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Discourse in curriculum policy enactment: a focus on leadership practices

Abstract

This article focuses on the prevailing discourse in the enactment of governmental curriculum policy via the leadership practices of school management teams (SMTs). Based on qualitative research in three selected working class schools, the article explores how the working class context positions schools in distinct ways to enact curriculum policy. Stephen Ball and colleagues' policy enactment theory is employed as a lens to investigate the enactment of curriculum policy via the four core leadership practices of setting direction, developing people, redesigning the organisation and managing teaching and learning. It is argued that these working class schools are regulated by the incoming discourse of the curriculum policy and they respond to this incoming discourse in an almost robotic way. The article highlights the two-folded nature of discourse, i.e. the incoming discourse of the curriculum policy, and the schools' discursive responses. The results indicate that the SMT's leadership practices are fundamentally impacted and determined by the schools' materiality and discursive constructions.

Keywords: *curriculum policy, discourse, discursive strategies, leadership practices, policy enactment, working class context*

1. Introduction

The article focuses on how selected working class schools' leadership practices receive and enact governmental curriculum policy as part of their endeavours to build a teaching and learning (curriculum) platform at their schools. I posit that their working class contexts provide the framing and operational texts for their leadership practices in response to the curriculum requirements. In this article I argue that *how* the selected schools' School Management Teams (SMTs), which are responsible for implementing leadership practices, 'live' South Africa's current version of curriculum change via the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) (DBE, 2011), is fundamentally impacted by the schools' context. The research question that I explore is: How is the curriculum policy enacted within the working class context via the leadership practices of the SMT? I locate this study within the gap between policy intention and policy implementation as I explore the material and discursive contexts of the schools in this study.

Over the last twenty-eight years, governmental curriculum policy has had disparate effects on South Africa's schools, as there are still deep inequalities which were carved by apartheid (Pillay, 2021). CAPS, the latest manifestation of governmental curriculum initiatives, has been described by Maddock and Maroun (2018) as a "one-size-fits-all" curriculum which implies that it is expected that CAPS should be implemented in a relatively uniform manner in all South African schools. The working class context, associated with poverty, crime, lack of parental involvement, overcrowded classes and poor infrastructure (Christie, Butler & Potterton, 2007; Moloi, 2010; Fataar, 2015), position working class schools in distinct ways with regards to implementing the curriculum. CAPS is associated with an expectation of a type of behavioural performativity among schools and teachers as a result of a culture of constant monitoring by the Department of Basic Education (DBE). Schools are therefore positioned for compliance with CAPS expectations, meaning that they have to attain learner performance scores in order to avoid being negatively labelled as underperforming or dysfunctional schools.

In exploring the discourses associated with curriculum policy enactment in the working class context, this article uses the four core leadership practices, namely setting direction, developing people, redesigning the organisation and managing teaching and learning (Leithwood *et al*., 2006). These core leadership practices entail the following: Setting direction involves activities such as the setting of vision and framing of goals, whereas the leadership practice of developing people relates to the motivation, support and intellectual stimulation of people. The leadership practice of redesigning the organisation focuses on building a collaborative culture within the school and with the wider community, while the leadership practice of managing teaching and learning deals mainly with staffing, planning and monitoring performance.

I start by discussing the theoretical and methodological orientations of the study. I then discuss how the expectations of the incoming CAPS position the leadership practices of the SMT within their context, i.e. how they receive CAPS and how they view and experience CAPS. This is followed by a discussion of the four core leadership practices and how the SMTs, via their leadership practices, respond to the implementation of CAPS in order to establish a viable curriculum policy platform. I focus on how the SMTs' leadership practices pursue the requirements of CAPS within the context of their schools by showing how the leadership practices are enacted within the working class school environment. In so doing, the article contributes to the literature on leadership practices in working class school contexts.

2. Theoretical considerations

The policy enactment framework of Ball *et al*. (2012) is employed to inform and guide the analysis in this article. They describe policy enactment as "creative processes of interpretation and recontextualisation - that is, the translation of texts into action and the abstractions of policy ideas into contextualized practices" (Ball *et al*., 2012). They base their framework on three constituent dimensions of the messy reality of school life, which are: the material, the discursive and the interpretive dimensions of policy implementations in schools (Ball *et al.,* 2012). Firstly, the material dimension relates to the contextual factors such as the school buildings, resources, and infrastructure. Ball *et al.'s* policy enactment theory is concerned with the interplay between a school's practices and their contextual variables and not only on context as a background (Ball *et al.,* 2012). In their theorising about policy, Ball *et al*. (2012: 21) group the dynamics of context as follows:

- Situated context which refers to the location of the school, its history and students.
- Professional cultures, in reference to values, teacher commitments, experiences and policy management in schools.
- Material contexts which are the staff establishment, school budget, buildings, technology and infrastructure.
- And the schools' external context which covers the degree and quality of learning area support, pressures and expectations from broader policy context, such as school ratings and responsibilities.

These four components of context serve as a vehicle to illuminate different aspects of policy enactment, which are applied in this article to the working class school context. The material dimension provides the tools to explore the working class school's specific contextual circumstances such as the interplay between people, their emotions, their values and their physical surroundings (such as resources and overcrowded classes) associated with the enactment of curriculum policy.

The second dimension of Ball *et al*.'s policy enactment theory is the discursive domain (Ball *et al*., 2012). In a school, discursive practices involve different activities and artefacts which represent policy and which contribute to the process of policy enactment. Examples of these discursive practices include textbooks, websites, newsletters, policy symbols, prize giving ceremonies, meetings and similar events (Ball *et al*., 2012). These artefacts exercise power through a production of 'truth' and 'knowledge' as discourse (Ball, 1993: 49), which means that these activities and artefacts are used to portray policy. Maguire *et al*. (2011) explain that discourses are social processes, formed within and by wider events, beliefs and 'epistemes' to produce common sense notions and normative ideas. Discourse thus 'directs' the school toward desirable behaviour. Foucault describes discourses as "the sets of conditions in accordance with which a practice is exercised, in accordance with which that practice gives rise to partially or totally new statements, and in accordance with which it can be modified" (Ball *et al*., 2012: 123). What this means is that in school settings specific situations give rise to specific practices, which are then lived as the 'truth' in that setting, and which are adapted based on the prevailing expectations by those in power, as ''discourses are both an instrument and an effect of power'' (Ball, 2006).

Relating to the curriculum, Maguire *et al*. (2011), in their article *Policy discourses in school texts*, turn the attention to certain discursive productions of the 'good' learner, the 'good' teacher and the 'good' school. Discursive productions of the 'good' learner refer to high academic expectations. This involves celebrating achievements of learners through activities such as prize giving ceremonies and displaying the names of the top achievers for the school and broader community (Maguire *et al*., 2011). On the other hand, discursive productions of the 'good' teacher focus the attention on the qualities of teachers, such as commitment and professionalism of teachers (Ball *et al*., 2012). These qualities of the 'good' teacher are discursively portrayed throughout the school by means of posters, meetings, teacher awards and teacher development days that focus on the desired teacher qualities and values. Furthermore, discursive productions of the 'good' school focus on how the school selects, interprets and translates specific aspects of policy initiatives and mandates (Maguire *et al*., 2011) into actions. Hence, the focus of the 'good school' is on raising the standards and raising the achievements of the learners. This is done by using discursive strategies such as the visualisation of policy by means of comparing school results and encouraging teachers to work hard (Ball *et al*., 2012).

A discursive lens enables the analysis of the types of events and activities that the school depicts as desirable in enhancing teaching and learning. The discursive lens highlights what is regarded as valuable knowledge in the school, emanating from policy, and how this valuable knowledge is lived as the truth in the school, through discursive strategies, implemented via leadership practices. Furthermore, it provides insight into what is regarded as desirable behaviour in the school. Thus a 'visualisation' of the requirements for the implementation of curriculum policy, allowing people to 'see' what is commended in the enactment of governmental curriculum policy. These discursive strategies are regarded as the 'tools' in the policy work of the school (Ball *et al*., 2012).

Third is, the interpretive dimension of policy enactment which refers to the sense making of policy by policy implementation actors (Ball *et al.*, 2012). The focus of the interpretive dimension is on the policy text and how the policy text is made meaning of, interpreted, conveyed and re-interpreted. Here Ball *et al*. (2012) distinguishes between interpretation and translation, where interpretation refers to an engagement with the languages of policy and translation refers to the languages of practice, meaning that interpretation and translation relate to how the text is translated into action.

Ball *et al*. (2012: 45) state that interpretation is "a strategy, an institutional political process, a process of elucidation and explanation". Translation on the other hand refers to putting the policy text into action. This translation can take place through meetings, plans and events. Both interpretation and translation here refer to the meaning-making process of the policy document. In relating the aspects of the interpretive dimension to leadership practices, the article discussion explores how the school's leadership in working class school contexts make meaning of the policy text, especially in this era of performativity where schools are expected to attain results. In other words, how the policy is received, read and understood in practice and how it is translated into actions during implementation at the schools (Singh, Thomas & Harris, 2013).

3. Methodology

The research on which this article is based, is a qualitative study with the SMT members of three working class schools in a peri-urban area outside Cape Town. This study focused on the prevailing discourse in the enactment of curriculum policy via the leadership practices of the SMT. The research was conducted according to the interpretive paradigm and enabled me to capture the lived experiences of the SMT members of the participating schools. The interpretive paradigm allowed me to gain a deeper understanding of the leadership practices of the SMT (Bhengu & Myende, 2016).

In this research purposive sampling (Punch, 2005) was done by selecting SMT members from three working class secondary schools, as a working class school is the contextual focus of this study. According to Fataar (2009) and Mampane and Bouwer (2011) working class schools in South Africa have their origins in racially segregated, low-cost housing areas for people of colour and these contexts are characterised by distinct features such as poverty, child-headed households and gangsterism, among others (Christie, 2008). The sample size for this study depended on the size of the SMTs of the three schools. At the time of this study school A had an SMT of 11 members, school B an SMT of 9 members, and school C a rotating SMT of 4 members (still considered a growing school).

The data were collected via semi-structured individual interviews with the principals of these schools and focus groups with the rest of the SMT members (excluding the principal). Although principals are part of the SMT of a school, their interviews were done separately as a means of triangulation. The individual semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions consisted of two phases, where phase 1 probed the material aspect of Ball's policy enactment theory and Phase 2 probed for actions associated with the four core leadership practices. The focus groups and semi-structured interviews lasted 45-60 minutes. Based on an inductive data analysis approach, I attempted to gain an understanding of how the SMTs (including principals) experienced their school context and how they engaged with the curriculum policy, via their leadership practices.

To maintain anonymity, pseudonyms were used, i.e. School A, School B and School C. The pseudonyms used for the principals are as follows: For School A - Principal 1, for School B – Principal 2 and for School C – Principal 3. The deputy principals and departmental heads (DHs) are linked with their respective school. The same set of questions was used in the semi-structured interviews with the principals and the SMT focus groups and it was thus possible to ascertain the similarities and differences in how each school's stakeholders perceive their context, leadership practices and curriculum policy enactment.

As the quality of research may be questioned, a discussion regarding trustworthiness, reliability and validity of the research is necessary. In order to adhere to trustworthiness I formulated the semi-structured interview and focus group questions based on the relevant literature and theoretical framework that I employed, as well as through the technique of triangulation. Reliability was ensured by recording each interview (with permission) and personally transcribing them *ad verbatim*. To promote reliability and validity (Merriam, 2009), the data and provisional interpretations were discussed with the participants to determine whether these interpretations were a correct representation of their responses. Also, an attempt was made to remain unbiased. Furthermore, I kept a detailed account of the methods, procedures and decision points in conducting this study. Rich, thick descriptions are provided to contextualise the study. As this research involved collecting data from people, and about people, I adhered to the requirements of ethical research, i.e. foreseeing no harm for the participants, maintaining their privacy and anonymity, protecting their confidentiality, obtaining informed consent from the participants, as well as from the Western Cape Education Department, and not intruding on their class teaching time (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011).

4. Results and discussion

The purpose of this study was to explore the prevailing discourse in the enactment of governmental curriculum policy via the leadership practices of school management teams (SMTs). This section presents the findings of the qualitative research and analyses these by means of Ball *et al*.'s (2012) policy enactment theory. I focus on how the curriculum policy is represented through visual materials, which includes textbooks, trophies and recording sheets of learners, and activities (such as meetings and in-service training) within the schools. These types of visual materials are called artefacts which inform and form the ''ways of being and becoming'' (Ball *et al*., 2012: 122) in a school in the process of enacting a curriculum policy platform.

Ball *et al*. (2012) explain that discourse is twofold, in that institutions such as schools are both productive of and constituted by discursive practices, events and texts in the process of

policy enactment. In the current South African dispensation and performative regime within which schools find themselves and within which they have to enact a curriculum policy platform, schools are positioned to attain specified results to avoid being negatively labelled. Schools are thus positioned by the incoming discourse (CAPS) which they respond to through their own discursive strategies, i.e. what they do and think about the in-coming curriculum policy. CAPS provides the framework within which the school's practices take place which then give rise to new statements and new ways of doing things in the process of curriculum enactment. These discourses (the ways of doing and thinking) then become part of the everyday life of schools.

Curriculum policy in South Africa carries within it notions of achievement such as being labelled as a 'good' or 'dysfunctional' or underperforming school. According to Maguire *et al*. (2011) discursive productions of the 'good' school focus on how the school selects, interprets and translates specific aspects of policy initiatives and mandates. The 'good' school in the South African education system is portrayed as the school which achieves the required results as mandated by the DoE, i.e. schools that obtain less than 60% in the National Senior Certificate (NSC) examination, are labelled as underperforming schools (Republic of South Africa, 2013). This discursive formation of the 'good' school implies that there is a discourse of the 'good' teacher and the 'good' learner who compose the 'good' school (see Ball *et al*., 2012). The 'good' learner is thus depicted as the learner who achieves the required results and the 'good' teacher is depicted as the teacher who has a high level of attainment in his/her subject.

4.1 Incoming discourse of CAPS

From the data gathered, it was found that all three schools in this study experience CAPS as a quest for results within a limited time frame, and with a prescribed content. On a question of how they perceive CAPS, the participants had the following comments:

> *It's all about results really. Results, results and meeting the target that's from the department. It's all about pleasing the master [referring to the head of education] (Principal 1).*

> *The document restricts us (Departmental Head (DH) – School A).*

The responses point to some of the frustrations the SMTs experience with the results expectations of CAPS. Implicitly, the 'good' school is portrayed as a school which adheres to these results expectations. Due to pressure to perform at a certain level, the SMTs of all three schools highlight the manner in which their leadership practices are geared towards the attainment of results.

The responses further indicate that the incoming CAPS is accompanied by activities such as surveillance of schools by District officials which, in turn is followed by training sessions aimed at developing teachers to comply with CAPS requirements. It is evident that the SMT members of the three schools are positioned to adhere to the requirements associated with the incoming CAPS in terms of attaining specified results, completing the curriculum content as specified and adhering to mandated due dates as specified, although their contextual factors may impede this. The prescriptive nature of CAPS coincides with Fataar's (2015: 161) description of the South African curriculum policy orientation as 'teacher-proof', 'tight' and 'constrictive'. It seems that CAPS does not take into account the contextual constraints

of township schools. In these working class school contexts, as evident from the comments, teachers devote a lot of time to the pastoral care of learners before actual teaching and learning can take place. The expectations from the DBE in terms of CAPS point to the 'one-size-fits-all' nature of CAPS, as what is possible in one school, is not necessarily possible in another school due to the impact of context. This links with Fataar's (2015) suggestion that the curriculum policy fails to productively leverage the working class context of schools to engender productive teaching practices, thus indicating the prevailing discourse.

4.2 Discursive responses of the schools via their leadership practices

The data reveals that the schools respond to the incoming CAPS discourse by compliance through their leadership practices. The SMTs are therefore not powerless as they develop their own discursive strategies. However, the SMTs' leadership practices are shaped by the incoming discourse, i.e. pressure to comply with the directives of CAPS by district officials through their surveillance regimes, and the schools' discursive response is an almost robotic reaction to this incoming discourse.

The devices that the schools use to comply with this incoming discourse is their production of the 'good' learner and the 'good' teacher as a way of pursuing the 'good' school, which is advocated by the DBE. Their working class context positions them in a deficit way and this positioning informs their response, via their leadership practices, to the incoming discourse.

4.3 Setting direction

According to Leithwood *et al*. (2006) the leadership practice of setting direction involves the building of a shared vision, fostering the acceptance of group goals, creating high-performance expectations and communicating the direction of the school. The data indicate that all three schools placed a focus on high achievement for all learners due to the academic expectations of the DBE.

> *Our goal is 60%. What the WCED wants. So our focus is on pass rate as a school (DH – school A).*

> *As a school we want to produce better results. The HODs have subject meetings and set the targets in those meetings (DH – School C).*

The curriculum policy expectations are interpreted as a request to achieve results. Some of the interviewees mentioned that the poor socio-economic background of their learners prompts them to set goals of high achievement as a means to capacitate learners to escape their harsh township environment. In the words of Principal 2 "*Just to take them out of this environment*".

The interviewees of Schools A and B are convinced that providing their learners an educational basis that would take them out of their negative township environment will propel these learners to succeed in life. However, taking these learners out of the township environment for their grade 12 year, is only a short term goal as they need money for this, and learners will have to return to the township. The discourse of performativity drives the schools' direction setting and it becomes a major constituent of their curriculum policy platform, but their materiality constrains them in many ways.

In pursuing the production of the 'good' school (the expected results), the focus of the construction of the 'good' teacher is on high results expectations of the teacher in the enactment of a curriculum policy platform. The 'good' teacher is produced out of high levels

of (subject) attainment (Ball *et al*., 2012). In the case of the enactment of a curriculum policy platform in South African schools, the 'good' teacher is perceived as the teacher who produces good results for their subject in line with DBE expectations. The DBE holds the SMT members responsible and accountable if there is a drop in results, while at the same time acknowledging those teachers whose learners perform well by means of public award ceremonies. In a similar vein, the SMT holds teachers responsible for the attainment of the expected results.

As indicated by the SMT members, their goals and vision are translated via meetings, one-on-one discussions with learners and morning staff briefings with a main focus on results. As the goals are already predetermined by the DBE, it leaves no space for innovation and creativity of the SMT. Discourse structures the way they think and do things. In line with this, using Foucault, Ball (2006: 48) explains that "we do not speak discourse, discourse speaks us".

4.4 Developing people

This leadership practice centres around providing individualised support, intellectual stimulation and the modelling of appropriate values and practice (Klar & Brewer, 2013). The responses from the interviews indicate that the three schools in this study attempt to incorporate these aspects of development into their enactment of a curriculum policy platform at the school, although it does not materialise as outlined by this leadership practice, due to their context.

Development in the schools is mainly focused on increasing the teachers' subject teaching capacity to achieve the results expectations of the DBE.

> *You see, but they [WCED] are looking at the subject. It's content of the subject. How the subject can be dealt with in order for the learners to understand very quickly (Principal 2).*

School A's principal persuades his teachers to attend development programmes, by luring them with the possibility of upgrading their classrooms with smart boards. Having smart boards is expected to assist teachers with their teaching as the school currently has to cope with a lack of resources which hampers their curriculum delivery. Peer teaching, seminars focusing on specific subject content and advice from subject advisers are some of the strategies that are used to assist and enforce the expected teaching capacity of teachers, with the aim of improving student results. Based on the comments and following Ball *et al*. (2012) the curriculum policy document is read and interpreted as specific subject content knowledge which has to be conveyed in a specific manner within a specified time frame. There is no indication of intellectual stimulation for teachers.

The principals and SMT members also indicated that they provide individualised moral and social support as part of their development initiatives due to the challenging nature of their context:

> *School A: My support to the teachers, number one, is a word of encouragement. I've always made it a point, every morning. I'm a very spiritual person. Every morning I ensure that, you know, there's a positive verse that I read for people, you know, from the Bible (Principal 1).*

This type of support is expected to motivate teachers to cope with their contextual challenges and to still produce results, despite adverse circumstances. It is evident that the schools do not have a fixed program for development, but that the principals and SMT members

are aware of the development that is needed within their schools, especially regarding the managing of large classes and disciplining of often unruly learners which is characteristic of their working class school contexts. From the responses it appears that development is done on an *ad hoc* basis or provided by the DBE.

The DH of School A's comment refers to the intertextuality (Ball *et al*., 2012) of policy when she mentions that the IQMS process influences the development aspect related to the curriculum policy. She raises the point that if development in specific aspects is not requested on the teacher's Personal Growth Plan (PGP) of the IQMS, it will not be endeavoured by the school. Development at school level is seen to be IQMS driven and not automatically incited by the SMT. On the other hand, the principal of School B's comment points to the association of CAPS with time. According to him, the content of CAPS for the different subjects takes too much time already and they need to focus on finishing the curriculum. Therefore, they do not have enough time to accommodate certain development programmes.

The principal of School A also extends the construction of the 'good' teacher to their dress code:

> *I'm very strict when it comes to dress code. You don't come here wearing tekkies and a beanie as teachers (Principal 1).*

This principal is of the opinion that ''*students become what they see*''. In other words, if teachers are dressed appropriately, it may motivate learners to have high expectations of themselves. The 'good' teacher is thus dressed in a manner that is expected to motivate learners to excel in their school work.

Apart from teacher development, the SMTs indicated that they focus on the development of their learners as well. The development of their learners focuses mainly on support activities aimed at improving the knowledge of learners in order to promote achievement. All three schools indicate that the development of the learners centres around the provision of extra classes as a means to improve the learners' content knowledge for specific subjects, to attain results. The 'good' learner is thus expected to attend these classes. Furthermore, School A provides the necessary space for learners to study at school after hours and some teachers take learners into their homes to support and develop them. At School A, they also direct learners into selecting specific subjects which they believe learners will be better at. Learners are thus lured into certain subjects which may produce 'better' results for the school.

4.5 Redesigning the organisation

The third core leadership practice involves the building of collaborative cultures, modifying organisational structures to nurture collaboration, building productive relations with families and communities and connecting the school to the wider community (Klar & Brewer, 2013). In exploring this leadership practice, all three schools in this study indicated that they endeavour to build collaborative cultures as a means to improve results, albeit in differing ways and not always successful. The SMT members believe that collaboration will enhance the teaching and learning experience as this may lead to a uniform interpretation and effective implementation of the curriculum policy in pursuit of results as township schools are usually characterised by fragmented relationships. The 'good' teacher is thus depicted as the teacher who has good interpersonal relationships and who can work in a team.

The schools' attempts at building collaborative cultures translate into the following activities:

> *Our departments sit together and plan together. They work together (School B - DH).*

> *We have our morning briefing and then state our challenges which we have as a school- in general, curriculum wise, discipline wise and all these things (School C - DH).*

According to the interviewees, collaboration in these schools is promoted through the expectations of the principals and SMTs for the different subject departments to work together. According to SMT members, collaboration among the subject departments is expected to raise the level of teaching and learning with the aim of improving results. However, School A's DH indicated that collaboration does not always happen as expected as relationships between teachers may be volatile. This comment on fragmented relationships within their schools is supported by the comments of the three principals. In the case of School A, the principal commented that the harshness of their working class context restricts collaboration as many teachers do not have the passion to teach at the school anymore. School B's principal commented on the negative attitude that some teachers may have when they are reprimanded if they did not follow instructions correctly. School C's principal highlights their professional challenge of a temporary rotating SMT as having a negative influence on teachers who may aim for promotion posts. He added that this may result in teachers who sabotage each other's work, particularly with regard to the completion of administrative duties which has specific due dates. The responses indicate that although the SMTs attempt to redesign the schools through meetings and expectations of collaborative planning, it is hampered by poor human relations.

The principals of Schools B and C indicated that they place a high focus on adhering to DBE due dates for the completion of school-based assessment tasks. They believe that they can ensure this adherence by following DBE protocol, such as the hierarchy of responsibilities, as it allows them to hold the DHs and deputy principals accountable. The constant surveillance by the DBE regarding the completion of assessments coerces them to follow protocol.

4.6 Managing teaching and learning

This leadership practice entails staffing the instructional programme, monitoring the progress of learners, teachers and the school, providing instructional support, aligning resources and buffering staff from distractions to their work (Klar & Brewer, 2013). The previous three leadership practices that were presented culminate into this leadership practice. The strategies associated with the management of teaching and learning is an attempt to ensure that the direction that is set, is adhered to, that the development of teachers and learners are focused on meeting the set goals, and that the redesign of the organisation is pursued.

Recruiting teachers and allocating subjects to teachers, pose some challenges. At school C, the principal indicated that they had the challenge of implementing the WCED policy whereby teachers had to be appointed if they were in service of the school for more than six months. School C's principal commented as follows:

> *We don't really have teachers who are qualified for LO [Life Orientation] and the challenge emanates from a circular last year which said that educators who had been in the system for 6 months should be automatically converted to permanency. There was no way of looking at the school's needs. It was an instruction.*

This resulted in the school not being able to appoint teachers with the necessary qualification, for specific subjects. Some teachers are thus teaching in a subject field for which they are not qualified. This adds pressure on how teaching and learning are managed.

One of the major aspects of the management of teaching and learning that was emphasised by the schools is the monitoring and moderation process. According to the SMT members they are directed by the subject advisers in terms of what and how they should interpret the curriculum policy and this informs the actions of their management of the teaching and learning process. Again, this points to the directive role of the DBE in this leadership practice.

School C indicated the following:

> *The HOD [DH] reports to the deputy curriculum who also monitors that the curriculum standard is acceptable. We also check our standards against other high schools through external moderation, having another school moderate (DH).*

There is a strong emphasis on monitoring and moderation to ensure compliance. The SMT is positioned by the incoming discourse of surveillance and they respond to this with their own surveillance. The monitoring of the curriculum, according to the SMT members, encompasses class visits to make sure that teachers are teaching, monitoring student workbooks to ensure that they are up to date and monitoring whether the assessment tasks have been completed. Specific tools such as a check-up tool, a catch-up programme and the monitoring of learners' books are instituted by the SMT members to assist with the monitoring of the curriculum. Teachers and learners are thus under constant surveillance.

In buffering staff from distractions to their work, i.e. ensuring that the teachers are able to remain focused on their work, all three principals referred to the discourse of the progressive discipline of teachers as a way of buffering them from distractions to their work. The principals view progressive discipline as a means of supporting teachers and securing the teaching and learning process at their respective schools. In other words, progressive discipline is being used as a means of constructing the 'good' teacher by disciplining teachers to act in a specific way. School A's principal indicated the following:

> *You want to put them on the wellness program. For the June reports to be issued this year, I had to lock the gate, keep the key with me, I say nobody leaves the school. Nobody leaves the school until I get all the marks.*

The responses indicate that the principals mainly rely on progressive disciplinary measures to ensure that teachers stay focused on what they have to complete and by when. They believe that doing it in this way ensures that DBE expectations such as an improvement of results and adhering to due dates are achieved. They view the process of progressive discipline as a tool in the production of the 'good' teacher. They monitor and evaluate their teachers' compliance with the CAPS requirements and if teachers do not comply, they are charged with progressive disciplinary measures, which indicate the way the SMT wants policy to be ''thought of, talked about and written about'' (Ball, 1993: 14).

5. Conclusion

This paper explored and analysed how various aspects of the incoming discourse of CAPS affect the schools and how the schools respond, and continue to produce their own discourse through the implementation of certain artefacts and activities which becomes part of how they live the policy. In this article I focused on how the incoming discourse (CAPS) positions

working class schools and how this incoming discourse crystallises into the schools' own discursive responses to construct a curriculum policy platform. Through the schools' own discourses I explored how discourse fabricates and sets up the terrain of operability of the SMT members.

Relating to the incoming discourse of CAPS, there is an entangled relationship between the discourse and the real and this is visible in the way the DBE entices teachers with rewards (artefacts) such as certificates of acknowledgement if their subject performs well in the NSC examination. As teachers seek acknowledgement, they follow the incoming discourse. There is a notion of power which is evident in the control exercised by both the incoming discourse as well as the SMTs' discursive responses.

Implicit in the expectations and prescriptions of CAPS are the notion of the 'good' learner and the notion of the 'good' teacher which is expected to produce the 'good' school, as envisaged by the DBE. Based on the SMTs' responses it is derived that the 'good' learner is portrayed as the learner who has a textbook and who performs well in the assessment. Further analysis of the responses reveal that the 'good' teacher is systematically shaped as the teacher who obtains the expected results in their subject, who goes to great lengths to source textbook information, who teaches extra classes and who adheres to due dates from the DBE. It is expected that the production of the 'good' learner and the 'good' teacher will lead to the production of a 'good' school as envisaged by the DBE.

The discussion indicates that the incoming discourse of CAPS is associated with a multitude of prescriptions, expectations and surveillance from the DBE. These prescriptions and surveillance prompt the schools to respond to the incoming discourse by engaging their leadership practices toward compliance to avoid negative labelling. Discourse is a key dimension in the execution of leadership practices which leads to the establishment of a curriculum policy platform. The schools produce their own discourse by complying with the DBE prescriptions and by building on the practices associated with the incoming discourse. This is how the discourse 'speaks' them.

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