is clear that most teachers have considerable levels of discretion in the way they deliver and implement educational policy. However, there are also other factors which limit their discretion. For instance, at this school Christian principles and values are very important in setting out what and how things should be done.

Another area where teachers exercise discretion and autonomy is in the assistance of learners where the language of teaching and learning is not their home language. Language was found to be one of the key factors in a learner attainment study by the Department of Education KwaZulu-Natal (Department of Education, 2003d, p.55). That study showed that learners who took subjects in their home language scored higher than those who took the same subject in a second language. The language of teaching and learning at the school under study is English despite the fact that the majority of learners at this school speak English as their second or third language.

Teachers were asked to rate the extent to which they assist learners whose home language was not the language of teaching and learning at the school. Figure 4.7 shows the extent to which teachers assist learners with language problems. The majority of teachers (50%) said they help the learners with language problems 'to a great extent' which was the highest score. Most of

these teachers were those who could speak both English and Zulu. Some teachers (7.7%) who speak other languages said that they help the learners with problems with English ‘to a very small extent’, the lowest score. Generally, it seems that most teachers even if they are not Zulu speakers, are trying their level best. About 26.9% of the respondents said they help the learners ‘to some extent.’ Some teachers said that:

At the beginning of the year we have these learners from Zulu schools... when they come here they are like blank in the lessons you teach in English but you need to find some spare time where you can explain Zulu and English so that the learner can understand (Tr6.)

I cannot speak Zulu. In Arts and Culture I sometimes get a child to explain to another child in their mother tongue (Tr3).

At times I use another learner to interpret what I say to those who don't understand. If it doesn't work I explain and explain until the learner understands (Tr7).

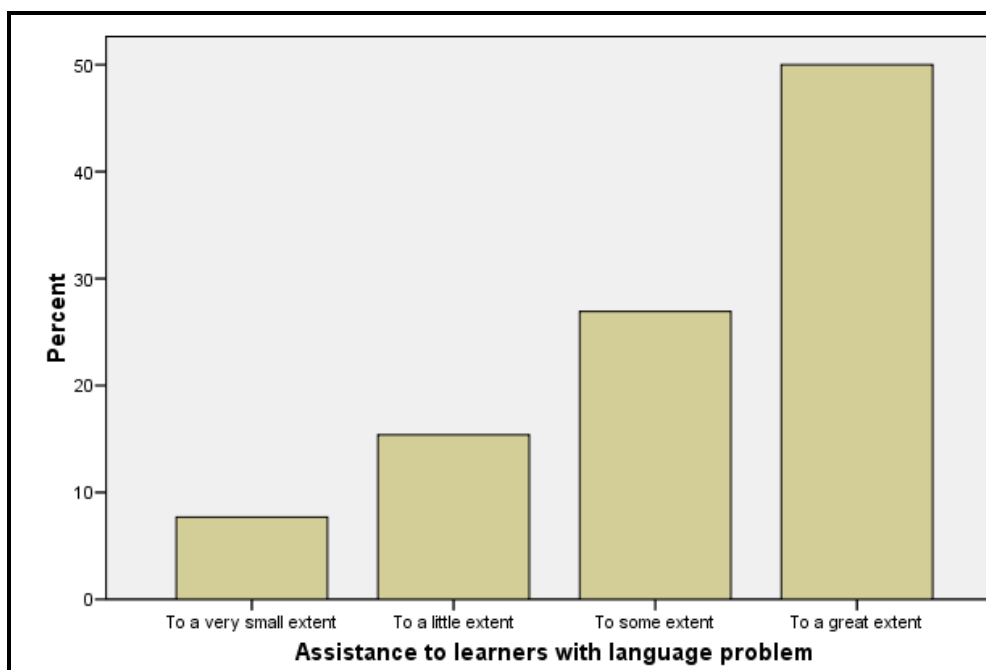


Figure 4.7 Assistance given to learners with problems with English

It can be seen from these findings that teachers as street-level bureaucrats enjoy considerable discretion in the process of implementing the NCS. In the way they carry out their tasks teachers have more discretion than they do in determining the tasks to be done. This can allow them to ‘make’ policy as a matter of practice, at its bottom: in the classroom.

4.3.2 Is the exercise of discretion related to educational qualification or level of teaching?

Experience, educational qualification and level of teaching assignment have been thought by many teachers to be a factor in determining the level and effectiveness of their discretion.

Professional education and training are also used by employers to limit discretion among street-level bureaucrats. This study sought to find out any relationships between these variables. First we examine the level of education and level of discretion in NCS policy implementation. Figure 4.8 shows the relationship between educational qualification and the level of discretion on how to do tasks in class.

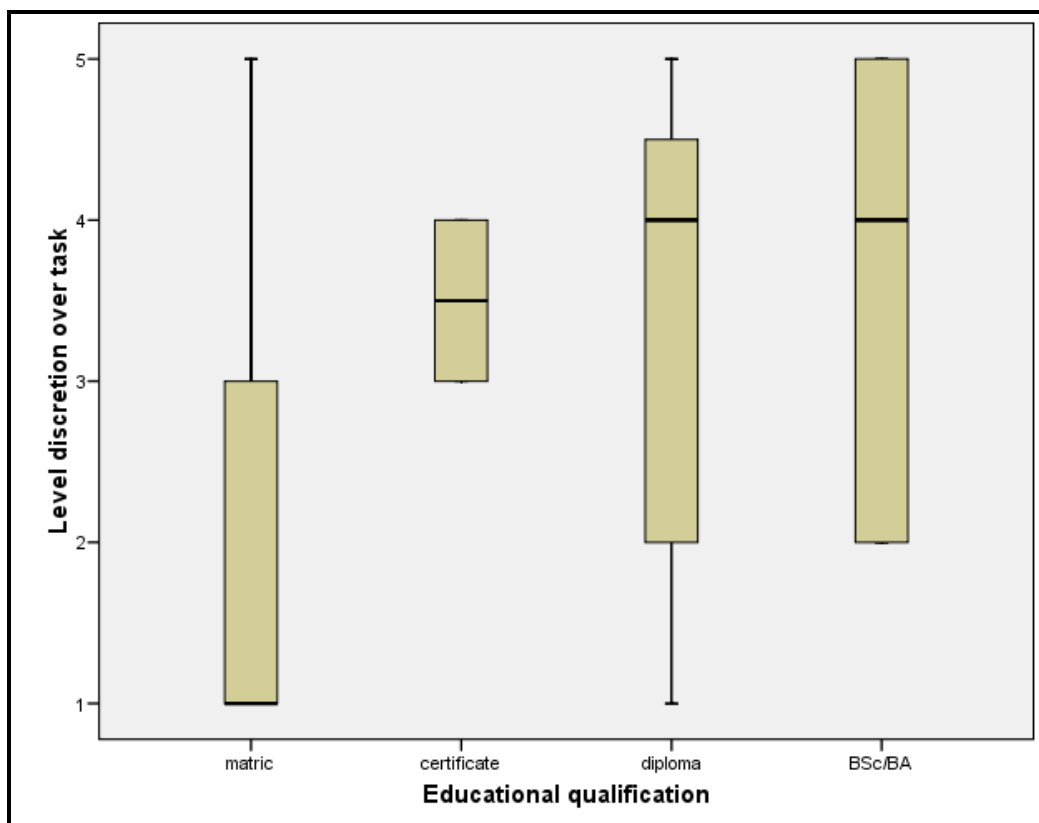


Figure 4.8 Educational qualification and level of discretion

There seems to be a relationship between educational qualification and the level of discretion in class. The more educated teachers seem to use more discretion than those with less education. Only 3.8% of the respondents said they have no discretion over how they do their tasks. All of these have the lowest level of education. The majority (55.6%) of those with the highest level of discretion in classroom procedures are degree holders. This study shows that there is a relationship between educational qualification and the level of discretion exercised in class. However, this relationship is not significant ($P = 0.7$). It is important to note that less qualified people might not have any knowledge except for policy guide-lines and experience.

All the teachers claimed that experience informs their discretionary choices in the implementation of the NCS. One of the goals of this study was to find if there is any relationship between level of experience and the level of discretion in the implementation of the NCS. Figure 4.9 shows the relationship between experience and level of discretion in class.

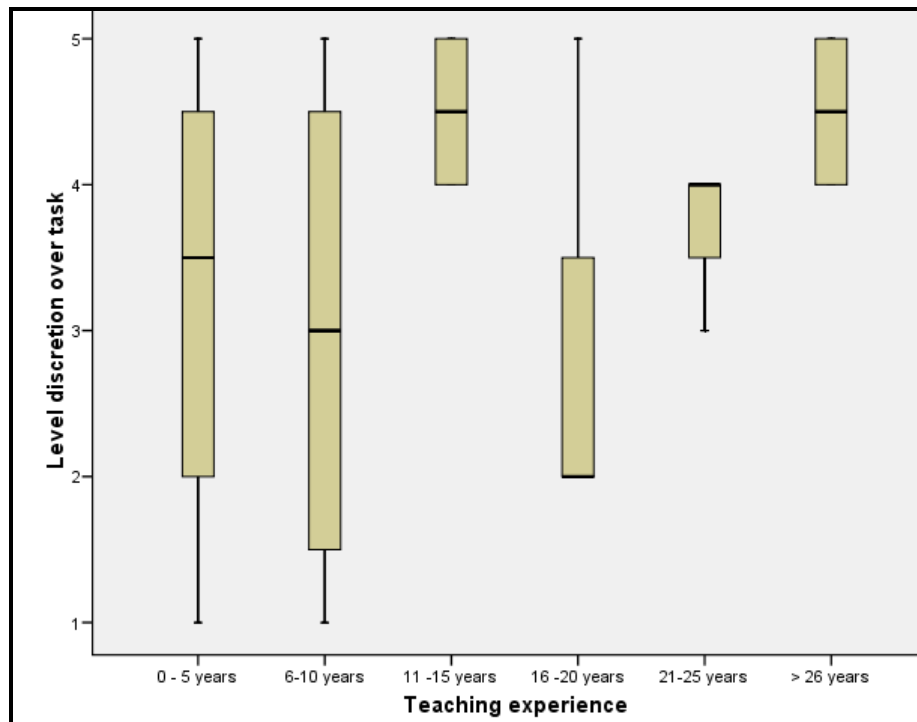


Figure 4.9 Teaching experience and level of discretion

The mean level of discretion for all the teachers is above three out of five which is relatively high and typical of Lipsky's street-level bureaucrats. It is again clear from Figure 4.9 that when experience increases the level of discretion also increases. Most of the teachers who have twenty or more years of experience have a level of discretion which is at least four out of five. However this relation is not significant ($P = 0.9$). This can be explained by the fact that it is difficult for older teachers to adapt to the new OBE approaches to teaching. The study also found that there was no significant relationship ($P = 0.2$) between the level of teaching assignment and level of discretion.

It is clear that teaching experience, educational qualification and level of teaching assignment are important but not very important and significant as shown by Chi-Square tests mentioned above ($p > 0.05$). Most of the people with lower educational qualifications also had little experience. So these factors operated as a cluster rather than as an individual factor.

4.3.3 In what ways do teachers exercise professional discretion?

Having discussed that teachers exercise a great deal of discretion in the implementation of NCS, it is also important to know the ways in which they exercise such discretion. Most teachers explained that some of the learning outcomes and assessment standards cannot be achieved in the time frame given to the particular grades. Some teachers said that:

The learning outcomes for Grade 8 Afrikaans are way above the level of my Grade 8 learners. If I try to do them I will be wasting my time and the time of my learners. To solve this, I use the Grade four Afrikaans work although I don't tell them (Tr3).

At this school no one knows much about my subject. That gives me much room to do what I want. I choose the material I want to teach at anytime. I only make sure that I meet the minimum standards set by the Department of Education. The rest, I do what is feasible with my learners (Tr18).

We are dealing with people and not machines. People react differently from the same stimulus. It is only through the use of my discretion that I can be able to handle different classroom situations. At times Grade 11 learners are expected to carry out a research project with research questions, hypotheses, testing the hypotheses and so on. I have never done such research myself. How am I going to assist and mark my learners' work? Under such circumstances, I simply give them an assignment and the marks for such an assignment will stand for the research (Tr19).

We plan our lessons according to the dictates of policy documents but at times I deviate from what I have planned for the week, cycle or day to meet the real situations in the class. I am not a prisoner of my plans or policy guidelines. In Geography for example, the policy guidelines state that map work should be taught throughout the year bit by bit. There is nowhere you will find a textbook arranged in such a way. In such cases, I use my discretion and finish with it once and for all (Tr26).

All the respondents said they use discretion in many ways in the execution of their duties. At times the discretion is used to meet learner needs, such as initiatives to make sure that the learners grasp the required concepts. Observation revealed that at times it is used to make the teacher's job more comfortable. For example, Tr19 was unable to understand the concept of a research project and used discretion and chose a less difficult task. These results are in keeping with Lipsky's main view that street-level bureaucrats enjoy a considerable amount of discretion in the course of their duties. Lipsky discusses the development of 'routines and simplifications' which help street-level bureaucrats deal with the pressures associated with their work (1980, p.82). Most teachers simplify their work by following daily routines.

Another area where teachers exercise discretionary choices in the implementation of NCS is in the area of assessment. The NCS requires teachers to:

- Assess learners' progress regularly and update records throughout the year.
- Do baseline assessment of prior learning at the beginning of a grade or phase and establish what learners already know.
- Make sure that learners are active participants in learning and assessment.
- Make sure that assessment strategies cater for a variety of learner needs (language, physical, psychological, emotional and cultural).
- Make sure that summative assessment is planned at the beginning of the year to include a variety of assessment strategies (Department of Education, 2003, p.8).

Given these requirements, the study sought to find out how teachers are exercising their discretion. Teachers were asked to show the extent to which they are doing these activities in

obedience to the requirements of the NCS requirements. The study revealed that only 3.8% of the respondents said they do base line assessment 'to a very great extent' (which was the highest score) as required by the policy. The largest portion (42.3%) said they are doing baseline assessment 'to a great extent' which is second highest on the scale. However, 30.8 % said they do not do the base line assessment at all. Some of those who said they do not do base line assessment said:

With the kind of learners that we have here it is a waste of time to do a baseline assessment. Even if you ask them to tell you what they learnt in your previous lesson, they can't tell you. If their memory is that short it means I will spend the whole year teaching the work from the previous year. Because of that I just continue with no baseline assessment (Tr9).

There is a mark required for promotion from each grade to the next. If you don't attain such a mark you will not proceed to the next grade, so why should I waste my time (Tr16).

There was a general agreement in that they all questioned the need for a formal baseline. Those who said they do baseline assessment said they do it informally during the lessons. One teacher said:

I do baseline assessment whenever I am introducing a new topic. I just ask a few oral questions as part of my introduction (Tr25).

This shows that baseline assessment is not taken seriously by most teachers. As a result they do not do it or they just do it in passing without giving it serious attention.

Another policy requirement is the need to make sure that assessment strategies cater for a variety of particular needs (language, physical, psychological, emotional and cultural). In other words teachers should cater for the individual needs of the learners. But in most cases, as Lipsky says, teachers, because of work pressure, overcrowded classrooms and shortage of time and other resources, are often unable to do this (Lipsky, 1980, p.13). The study showed that only 7.7 % of the respondents do cater for individual differences 'to a very great extent' which was the highest score on the scale. The largest portion (38.5%) of respondents said they cater for individual differences to 'a great extent' which was second on the scale. These results show that under the trying pressures of their workload teachers are trying to cater for individual differences in their classes. Only 15.4% of the respondents said they cater for individual differences 'to a little extent' which was the lowest score. One teacher emphasised the importance of catering for individual differences by saying that:

You can't treat all the learners in the same way. ... Because all learners are at different levels of understanding so you can't treat them the same. You need to adjust in accordance to that learner's ability. You cannot treat all the learners the same (Tr17).

However, it is important to note that although teachers, governed by their ethics and conscience, know that learners should be treated as individuals, time and resources can hamper teachers from doing so. That is why only 7.7% of the respondents said they cater for individual differences to a great extent.

Teachers are expected to assess learners' progress regularly and update records throughout the year. This is one of the most important cornerstones of OBE. Assessment could be formal or informal. If it is a formal assessment the policy says the task should be moderated before and after marking. Teachers were asked to rate the extent to which they assess and record the learners' progress. The results show that a significant proportion (23.1%) of the teachers do assess learners' progress regularly throughout the year 'to a very great extent', which was ranked the top score. The majority of the teachers (65.4%) do the assessment 'to a great extent' (second highest). This can be expected since the school management is keen on this issue. Teachers have very little discretion on this matter. One teacher said that:

The type of assessment may not matter, you may do it in a manner that you want but the marks for assessment must be sent to the office at the end of each mark cycle. Our principal makes sure that you submit those marks (Tr22).

Most teachers expressed that there is a very little room for discretion in assessment and in recording marks. School management is designed in such a way that all teachers must do assessments, record them then send them to the office at regular intervals. The study revealed that only 7.7 % of the respondents do not do assessment on a regular basis. These are the teachers who are teaching non-examinable subjects.

The NCS policy states that summative assessment is planned at the beginning of the year to include a variety of assessment strategies. Summative assessment gives an overall picture of learners' progress at a given time, for example, at the end of a term or year or on transfer to another school (Department of Education, 2003d, p.19; Department of Education, 2003a, p.11). Teachers were asked to state the extent to which they plan this at the beginning of each year so as to include a variety of assessment strategies. Figure 4.10 shows the responses of teachers on following summative assessment guidelines.

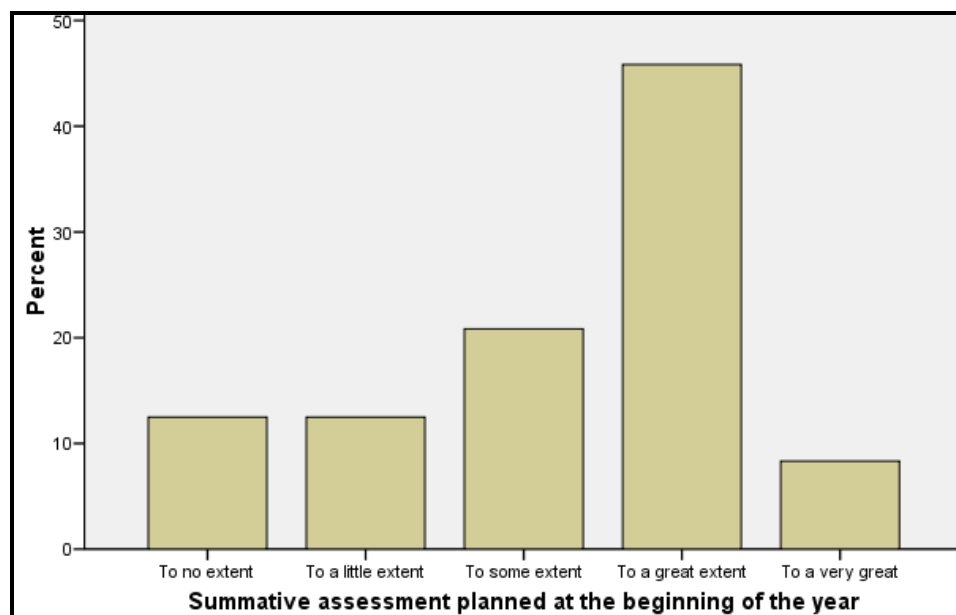


Figure 4.10 Planning summative assessments by teachers at the beginning of the year

The majority (54.2%) of teachers plan and follow this policy at least ‘to a great extent’. A small proportion (19.2%) plan and follow this policy guideline ‘to some extent’, which is level three out of five. Generally, the teachers at this school implement this policy to a considerable extent. Most teachers said that this is because the school management makes sure that everything is planned at the beginning of the year and handed to the office before school opens. One teacher said that:

You have no choice in planning your assessment at the beginning of the year. We open school a week before learners start school. During that time you plan all your formal summative assessments. In those plans you state the exact dates, and strategies that you want to use in your assessment (Tr9).

Planning is not a problem. ... We plan these assessments but at times because of time and resources you cannot plan and send your assessment tool for moderation before the assessment. At times I set the assessment and assess my learners and send my assessment tool and learners’ work at the same time (Tr25).

Here Tr25 was referring to the requirement that if a teacher wants to formally assess the learners, he or she is supposed to set the assessment tool plus prepare the memorandum (making guide/rubric) for the phase co-ordinators well before the date of moderation. The assessment is done; then the teacher takes the assessment tool and the rubric to the phase co-ordinators for moderation. Sometimes teachers cannot manage due to time constraints and therefore resort to

Tr25's strategy. However, it is important to note that at this school, this requirement is met to a very great extent due to the enforcement strategy of school management.

4.3.4 Is discretion effective in implementing NCS?

Teachers were asked to rate the effectiveness of professional discretion in implementing the NCS and the achievement of learning outcomes. The majority of the teachers (61.5%) said that the use of professional discretion is very effective in the implementation of the NCS. Only one teacher (3.8%) said the use of discretion is not effective in the implementing the NCS. Figure 4.11 shows that the majority of the teachers supported the use of discretion in their classes.

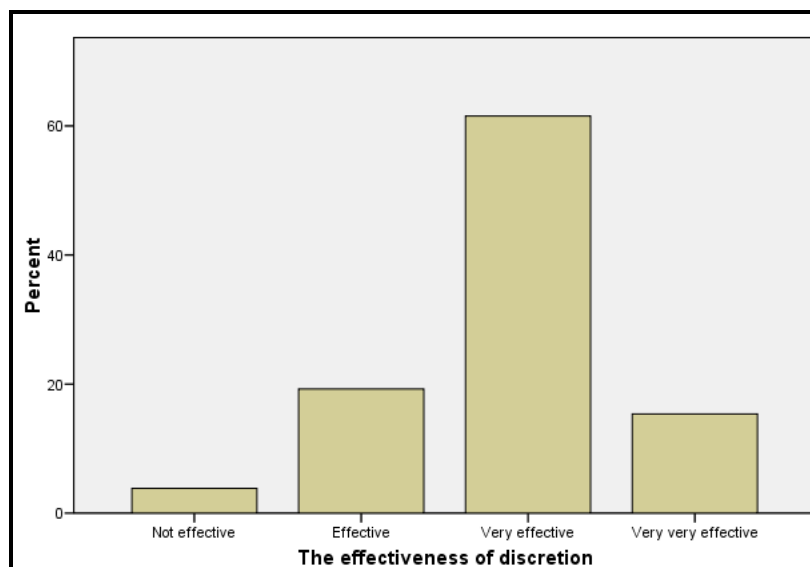


Figure 4.11 Effectiveness of the use of discretion in class

In tandem with this, teachers were asked to give the extent to which they observe the policy of NCS in their daily work. This gives a clear picture of the extent to which discretion is also exercised. Only one teacher (3.8%) is not observing the NCS policy. This teacher said that:

The subject I am teaching has no policy document from the Department of Education. I formulate my own curriculum for each level since I teach from grade R to grade 9. However I do observe the school rules but nothing from the Department (Tr8).

Some teachers (11.5%) said they observe the policy to a very little extent. They said their subjects are not examinable, and there is no policy document to observe. They said that:

We make our own plans which we give to the school management for 'approval' and then we need to follow those plans. If that is the policy then we are trying to follow it (Tr14).

The majority of the teachers are following the policy either 'to some extent' or 'to a very great extent'. Those who are observing the policy to some extent and to a great extent constitute 77% percent of the respondents. Only two respondents (7.7%) said they are observing the policy to a great extent.

One teacher said that:

I only follow and take the things that fit my pace, my personality and my style... therefore I achieve the learning outcomes better than by following other set procedures. That is why I do observe the policy to a great extent (Tr9).

Figure 4.12 shows the extent to which teachers observe the NCS. It can be seen that the majority of the teachers are observing the NCS policy. This figure shows that although teachers say the use of discretion is very effective, they still observe the policy to a considerable extent.

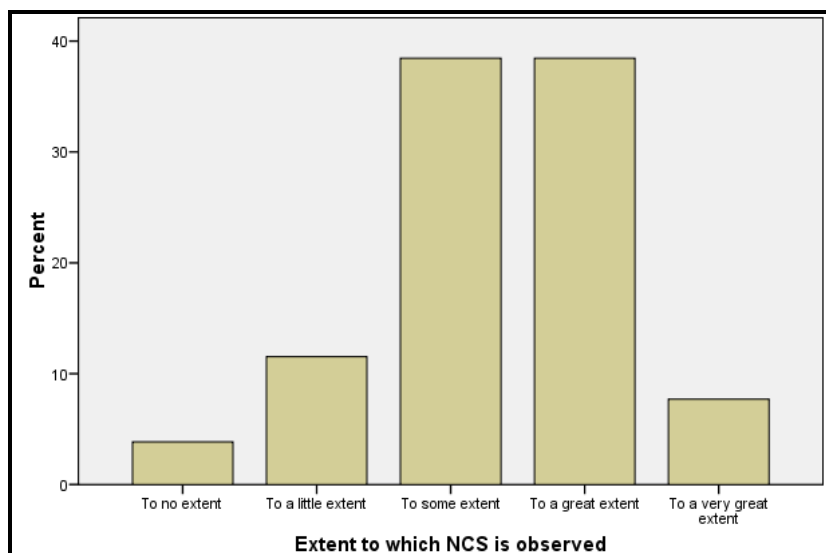


Figure 4.12 Extent to which the NCS is observed

4.2.5 What forces the teachers to use discretion?

(a) Shortage of resources

Most of the teachers complained about the workload and the resources available. Teachers said they were generally satisfied with the level of resources. On a scale of 1- 5, with 1 being the lowest, and 5 being the highest, 69.9% of the teachers were at 3 which meant that resources were adequate to some extent. Only 3.8% said the resources were not adequate at all. Some of those who complained are Physical Education teachers who said they do not have enough facilities and equipment. For instance, they do not have a swimming pool and a proper soccer pitch. Because of that, they say they spent a lot of teaching time on travelling to hired grounds and swimming pools. Another group of teachers said they do not have whiteboards, and enough computers that are connected to the internet. Few teachers (3.8%) said the resources were adequate to a 'very great extent'.

One teacher said that resources are so scarce that lessons are planned according to what is there. The teacher said that:

We need more resources than we get. We need more charts, we need CD players, radios, we need overhead projectors, and there are times when you say need stuff and they tell there is no

money for that. You know, we want to be creative in classrooms but you can't be really creative because you don't have the resources (Tr18).

Observation shows that resources are generally adequate. Their shortage forces the teachers to improvise and use their discretion. As this respondent said, if all the resources were there, it would be easier to follow the NCS requirements for the subject in question. Figure 4.13 shows the responses of teachers when they asked about the adequacy of the resources in the implementation of the NCS. It is apparent that at this school resources were generally held to be adequate.

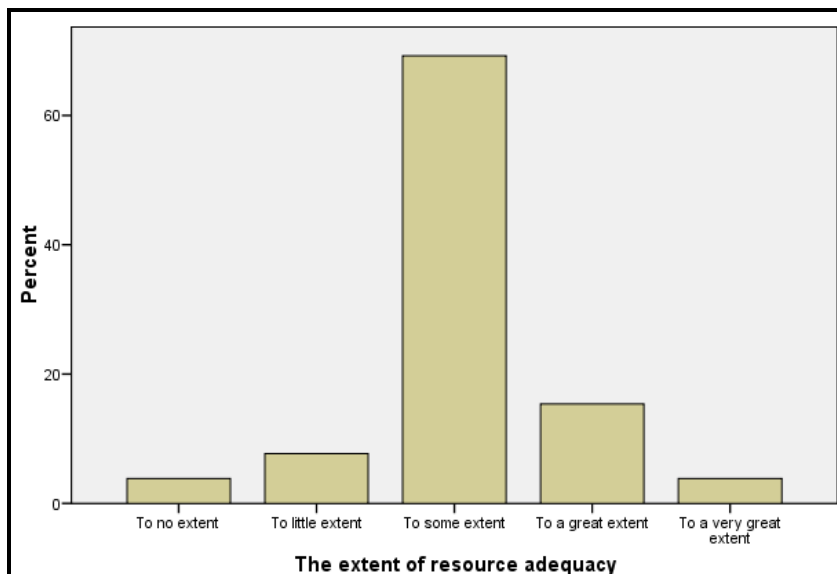


Figure 4.13 Adequacy of resources

(b) Heavy workload

Figure 4.14 shows the responses of teachers when they were asked about the heaviness of their workload.

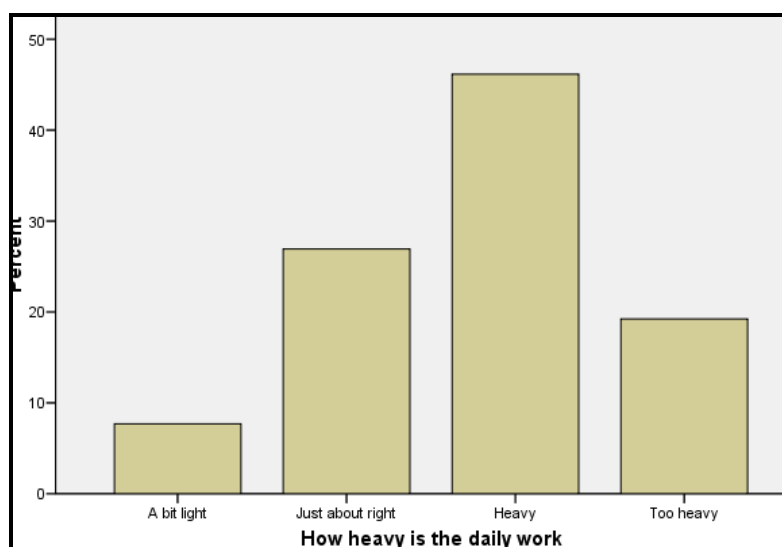


Figure 4.14 Heaviness of the daily workload in implementing NCS

Because of the workload and other factors some teachers complained that this is making their job very difficult. For instance, only 7.7 % of the teachers said their job is a ‘bit light’ and 26.2% said their job is ‘just about right’. Most of these teachers are either part-time teachers or assistant teachers. Forty-six percent of the teachers said their job was heavy while 19.2% said the job was too heavy for them. Administrative work is what most teachers complained about. A large proportion of their time is taken up with clerical work which in many cases results in duplication. The same work is demanded by the Department of Education and the school management in two different formats. As a result much of the teachers’ time is spent doing these tasks instead of teaching. This makes the teachers’ work very onerous.

Some teachers said that their work is very heavy. Some of the things that make their work heavy are that they teach a number of subjects which have different learning outcomes and assessment standards. The administrative and clerical work is one issue that was mentioned by teachers adversely contributing to their work load. One teacher said that ‘*all I want about teaching is teaching the learners and not much about administration*’ (Tr8).

(c) Lack of time

Another factor which forces teachers to use discretion is the inadequacy of time that is required for them to do all their work to teach. Table 4.3 shows that the majority of teachers (46.2%) spent 61- 80% of their working day in the class with the learners. While only one teacher (3.8%) spent less than 20% of the day with the learners.

Table 4.3 Proportion of a normal working day that is devoted to face-to-face tuition

Time devoted to face-to-face tuition	Frequency	Percent
0 -20%	1	3.8
21- 40%	3	11.5
41- 60%	3	11.5
61- 80%	12	46.2
81 -100%	7	26.9

n=26

The differences result from the fact that some teachers are full-time while some are part-time teachers. Part-time teachers spend less time with the learners than the full-time teachers do. It follows that if a teacher spends 61- 80% of the time with the learners only 20% of the time that is

left is for administration work and marking and the many other roles that are expected of a teacher. Many teachers complained that this time is not enough. To cope with this, teachers use their discretion. One respondent said that:

With time and experience you develop techniques around this problem. You use short cuts (Tr25).

The use of 'short cuts', as Tr25 said, entails the use of professional discretion by the teachers as a way of coping with the pressure that comes with the work of implementing the NCS. In many cases it involves not doing what is supposed to be done, window dressing and doing what is comfortable for the teacher and the learners. One teacher said that:

You cannot do everything that is required by the policy. I only do what I can (Tr18).

The researcher observed that at certain times of the term, teachers work after hours and during weekends to make up for little time they have for teaching and administration work.

(d) Clarity of goals

Another factor which forces street-level bureaucrats to use discretion has to do with the clarity of goals in the NCS policy. This study sought to find out whether the goals are clear, specific and reasonable. In responding to the reasonability of NCS one teacher said:

Some of the Department's requirements are unpragmatic... if you want to know how unpragmatic they are... I got a fax today saying I must bring my Physical Education tasks for moderation and I need to bring my best learner, middle learner and the worst learner so that they can be moderated. However, according to assessment standards and the learning outcomes my task was a hike on the mountain and the other one was carrying poles over the football goals, so how am I going to carry the 'mountain and the best learners and the worst learners' for moderation... absolutely unpragmatic (Tr4).

On the issue of clarity most respondents (46.9%) said the goals of the NCS are clear 'to some extent' which meant level four on a scale of 1- 5 with five being very clear. A small proportion (11.5%) of the respondents said the policy goals are clear 'to a little extent' (level 2). Only 7.7% of the respondents said the policy goals are very clear in stating what should be done by the teachers and supervisors. Although some respondents said the objectives and requirements are clear they also said some of the requirements are not reasonable (Tr4).

In addition to the above, the study also asked the respondents to rate the policy goals on the level of specification with level 1 (very general) and 5 (very specific). A larger proportion (26.9%) of respondents said policy directives were very specific (level 5). Only one respondent (3.8%) said the policy was very general (level 1). The understanding of whether a policy is general or specific is very critical in policy implementation. This allows great room for discretion when the

policy directives are very general and the reverse is true when they very specific. Figure 4.15 shows the response of teachers on the way they understand the policy goals in terms of clarity.

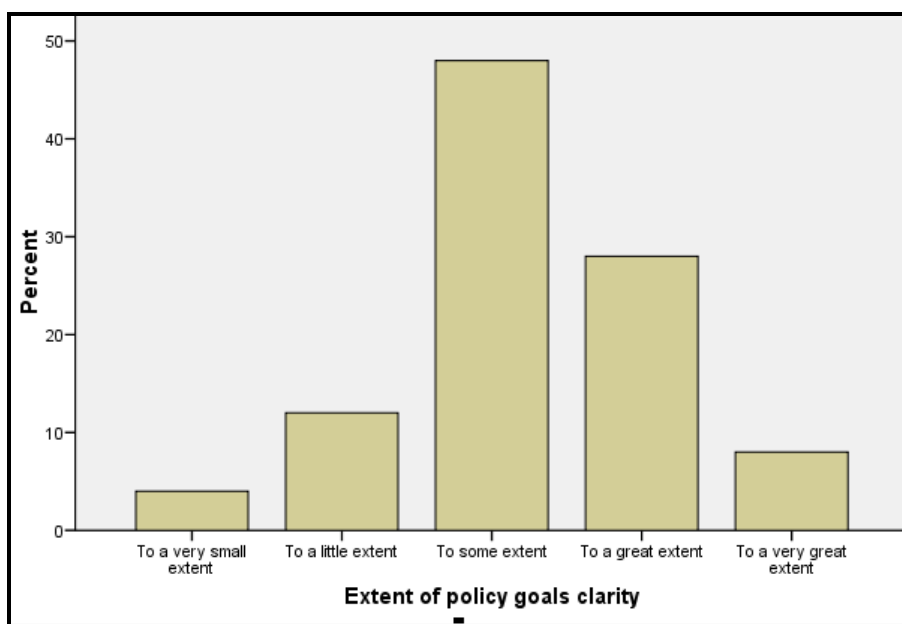


Figure 4.15 Extent of the clarity of goals

When policy goals are not very clear and not very specific it is difficult for street-level bureaucrats to implement the policy correctly. One teacher said that *‘some of the terms used in the policy are difficult to understand. There is a word in the Arts and Culture Learning Area Statement that I don’t even know the meaning of. The word is not in the dictionary’* (Tr3).

Most front-line workers lack confidence in what they do if they do not understand what the policy requires of them. The study sought to find out how easy it is for teachers to tell that they have done their work correctly. A significant number of teachers (42.3%) said it is ‘quite easy’ for them to tell that they have done their work correctly with 7.7% saying it is very easy for them to tell that they have done their work correctly. Table 4.4 shows the responses of teachers when they were asked how easy or difficult it is to be sure that they have done their work correctly. Although a small proportion (19.2%) of the respondents say it is ‘quite difficult’ to be sure that they have done their work, it is important to note that this is a significant proportion.

Table 4.4 Extent to which work is done correctly

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Very difficult	1	3.8	3.8
Quite difficult	5	19.2	23.1
Somewhat difficult	7	26.9	50.0
Quite easy	11	42.3	92.3
Very easy	2	7.7	100.0

n=26

The study also went further to confirm these findings by asking the teachers the percentage of time they are sure that they have done their work correctly. The majority (77%) of the teachers are sure that they have done their work correctly about 41-100% of their working time. The same percentage (19.2%) which said it was difficult for them to be sure that they have done their work correctly said they are only sure that they have done their work correctly less than 20% of the time.

4.7.6 What informs the choices of street-level bureaucrats in the exercise of their discretion?

If street-level bureaucrats use discretion in the implementation of NSC, the question is, ‘what directs their decisions?’ If they do more or less what the NCS requires, or do things in slightly different ways, how do they make their choices? The teachers were asked to explain what informs their alternatives in exercising professional discretion. The majority (53.88%) of teachers said experience informs most of the discretionary decisions they make. The other group (46.20%) said both professional education and experience work ‘hand-in-glove’ (Tr19), in informing their discretionary choices. Some teachers said that:

Since I started teaching there are very few instances I can say “now I am applying what I learned at varsity”. I can’t apply all the things I learned (Tr16).

I cannot separate professional education from experience. These things work hand-in-glove. When you start teaching usually it is your education which informs your decisions, but with time experience takes charge (Tr19).

The procedure may come from outside but it’s not applicable to a particular learner... in that case I have to use my own discretion but always under the umbrella of the code of conduct... But you always need to learn, you don’t have all the answers. But I think with time the experience will come, if you have been teaching for a long time you know the children, also I have my own children, teenage children, it’s very good to know what happens in real life to them. That comes with experience, some people can teach for fifty years but... I cannot say they don’t have experience but working with them (children) and staying with them gives more. I also find that where I am now with my teaching is different from when I started as a very young person at the age of twenty-one. ... The counsel of my colleagues also contributes to how I make my discretionary choices (Tr12).

This study revealed that it is difficult to separate experience from education and training in the manner that they influence professional discretionary choices. Most teachers (52.8%) said experience dominates in most cases. Teachers tend to use the alternatives that worked for them before and avoid those that did not produce good results in the past.

4.2.7 Which coping mechanisms do street-level bureaucrats use?

(a) ‘Creaming’

The study sought to find out how the teachers cope with their workload in the implementation of the NCS. Many teachers complained about workload. One teacher mentioned that *‘where it comes to assist the learners individually, they choose those who are capable of making very good marks and assist them. Actually, those learners come to me. In other words, it is by self-selection. You cannot treat everyone the same’* (Tr9). This is what Lipsky (1980, p.107) says when street-level bureaucrats are confronted by more clients than can readily be accommodated. They often choose (or skim off the top) those who seem mostly likely to succeed in terms of the criteria of bureaucracy. This happens despite the formal requirement by the policy to treat learners equitably. In Lipsky’s terms this is called ‘creaming’ (1980, p.107).

Another way in which street-level bureaucrats are practising creaming is by choosing those learners with special needs or who are slow in grasping some concepts and giving them special attention. For instance, Tr1 and Tr6 have a special programme for learners with Zulu Language problems. Every Friday they offer remedial lessons to those learners for a period of one hour. Lipsky calls this a form of creaming in which clients who are at ‘high risk’ are selected (1980, p.107).

(b) ‘Rubber stamping’

Most teachers also cope with the pressure of their work by ‘rubber stamping’. Most teachers said that they do not do baseline assessment as required by the policy. They said that there is a promotional requirement from each grade or phase to the next. If a learner does not meet this requirement he or she does not proceed to the next grade or phase. In that case, what is the purpose of doing baseline assessment? Lipsky says teachers use the judgements of children’s previous teachers in their informal assignments as early as the second grade. In that case street-level bureaucrats simply endorse or ‘rubber stamp’ the judgements made by the previous teachers (1980, p.129).

(c) Referrals

The researcher observed that in some cases where children needed special attention, teachers referred difficult or problem cases to other people employed in the organisation or to other organisations. For instance, teachers refer some disciplinary cases to phase co-ordinators and at times to the school management. According to Lipsky (1980, p.133), this usually happens when novices as supervisors ask more experienced workers to handle clients who present difficulties. This coping mechanism arises not because cases defy a teacher’s ability to handle them, but because they interfere with routine procedures in class.

(d) Working overtime and modifying the conception of work

In order to cope with a heavy workload, most teachers use their spare time, weekends and evenings to meet deadlines and finish school work. One teacher said that:

OBE requires that you do a lot of admin (paper work) so you end up rushing the children so that you can complete admin records. There you actually spend less time with the children... then at times you have to do admin after hours, you do some on weekends, evenings and at times during holidays (Tr3).

I use my spare time; I sacrifice my own time to do the work... at times I swap the subjects because the load of subjects is not the same. For instance Arts and Culture and Maths... Arts and Culture is one lesson a week for Maths you need more time for children to understand. In that case I can take time from other subjects and give it to Maths in order to help the learners (Tr6).

I have to stretch myself. That means I have to work extra hours, three times a week I wake up at night to do school work. I can't type very fast using the computer. So I need to work more hours on my work on the computer. They need to find a typist who can do all these things and I spend most of my time with the learners (Tr7).

It is clear from this evidence that teachers need to work extra hours in order to cope with their work. At times teachers as street-level bureaucrats cope with work pressure by modifying their conception of work (Lipsky, 1980, p.143). He says that street-level bureaucrats cope with job stresses by modifying their conception of work and their conception of clientele to be served. One teacher said that: *'teaching is now part of my life. I don't even feel burdened even if I am doing it at home or during holidays or even picnics. I join family time with work life'* (Tr20).

(e) Private goal definition

Another way in which teachers modify their conception of work is by focusing on a few aspects of their job. Some teachers complained about the discipline among the learners. They said that if you want to focus on 'perfection' from our learners you will never find it (Tr9). They argue that it is better to focus on your subject. Lipsky calls this coping mechanism 'private goal definition' (1980, p. 145). He says teachers are oriented toward classroom control or toward cognitive and personality development. It is, however, important to note that a lack of discipline may hinder proper learning in class too.

(f) Withdrawal

One respondent said that coping with work demands is very difficult. Because of that, this respondent is thinking about quitting the job next year. *'I sleep very late, I come here very tired.*

I can't manage when I am tired. That's the reason I want to resign. I cry every day, I teach seven learning areas some of which I don't know much about' (Tr17). Lipsky says that 'idealist young teachers quit either because they cannot tolerate the pettiness of their supervisors or they an inability to teach as they would like or were trained to teach' (1980, p.143). Lipsky notes that street-level bureaucrats show different withdrawal attitudes. Some of the withdrawal manifestations among street-level bureaucrats are absenteeism, high turnover, and general slowdowns. This particular school has been losing at least five teachers per year for the past two years.

4.7.8 How do the Department of Education and school management cope with street-level bureaucrats?

The study revealed that both the school management and the Department of Education have some mechanism of limiting or controlling the discretion of the street-level bureaucrats to some degree.

The school management is structured in a hierarchical way to ensure effective supervision. At the top of the hierarchy is the principal. The principal is assisted by two deputy principals, one for high school and the other one for primary school. Below the deputy principals are phase co-ordinators. All teachers report to the phase co-ordinators, who play a central role in assisting and supervising teachers. However, this also increases their work load since they are also expected to teach their classes like other teachers.

(a) School management

In terms of teaching methods and styles, the school management encourage teachers to be creative and responsive to classroom situations. When they were asked the question 'what is the reaction of school management when you use discretion,' some teachers said that:

The school management is supportive if one uses discretion which is aimed at enhancing the attainment of NCS outcomes. ... It also depends on the level of trust between the management and the teacher. When I was employed here, they knew my qualification and experience. Based on that they have a level of trust on what I do in class (Tr9).

I think some of the things I do and how I do them the government or school might not know. I don't know how they would react if they found out (Tr4).

I think they expect me to exercise discretion but within the bounds of policy (Tr20).

The job description of teachers and other street-level bureaucrats requires them to use discretion in some situations. It would be impossible to come up with a policy that directs how street-level bureaucrats should do their job by determining precisely the actions to be taken at each level and for all situations. However, this is not to say street-level bureaucrats can do as they wish at any

time. The school has some methods of controlling and reducing the level of autonomy of teachers. Some teachers said that:

In terms of assessment, our checks and balance system at school makes sure that the teacher does what is required. That's how we set our assessment policy. At every stage of the game there is a check point system to make sure that all assessment standards are being covered, learning outcomes are being covered and the required number of tasks has been done. That is from the school side (Tr7).

Everything that you use as formal assessment must be moderated before it is done by the learners. The school management also checks if you have done your work according to policy (Tr10).

Internal moderation is the main instrument to monitor our implementation of the policy at school level (Tr18).

The office does a lot to reduce our discretion, our records are checked fortnightly, you have to submit marks at the end of each mark cycle (after every two weeks) and at the end of the term. You have no choice on those things; the management is very strict on this issue (Tr20).

... It is easy to make and submit neat admin without helping the learners (Tr22).

This evidence suggests that teachers are well supervised. They cannot do as they please. At this school the assessment policy is followed to the letter. It was confirmed that the checks and balances as said by Tr7 are in place. This is one of the reasons teachers complain about administration. However, as earlier sections have shown, teachers still have a considerable degree of discretion. Tr22 explained that many teachers can prepare records and send them to the office in perfect shape but without helping the learners. The issue could be: if there are good records in the office about what is happening in class 'where is the missing link?'

(b) The Department of Education

The Department of Education has its own mechanism of making sure that the street-level bureaucracies and street-level bureaucrats are implementing the NCS. Most teachers said that they attend workshops which are aimed at providing guidance in the implementation of the NCS and also reminding the teachers on the importance of following policy. Some teachers said that:

Recently we attended a workshop, one of the facilitators from the Department of Education said 'OBE is not dead, you should implement it. We are coming to your schools to check whether you are doing this or not.' (Tr18).

External moderation keeps you on track (Tr7).

...by imposing such things as deadlines the government reduces my discretion. The control tests also known as common tests which are written by all schools force you to cover the syllabus in

time to prepare your learners for such tests. Also learning outcomes to be covered in the year are also a key factor. You need to move at the right pace so as to them (Tr9).

As the OBE stays in place longer more and more of our discretion is taken away. Each new policy guideline is coming to try and limit our discretion (Tr15).

The issues raised by these teachers are very critical in limiting the discretion of teachers in the implementation of NCS. For instance, in the FET phase in some subjects they write common tests throughout the province. In that case, the teachers teach what they are given as scope for the examination. They write examinations in March, June, and September for Grades 10 and 11. Grade 12 learners write their fourth and final examination in November. All these checks and balances keep the teacher on track. The teachers respect these because that is how the success or failure of street-level bureaucrats in implementing the NCS is measured.

After all this is done, the tests are moderated at school level and then at cluster level to see whether the work has been done according to policy. The subject advisers and cluster coordinator work hand in hand to supervise the implementation of the policy at cluster and school level. Although this sounds tightly controlled here, it is important to note that street-level bureaucrats always find some way of coping with these demands, as shown previously.

4.4 Discussion of the findings

This study examined how street-level bureaucrats (teachers) exercise discretion and use coping mechanisms as they implement the NCS. The work of Lipsky provided the framework for the investigation. According to Lipsky's definition, street-level bureaucrats are public service workers who interact directly with citizens in the course of their jobs and who have substantial discretion in the execution of their work. Lipsky says when taken together the individual decisions of all these workers become, or add up to, policy. Put differently, the individual decisions of teachers in the implementation of NCS become the 'NCS' regardless of what is in the policy documents.

Most citizens, parents, learners and other people encounter OBE through teachers. In the Lipskian terminology, the teachers, who are the street-level bureaucrats, are the 'street ministers of education'. What the parents see their children doing, the kind of homework, what they see on parents' day are the only ways they can know or experience the NCS. This makes the importance of street-level bureaucrats critical in the formulation and implementation of the NCS. In the following discussion attention is focused on the relative autonomy and the exercise of discretion by street-level bureaucrats in the implementation of the NCS as shown by the findings of this

study. Furthermore, an analysis of how street-level bureaucrats cope with the pressure of their work will be undertaken.

As shown in the study, all teachers confirmed that they have a considerable degree of autonomy and discretion from the authority of school management as well as from the Department of Education. Most teachers said they were free in many aspects of implementing the NCS. Lipsky says that street-level bureaucrats (teachers) work in situations too complicated to reduce to programmatic formats (1980, p.15). For teachers this is compounded by the fact that ‘contemporary views on education [upon which OBE is based] mitigate against detailed instructions to teachers on how and what to teach’ (Lipsky, 1980, p.15). This philosophy then allows and gives teachers a lot of room to use their discretion. Most teachers were found to be in agreement with Lipsky’s view of the current philosophy of education which suggests that ‘every child requires a response appropriate to a specific learning context’ (1980, p.15). In the process each teacher makes an individual decision which in the end will constitute a policy.

The main reason for this is that teachers as street-level bureaucrats work in situations which often require responses to the human dimension of situations. Tr18 said that ‘*we are not dealing with machines, we are dealing with people.*’ Lipsky notes that ‘we want teachers to perceive the unique potential of children’ and react appropriately to each learner (Lipsky, 1980, p.15).

Teachers’ discretion also promotes self-regard and encourages clients (learners) to believe that teachers hold the key to their well-being. For teachers this improves their self-esteem and learners also feel confident when they see that their teacher is in control of their learning.

Teachers also resort to their own discretion when the Department of Education is not clear about what is intended or required. As this study has shown, a significant proportion of the respondents (15.5%) described the policy goals as either ‘not clear’ or ‘somewhat clear’ (see Figure 4.15). Lipsky describes this as one of the conditions under which street-level bureaucrats work. Lipsky says that ‘Goal expectations of the agencies in which they (street-level bureaucrats) work tend to be ambiguous, vague or conflicting’ (Lipsky, 1980, p.27). One such goal of the NCS requires learners ‘to be culturally and aesthetically sensitive across a range of social contexts’ (Department of Education, 2002, p.10). It can be difficult to assume that all the teachers will arrive at a similar interpretation of the same outcome.

Street-level bureaucrats work under conditions of limited resources. Lipsky notes that resources are chronically inadequate relative to the tasks workers are asked to perform (1980, p.27). Their workload also means that performing to meet the expectations of the policy may become difficult. This is confirmed by this study which found that 65.4% of the respondents described their workload as either heavy or too heavy. In order to adjust to the reality of their work and their conditions of work, street-level bureaucrats employ coping mechanisms.

According to Lipsky, 'routines and simplifications' are a coping mechanism which helps deal with the pressures associated with demand that outstrips supply. Routines, says Lipsky, aid management of complexity; environmental structuring limits the complexity to be managed. For instance Tr9 said that he uses the lecture method in most or all of his lessons. This is because the learner culture of his class cannot produce good results by other methods such as discussion and group work. The lecture method is this teacher's routine in all lessons. Lipsky notes that 'routines and categories developed for processing those decisions effectively determine policy within the parameters established by authorities' (Lipsky, 1980, p.84). In this sense street-level bureaucrats 'make' policy.

As a way of coping with the pressure of their work, teachers ration their services. Lipsky notes that services can be limited in terms of a client's personal characteristics (Lipsky, 1980, p.102). In this study it was noted that learners with severe problems in Mathematics were referred to other private organisations for remedial lessons. In this case, the teachers' services were reserved for the 'mainstream' learners.

Another coping mechanism employed by teachers which is related to rationing is creaming. As already discussed, confronted with more learners than can readily be accommodated, teachers often choose (skim off the top) those who most succeed in terms of the NCS criteria for success. These learners often look for such teachers without being called. In the process these learners receive extra tuition that the others are not getting.

This study revealed that teachers use their discretion in the maintenance of discipline in class so as to permit learning to take place. Tr18, for instance, says '*I do not send all offences to the office, even those that the school says they must be dealt with by school management.*' This teacher says that this helps in cultivating a 'good' relationship with the learners. The learners comply with this teacher's class rules because they do not see her as a 'spy' of the office. Lipsky says that 'teachers and policy officers both must act immediately to secure co-operation of the

people with whom they are engaged' (Lipsky, 1980, p.122). Tr18 cited that one day she found a learner with dagga but she dealt quietly with the issue with only one member of school management. This helped her to develop a non-conflictual relationship with this learner. Another reason why teachers may opt for such a decision is to protect them from the violent culture of learners in this country.

Another fact discovered is that teachers 'develop sanctions to punish disrespect to routines of order' (Lipsky, 1980, p.125). Many teachers reported that at times they send children for detention if the children commit 'educational sins'. In concurrence with Lipsky's assertion that 'teachers in traditional schools fear the removal of sanctions that, rightly or wrongly, they believe to be effective deterrents to student misconduct' (Lipsky, 1980, p.125), teachers complained that the banning of corporal punishment in schools is making their job difficult. Most teachers agreed that the current forms of punishment may not be effective. One of the senior management officers said '*the position of this school as a biblically-based school is compromised when corporal punishment is removed from schools*' (Tr7).

This study established that, as a coping mechanism, teachers 'refer difficult or problem cases to other people employed in their organisation' (Lipsky, 1980, p.133). This can also be related to specialisation in the bureaucracy. At this school, there are specialist Arts and Culture teachers in the foundation phase and in the intermediate phase. However, learners with special needs are referred to other individuals outside the school.

In conclusion, Lipsky notes that denying discretion is a common way to limit responsibility (p.149). A small but significant number of teachers denied that they have discretion in the implementation of NCS.

Workers seek to deny that they have influence, are free to make decisions, or offer service alternatives. Strict adherence to rules and refusal to make exceptions when exceptions may be made, provide workers with defences against the possibility that they might be able to act as clients would wish (Lipsky, 1980, p.149).

Many teachers generally are heard saying that the poor results in the National Senior Certificate are a result of 'OBE'. This implies there is no room for discretion and thus they follow the policy to the letter. These could also be strategies to protect themselves from their shortcomings as the final service deliverers of the NCS policy. However, the study has shown that most teachers in this school under study enjoy considerable discretion and autonomy in the implementation of the NCS. It was also found that teachers believe that the use of their discretion is helpful in the

implementation of NCS. But the study also found that the school management and the Department of Education try to limit the teachers' discretion.

The position of teachers and management represent a dichotomy. How can the gap between them be reduced? Or, viewed another way, can the teachers be given the latitude to 'make' policy from the bottom which is based on their experience? Can the Department of Education adopt a complete F W Taylor mode of bureaucracy and form of scientific management? What has been made clear by this study is that, because of the nature of their work, it is difficult if not impossible, to take away the discretion of teachers as street-level bureaucrats in implementing the NCS policy.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

This chapter draws conclusions and make recommendations. The conclusions made by this study cover both the theoretical and practical aspects of policy implementation. Some theoretical aspects to be discussed have to do with the policy implementation models presented in earlier chapters. The recommendations apply to both policy practitioners and scholars.

This study has shown that teachers can be characterised as street-level bureaucrats as construed by Lipsky. Teachers, in the implementation of NCS, have a considerable degree of discretion and autonomy from school management and the Department of Education. This is because a teacher's work does not lend itself to bureaucratic control and any systemic attempt to appraise, evaluate or assess this work is 'determined to be routine or ritualistic' (Fitzgerald, 2003, p.103). Lipsky's analysis provides a set of lenses through which policy practitioners and policy scholars can conceptualise and theorise how policy implementation evolves and how front-line workers behave.

This observation raises critical questions about the policy implementation of the NCS. As the study has shown, some street-level bureaucrats profess that the use of discretion was very effective in the attainment of NCS learning outcomes. Lipsky says that street-level bureaucrats (teachers) acting as partners are simultaneously acting as 'business owners' interested in achieving results 'consistent with agency objectives' (Lipsky 1980, p. 18). In this view, teachers' autonomy and their exercise of judgment in the implementation of NCS need to be recognized as resources which need to be used effectively (Widaningrum, 2007, p.13). The teachers' creative solutions and teaching methods, which usually went unnoticed, or 'may have brought reprimands in the past, should be captured, identified as appropriate behaviour' (Widaningrum, 2007, p.13). This could take place in cluster meetings, and in any other forums where teachers gather and share ideas.

However, one vocal commentator on the implementation of OBE in South Africa, Jonathan D. Jansen, warns that 'these autonomous spaces should not, however, be romanticised' (Jansen, 2004, p.64). Jansen notes that 'it is particularly dangerous given the fact that at least 25% of South African teachers are under-qualified and a majority under-prepared to deal with the demands of curriculum innovation, new assessment technologies and –at a very basic level— accurate teaching of the subject matter' (Jansen, 2004, p.64). Given this view, allowing the room for autonomy and discretion that has been revealed by this study to 'unqualified' and 'under-prepared' teachers could spell disaster for education.

It is, therefore, important for there to be guidance on using discretionary powers, ‘bolstered by the incentives and remuneration practices, supervision, and peer pressures which are required to sustain appropriate provider behaviour from teachers’ (Widaningrum, 2007, p.13). This is so since some studies of street-level bureaucracy (Checkland, 2004; Palumbo and Calista, 1987; Maynard-Moody and Musheno, 2003) demonstrate that front-line workers used their discretionary power not to advance professional ideals, as suggested earlier, but rather to manage otherwise overwhelming demands. As was shown in this study, at times street-level bureaucrats employed discretionary choices as a way of coping with pressures of work. When speaking about discretion and autonomy in the classroom it is imperative that we take heed of Jansen’s warning that:

The rigid defence of autonomy means that another generation of learners would be underserved by poor teaching, that misconceptions in subjects like mathematics and science would be sustained, and that teachers would simply stagnate in terms of their professional development (Jansen, 2004, p.64).

This research also concludes that teachers give priority to national and Department of Education examinations in their teaching. What and how they do their work and even use their discretionary powers is in most cases influenced by examinations. This is because the Department of Education measures the successful implementation of NCS according to examination results. According to Lipsky, street-level bureaucrats redefine their goals, and emphasise the criteria that is used by the agency to measure success or failure. In this sense teachers must consider the formal curricula that have been mandated by a nation, state, district and school and the way it is monitored and evaluated (Boote, 2006, p.463). The current way the teachers are held accountable ultimately is by Matriculation results. Jansen points out that ‘...the teacher performance is directly related to learner performance as measured in matriculation scores’ (2004, p.62).

However, this is not enough to reduce the teachers’ discretion in the implementation of NCS since these examinations only take place once at the end of the twelve years of the educational life of a learner. If examinations are as important as emphasised here it would make sense to introduce national examinations which are externally marked and moderated. This would be a departure from the current system which gives Common Tasks Assessments (CTAs) at the end of Grade Nine which is marked at school by the subject teachers concerned.

Yet another conclusion reached by this study is that the top-down models of policy implementation are insufficient in explaining policy implementation in both theoretical and practical terms. Although top-down models offer plausible descriptive tools of policy

implementation and formulation, they fail to acknowledge the role played by street-level bureaucrats. This study has shown that the individual decisions made by each teacher can eventually become policy as a matter of practice. That is, street-level bureaucrats 'make' the policy. In some cases the street-level bureaucrats make their own 'private goals' which may not be the same as the agency goals. One therefore has to understand the behaviour of street-level bureaucrats and acknowledge the manner in which they 'make' policy at the bottom. It is thus imperative to seek the input of street-level bureaucrats in the current efforts to streamline the NCS.

Consequently, the success or failure of policy implementation should be perceived from different angles. The NCS policy is usually criticised on the basis of the outcomes (Matriculation results). Most lay people would conclude that if the results are not satisfactory, the policy is therefore inadequate. Very few people choose to look at other factors such as the behaviour of street-level bureaucrats. This is not an attempt to justify OBE but only to indicate that the scope of analysis needs to be broadened in considering the implementation of the NCS.

In conclusion, this study has illustrated the importance of in-depth interviews and observational methods of data collection. Investigating the exercise of discretion by teachers in the implementation of NCS by school teachers required interviews and direct observation of front-line workers interacting with their clients. The time spent on observation and the number of schools analysed could be increased to include private schools as well as a range of rural and urban public schools so that the findings of this study could be tested more widely.

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Appendix A: Questionnaire for teachers

Demographic information

Please complete the following demographic information. This shall be used to compare and contrast the coping mechanisms and level discretion autonomy of participants. This information as well as the information from the interviews shall be kept private and confidential.

1. male/female

2. Level of teaching assignment.

Primary elementary (1-3)	Primary intermediate (4-5)	Middle school (6-8)	High school (9-12)

3. Total years of teaching experience.

0-5 years	6-10 years	11-15 years	16-20 years	21-25 years	26 or more years

4. Professional and educational qualification

National seniour certificate	certificate	diploma	BA/BSc	MA/MSc

Discretion autonomy in service delivery

1. How much autonomy do you have in determining the tasks that you do?

none	little	Some	Quite a bit	Very much

Comment:

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2. How much autonomy do you have in determining the way you do your tasks?

none	little	Some	Quite a bit	Very much

Comment:

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3. How much autonomy do you have in determining the rules and procedure in your class?

none	little	Some	Quite a bit	Very much

Comment:

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4. To what extent does the NCS (OBE) have clear-cut reasonable policy goals and objectives?

To a very small extent	To a little extent	To some extent	To a great extent	To a very great extent

Comment:

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5. When considering situations that arise in your work (class and school), what percentage of time are you guided by written policy?

0-20	21-40	41-60	61-80	81-100

Comment:

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6. How precise are these rules or standard in specifying what to be done?

Very general	Mostly general	Somewhat specific	Quite specific	Very specific

Comment:

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7. To what extent do you follow these rules?

To no extent	To little extent	To some extent	To a great extent	To a every great extant

Comment:

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8. To what extent do think the exercise of discretion helps you and the learners to attain the NCS learning outcomes?

To no extent	To a little extent	To some extent	To a great extent	To a every great extant

9. If you use your discretion and autonomy, what informs your alternatives? You can tick both.

experience	professional education

Comment:

.....

10. How does the government or school management react when you use your professional discretion?

11. In what ways do the school management and government reduces your discretion to ensure that you implement the OBE as it is on paper?

12. What percentage of your time is devoted to teaching (face-to- face tuition)?

0-20	21-40	41-60	61-80	81-100

Comment:

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 13. (a) How easy is it for you to be sure that you have done your work correctly?

Very difficult	Quite difficult	Somewhat difficult	Quite easy	Very easy

Comment:

.....

13(b) What percentage of time are you sure?

0-20	21-40	41-60	61-80	81-100

Comment:

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14. (a) To what extent are the resources adequate?

To no extent	To little extent	To some extent	To a great extent	To a every great extant

Comment:

.....

14 (b) How do you cope?

15. (a) How heavy is the load that the NCS (OBE) places on your daily work?

light	A bit light	Just about right	heavy	Too heavy

15 (b) How do you cope?

16. To what extent do you treat all learners/classes in the same manner at all times?

To no extent	To little extent	To some extent	To a great extent	To a every great extent

Comment:.....

17. To what extent do you assist learners at your school where the language of learning and teaching is not their home language?

To a very small extent	To a little extent	To some extent	To a great extent	To a very great extent

Comment:.....

18. To what extent do you do the following in your assessment?

Comment:.....

	To a very small extent	To little extent	To some extent	To a great extent	To a every great extant
Assess learners' progress regularly and updated records throughout the year					
Learners are active participants in learning and assessment					
Assessment strategies cater for a variety of learner needs (language, physical, psychological, emotional and cultural)					
Summative assessment is planned at the beginning of the year to include a variety of assessment strategies					
Baseline assessment of prior learning takes place at the beginning of a grade or phase and establishes what learners already know.					

20. Which one of these documents do you use in the execution of your duties? You can tick more than one.

Foundations for Learning	Learning Area Statements	Teacher Guides	Learning Area Assessment Guides	National Protocol on Assessment

21. How often do you use the documents?

	To a very small extent	To little extent	To some extent	To a great extent	To a every great extant
Foundations for Learning					
Learning Area Statements					
Teacher Guides					
Learning Area Assessment Guides					
National Protocol on Assessment					

Comment.....

Thank you for your participation.