Teachers’ professional judgement of mandated changes.


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Abstract

The role teachers play in the implementation of mandated systemic reform is broadly recognised as crucial. Recent studies have indicated a shift in the role of Governments wishing to reform elements of their educational systems, a role which has been characterised as shifting the responsibility for reform to the school site but little of the authority or choice of accountability procedures. Teachers are increasingly faced with demands from central authorities which require them to surrender their professional judgement in favour of a technician’s role – being told what to do and doing it without question (Soucek, 1997; Reid, 1998; Smyth, 1998; Miller, 2000; Hyslop-Margison, 2000).

This paper will draw on a case from the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal where four child protection workers claimed that their professional judgement led them to object to the Kennett Government’s policies in the Victorian Department of Human services (Mottram, 2000). It will also draw upon a case study of some twenty English teachers responding to the mandated Curriculum and Standards Framework in Victoria (Edwards, 2000). It is hoped this paper raises important questions concerning the role of teachers in determining what is important knowledge and what happens to Government policy mandates when they enter the schools.

Objecting to Government policy on professional grounds

Four child protection workers disputed the Victorian Department of Human Services’ policies. They alleged that the Department’s policies under the Kennett Government concentrated on ‘throughput rather than reflective practice’. The four took their case to Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal (VCAT) because they believed ‘we have the right to question policies and not necessarily believe a given policy is the only way to do things’ and that they had ‘never refused a legal directive but merely objected to certain practices on professional grounds’ (Mottram, 2000). The Department in its submission to VCAT is quoted by Mottram as stating that the case raised the question of ‘whether state employees who are opposed to particular government policies and practices are at liberty to refuse to implement those policies’ (Mottram, 2000). Mottram reported that the case was subject to a confidential settlement and this after the Department had been ‘fighting the claim for almost three years’.

The case raises some important matters for consideration in relation to Government policy and the autonomy of professionals employed by Government Departments. Elected governments make electoral promises and history tells us that some promises are core and
some are not, some are kept and some are broken. In the education portfolio, Ministers anticipate that the teaching service, a public service on the public payroll, will implement changes flowing from legislation, regulation or Ministerial Order. These three are the normal tools for mandatory change exercised by governments. Indeed, Oppositions can be quite forthright regarding their policy intentions if elected to Government. For example, prior to the state election in 1992 at which Joan Kirner’s Labor Government lost office to Jeffrey Kennett’s Liberal-National Party coalition, the then Shadow Treasurer, Allen Stockdale, when speaking in Parliament of the coalition parties’ education policy stated:

‘They (schools, school councils, Principals) will operate within a core curriculum that will demand excellence but we will impose accountability on them in a host of ways, and I shall now instance two of those ways.

Firstly we will ensure that funding follows the student. If a school ceases to attract students…that will be reflected in lower funding…

Secondly, we will impose accountability, particularly at Year 12, through a higher proportion of external assessments so that there is a standardisation of measurements across schools, and the community will be able to see which schools are delivering educational excellence and which are not ’ (Victorian Parliamentary Debates, 30 April 1992. My emphasis).

But history tells us that Governments may legislate and Departments regulate for certain things to happen and Ministers may issue Orders but whether they happen in the daily workplace as intended is perhaps another matter. This gap between the government intention and the practiced reality may explain in part the recent desire of Governments both in Australia and overseas to require students at various stages in their education to sit state-wide or national literacy and numeracy examinations. They have been justified as putative tools of accountability and public information. Based on these results schools are then labelled failing or stuck should their students’ results be seen as inadequate. Teachers’ responses to such tests have included resistant behaviours such as boycotts, leaking test papers on the WWW and cheating.

Standard management texts invariably treat resistance to change as a fault or opposition to be overcome by the zealous reformer (Robbins, 1997, 662; Barney & Griffin, 1992, 761; Kouzmin et al, 1994; Champy, 1995, 49). Teachers’ resistance to Government policy has similarly drawn criticism. Jeffrey Kennett, (ex-Premier of Victoria) when commenting on teachers who resisted change, was reported as describing them as ‘troglodytes trying to hang on to the conditions and practices of the past’, and as ‘elitist’, ‘lazy’, ‘obstructive’ and ‘trouble-makers’ (Jones, 1994). Similarly, in Scotland, Education Minister Jack McConnell, in responding to a proposed teacher boycott of further testing, labelled their boycott ‘unprofessional’ (BBB World Service Education, 2001).

The question that emerges from this discussion is one that was prefigured in the VCAT case cited at the start of this paper. Do ‘professional’ public servants reserve the right on professional grounds to object to Government legislation/regulation? Do they believe that any action they take which protects the welfare of their students justifies violating law and government policy? (Wasserstrom, 1971). The teachers may in fact choose not to openly defy a policy but may choose what Poppleton has termed ‘strategic compliance’ – a response which does not allow the policy to shape their teaching but rather shapes the policy to fit their teaching. This is done because they feel that the policy is ‘inappropriate for the students they teach’ (Poppleton, 2000).
Of potential relevance too is Crump's view of teachers exercising what he terms 'principled pragmatism', that is not 'opportunism but rather a disposition, or set of actions and behaviours which reflect a philosophical and moral approach to negotiated and representative authority' (Crump, 1990, 13). This echoes Ball's strategy of 'omissive action' (non-cooperation) (Ball, 1987,268), Sedlak's classroom-based discretionary behaviour (Sedlak et al, 1986) and Fieman – Nemser and Floden's picture of the teacher as ‘an active agent, constructing perspectives and choosing actions’(Fieman–Nemser & Floden, 1986, 523). Blackmore and Kenway summarise the policy implementation failure when they assert that gender reform policymakers in Australia failed to ‘recognize agency and the capacity of objects of policy to act other than how policy intended and with "good" reason’(Blackmore and Kenway, 1995, 240). But how is such strategic resistance aroused?

In a study of power and influence in organizations, Tetlock asserts that ‘trust and self-accountability are necessary for the smooth functioning of institutions but hardly sufficient’ and argues that resistance is likely when standards are perceived to be

(a) unreasonably high (employees see no method of achieving them that does not involved either unethical conduct or superhuman effort),

(b) to have been set in a procedurally unjust manner (employees’ perspectives were ignored) and

(c) unnecessary for organizational survival’ (the standards "privilege" some small group, such as top management, that may reap "windfall profits") (Tetlock, 1998, 131). These causes of resistance will be explored in this paper in which it will be argued that all three factors played their part in teachers exercising what they considered their professional ethics and judgement. The teachers questioned the Government’s ethics in the CSF reforms, felt professionally ignored and perceived the benefit to be not for students but for a Government which they believed was intent on stripping back expenditure on education, was distrustful of teachers and was pandering to populist demands for teacher accountability. Teachers may see themselves as behaving in a professional manner – protecting the interests of their students. Governments elected on various platforms expect obedience to their mandated changes. And therein lies the dilemma of reform.

Failure of reform

A cursory review of the literature concerning teachers and mandatory change illustrates the long-standing failure of governments wishing to force teachers to change. Numerous commentators have evidenced the lack of reform and the resistance of schools and teachers to attempts to 'improve' them. Sarason (1990), Cuban (1990), Goodlad (1987,1992), Goodman (1994); Kozol (1991); Fullan & Miles,(1992); Fullan (1994); Clark & Astuto (1994); Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, (1995); Ravitch (2000) – all have addressed this issue of school/teacher resistance and debated the relative merits or otherwise of top-down versus bottom-up implementation strategies. Stronach and Morris assert that teachers have been subject to 'recurrent waves of reform' whereby there is a 'flux of successive and evanescent reforms designed to construct short-term political support for current policies'(Stronach and Morris, 1994, 7-8). In the USA Darling Hammond asserts that 'even the most challenging and thought-provoking performance-based assessments will fail to transform schools if they are externally mandated and delivered' (Darling Hammond, 1997,52). In Victoria, the failure of reform may have as much to do with change fatigue as teacher resistance (McIntosh, 1995). Finally, Fullan portrays a deadly combination of factors when he writes that 'the school is not now a learning organization. Irregular waves of change, episodic projects, fragmentation of effort, and grinding overload is the lot of most schools' (Fullan, 1993a, 42).
One recent example of the questionable efficacy of Government reforms on teachers can be found in the UK. The Education Reform Act of 1988 was based upon the belief in the market as a means of school reform (Hillgate Group, 1986, 1987; Sexton, 1987). The British government pursued its five great themes of quality, diversity, parental choice, school autonomy and accountability (Whitty, 1993). At best, however some researchers have regarded the market’s achievements as dubious. (Whitty et al, 1998; Ball, 1994; Hutton, 1996). The reforms have been reported as having deleterious impacts on teachers’ health, (O’Leary, 1996), intensifying their work (Casey, 1995) and creating a deepening desire among many to escape from teaching (Fisher, 1995; Travers and Cooper, 1996).

While reforms have such severe impacts on teachers and their teaching there is also evidence that reforms may affect only superficial changes. Research shows that reforms in state-wide testing may change teaching content but not teaching practices (Firestone, Mayrowetz & Fairman, 1998). Further, Grant found that state-wide testing has little direct influence either on content or teaching (Grant, 2001).

Reforms also can go seriously wrong. An error by test publisher CTB/McGraw Hill in 1999 showed reading scores in New York had not risen for two years. Some 9,000 students were then sent to summer school based on these mistaken results. At least six other states were effected by erroneous results (Steinberg & Henriques, 2001). Similarly, in Victoria, computer errors in 1996 that distorted the scores of approximately 20% of the students who sat for the Learning Assessment Program did not add to the public ease about these state-wide tests.

Adding to the burden of reform is the practice as found in the US of governments eager to impose high stakes testing regimes with few offering financial support for the remediation of failing students or low-performing schools. Fifty states test their students. Only nine states provide finance for remediation of failing students (Olson, 2001).

Such an emphasis on testing bespeaks a view of education which valorises testing simply because it can be done and is a quantifiable indicator. But experience now tells us that high-stakes testing regimes are of questionable value if not educationally unsound (Ohanian, 1999; Meier, 2000). Contrary to Government hopes, it has even been suggested that such highly specific testing regimes can in fact lead to a ‘dumbing down’ of curriculum whereby some teachers teach to the test (Kohn, 2001).

In summary, Governments may find that their reforms are objected to because they produce deleterious effects, create superficial changes, are operationally flawed or produce precisely the opposite of the policy intent. Yet, teachers are required to implement policy without demur.

The role of contexts

But if the very nature and process by which policy is developed can be causes of reform failure, there is evidence that the contexts preceding and accompanying (and often unrelated to in policy terms) reform efforts can have deleterious impacts on policy implementation. Policy can be generated in ways and in contexts which treat the ‘professional’ teacher as a technician, one who is told what to do and who is given no say in its creation. The Australian Senate Committee inquiry into the Status and Professionalism of Teachers found teachers viewed some changes as having ‘the potential to undermine the professionalism of their work. These include:

- centralisation of the curriculum, with little input from teachers.
- Increasing managerialism in schools, with principals as arms of the bureaucracy rather than part of the collective teaching force.
• moves to introduce paraprofessionals into the classroom in place of some existing, qualified teachers
• the focus on fundraising, which diverts teachers’ time and effort away from their core work
• externally devised and implemented standardised assessment’ (‘A Class Act’, 1997, Ch.3, p.9)

Such concerns by teachers are not new although the terminology describing them may change. They constitute a cluster of concerns having their focus on the local against a backdrop which officially appears to maximise local input yet effectively minimalises the professional judgement teachers may have or wish for in their daily lives. Thus, for many teachers it might be argued that it matters little which particular political party is in power. Messages of mandate usually appear to contain elements of surveillance, checking of teacher professionalism, central decision-making and education policy at the mercy of the ruling political ideology or populist agendas. Teacher thinking is regularly ignored as witnessed in numerous studies of systemic reform. (Weiner et al, 2001; Rosenholtz, 1991; Smyth, 2001; Baker, 2001; Woods et al, 1997).

Waves of change can have a debilitating effect upon people and Durbridge points to ‘the danger of a breakdown of trust by teachers tired of the continued imposition of new expectations and managerial structures without adequate consultation’ (Durbridge, 1991, 85). The concerns reflect issues of power, voice, unity of purpose, dilution of professional activities and trust.

Additionally, the contexts of policy, both past and present, can vitiate policy initiatives. In relation to gender reform in Australia for instance, researchers have found an attitude among policymakers that assumes ‘linearity’ between policy and implementation, ignoring local contexts (Blackmore & Kenway, 1995, 239). In Victoria, the state-wide curriculum initiative known as the Curriculum and Standards Framework (hereafter CSF) was mandated. A number of contexts that existed prior to the CSF policy launch and during its implementation might be considered corrosive of teacher trust in their political masters.

• Early in its first term the Liberal-National coalition Government had reportedly closed 260 schools and had floated the merger or closure of a further 113 schools (Marginson, 1996). Resistance to such closures received major attention from all forms of the media for the heavy-handed police action and Government’s legal actions in pursuit of parents occupying the schools to prevent closure.

• One initiative at the time was the procedure whereby schools were required to name teachers in excess of staffing requirements (the formula for determining staffing needs was centrally fixed). These teachers were then considered for transfer to other schools, if needed. The Education Minister Phil Gude, while commenting on the 1500 teachers thus named in excess, was reported as saying, ‘Last year it cost the taxpayer of Victoria $26 million for no work, for no return, not one iota of effort for the people in these schools’ (Messina, 11 October, 1996,1)

• The Minister of Education was reported as saying ‘...agreements with powerful interest groups and union bodies are a thing of the past’(MacLean, 1 February, 1994,1). At this time just over 80% of teachers in Victorian Government schools were members of teacher unions. (‘A Class Act’, Ch.3, footnote 24).

• By 1994 the Minister was shifting to the schools the bases for establishing working conditions. They were to become matters for negotiation between the Principal and each individual teacher. Given the highly unionised nature of the Victorian teaching
service at that time it is perhaps not surprising that the Australian Education Union applied for and was successful in having its members shifted to a federal award agreement, away from the jurisdiction of the state Government. Victoria’s 12,000 teachers in Roman Catholic schools followed in August.

- In August 1996 Minister Gude announced the Government's intention to conduct state-wide Secondary Learning Assessment Program tests. For many teachers the test seemed to be a further example of the Government's distrust of teachers and their teaching. The previous Primary LAP tests were boycotted by the Australian Education Union and ‘about half of Victoria’s 150 private primary and prep-to-year-12 schools have told the Victorian Board of Studies they would not be taking part’ (Painter, 22 March, 1995, 3).

- This seeming distrust in the professionalism of teachers by the Ministry was further emphasised when the Minister was reported as suggesting that untrained outside ‘experts’ could teach in schools. The managerialist agenda was also raised when the Minister offered the notion that clusters of schools could be run by somebody ‘with industry background and experience’ (Messina, 5 October, 1996, 3). Duncan Stalker, president of the Victorian State Secondary Principals Association criticised the Minister’s proposal. The Minister reportedly replied that ‘They(Principals) are away with the pixies’ (ibid).

- At this time a debate emerged as to the wisdom or otherwise of publishing a ‘league table’ of Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE) results much as is done in the UK. This notion came to be changed to a proposal that the names of the top 10% of Yr. 12 students and their schools be published. For teachers the publicity was once again part of what was seen as an accountability device calculated to pander to populist agendas of naming and shaming. It flew in the face of arguments about student intake, resources and the sheer capital divide between Government and private schools. The limited publication of VCE results now takes place.

- The funding of Government schools once again made the news when in May 1997 the Auditor-General of Victoria’s, ‘Report on Ministerial Portfolios’ found that ‘Given the level of school revenues derived from local communities, it is evident that schools are, to some extent, reliant on this form of funding to supplement government funding for the provision of educational services’ (Victorian Auditor General, 1997). The evidence from an independent source was noting the fundamental shift in school financing away from the Government and onto the schools and their communities.

- Throughout 1997 a number of comments critical of education were made. In March the Federal Liberal Minister for Education Dr. Kemp described Australia’s literacy and numeracy levels as a ‘national disgrace’. The Prime Minister, John Howard supported him by noting that he believed many teachers of very young children ‘haven’t got the skills that they need’ (Brough,1997, 3). In July the Victorian Minister for Education, Phil Gude reportedly commented that some universities’ Education faculties were producing ‘poor-quality graduates, ill-equipped for the school system’ (Gibson, 21 July, 1997,1). A public and acrimonious debate ensued in the media between the Minister and various deans of Education faculties in Victoria (see The Age, 22-25 July, 1997).
• The Government’s shifting of the financial burden to the local school was further emphasised in June 1997 at the ‘Successful Schools Conference’. Education Minister Phil Gude announced a further extension of the ‘private’ state schools plan whereby schools would be encouraged to pursue private business sponsorships, be permitted to borrow money and buy land. He further announced plans to allow schools to hire and fire staff including hiring outside the pool of state teachers (Minister for Education, Victoria, 1997). The changes were criticised by Bishop Michael Challen of the Brotherhood of Saint Laurence who was reported to have viewed the changes as the ‘...gradual dismantling of the system of universally accessible state schools’ (Messina, 4 June, 1997, 3).

• The development of ‘fully self-governing schools’ was launched by Minister Gude in April 1998. The news release from the Minister’s Office details the initiative known as ‘Schools of the Third Millennium’. Schools could volunteer to join the program which would empower their School Councils to

- directly employ staff,
- coopt members with specialist skills,
- better set priorities
- enter into partnerships with business, TAFE or other institutions
- make their school a specialist in a chosen discipline.

The Minister claimed it was about ‘empowerment’ and that it would ‘lead to better educational outcomes for students’ (News release, Minister for Education, 8 April, 1998). The take-up by schools was quite limited and only 51 schools of Victoria’s 1630 Government schools registered to be involved (Costa, 2000).

These contexts sharpen an understanding of the environment within which the Government was hoping that the CSF policy initiative would be implemented. Many of the comments and actions of the Minister and the Department would not be lost on teachers who now found themselves in an increasingly combative relationship with both. Budgets were cut, schools closed or amalgamated, teachers cut, a managerialist agenda was being increasingly played out in schools and teachers were facing state-wide tests of dubious value on their students. Some teachers were considered by the Minister as expending ‘...not one iota of effort’ (Messina, 11 October, 1996, 1).

Trust Capital.

So far in this paper I have attempted to outline some varieties of centrally mandated reform failure. In addition, a focus has been made on the role of context in relation to reform initiatives and the climate such contexts might create within which a Government may require teachers to implement policy. Given the contexts outlined in the previous section it is perhaps not surprising that teachers brought to the implementation of the CSF a range of attitudes and experiences (not all of the Kennett Government’s making) which were critical of the policy’s intent and processes.

Crucial to any policy implementation between a central Government and thousands of teachers is the glue or cement of trust. Albach’s view of social capital specifies a form he names ‘trust capital’ (Albach, 2000). This is where the relationship is based on mutual trust
and confidence. In such a working relationship he suggests ‘it is possible to dispense with resource-depleting control mechanisms and systems’ (Albach, 2000).

In a now famous study of southern Italy, Putnam et al. (1993) blamed the economic backwardness of the region on a lack of mutual trust. Fukuyama (1995) echoed this finding and suggested that where trust existed it was fragile and could be quite easily broken (see also Gambetta, 1988). The establishment of trust in an organisation as large as the Victorian Department of Education would seem to be not a function of ‘a well-ordered machine, whereby policymakers can pull the levers and engineer a particular result. It is not possible to legislate or mandate trust into existence’ (Latham, 2000, 209).

Trust capital comes into play then where people consider the standards being set by authorities and the manner of their setting. Trust faces considerable erosion should the teachers consider the CSF standards are arbitrary and inappropriate, set without their contributing knowledge and not serving the interests of their students or meeting their professional judgement of what should be done. In this, the VCAT case reflects these concerns where a Government is seen to be more interested in an ideological outcome unrelated or indeed antagonistic to the needs of the people the ‘professionals’ are attempting to help. It is not simply that the teachers exercise their professional judgement. They do so in a climate of mistrust of Government intentions and of apparent Government mistrust in teachers’ professional abilities.

I would like to suggest that Albach’s trust capital was little in evidence among the teachers in a study made over two years of their implementation of the CSF (Edwards, 2000). The study that I undertook in a Victorian secondary college over two years found teachers disillusioned, mistrustful of the Government and weary of change. They deeply suspected the Government’s motives and intentions and found little that was educational or salutary in the CSF reform or its formulation.

If trust capital is a barometer of organisational health, the teachers’ attitudes towards the Department of Education (hereafter DoE) were clearly toxic to any proposed reform measures. (In the remainder of this paper I have excluded the use of quotation marks as all comments which follow are direct quotes from the participants. The numbers are the teachers’ code numbers used in the interviews).

13. I find the DoE distant and irrelevant.

16. I don’t have much to do with them except what comes out in print or what comes down to us through the school Admin. The DoE is my employer but really irrelevant.

24 I don’t think about it much. I guess they’re faceless. You used to be able to ring and find out stuff.

32. The Department is well-meaning but uninformed and ignorant…they’re still dictatorial

43 I imagine every Minister of Education wants to leave his stamp. ‘I’ll leave my mark on the system’. But we are a lower priority in their scheme of things.

53. I regard the DoE as my adversary because I believe they have two main aims for me: I) get rid of me or 2) get me to do a lot more work. A new Government seems obliged to change things just because it’s new. So I was pretty cynical about it (CSF).
57. I love teaching when I can enjoy it and I’m in control but the text, the school behind the CSF treats me like an idiot, no collaboration.

89. Gone is the old Public Service – without fear or favour. Now it’s political cronies… They (young teachers) are not being looked after and any collective sense of teachers working together is being destroyed.

90. The people running various parts of the system used to be teachers. Now, they’re public servants and I’m not putting them down but in some cases, they seem to have little understanding of how schools operate. Such views of the DoE were not limited to the teaching staff. Administrators and Key Learning Area Managers too had a number of scathing comments regarding the DoE.

7 Now there’s talk of more changes coming through. You know, "Ah! Now that you’ve got it all up and running we’re going to change it all!" Back ten years, forward ten years, and back ten years…

49. Some of the powerful people in the DoE are there because they toe the Party line. They’re political animals.

75. Every time we have ‘restructuring’ it is presented as improving service or efficiency. It’s not. It’s always about cuts.

Internal criticism of proposals is simply not tolerated. There is zero tolerance of internal criticism.

In terms of the last ten years’ documents from the DoE, if I was a terribly cynical teacher I might say I’ll wait till they get it right.

87. It’s a case of ‘Here we go again!’ for many teachers. We are an older group and so we’ve been through a whole lot of changes over the years. So this is seen as just another one. ‘Give it two years’ they (teachers) say.

Don’t forget ‘they’ (DoE) did get it wrong with the VCE. There’s a history of weird structures where ‘they’ didn’t get it right.

Curriculum-wise it’s not a bad thing but it’s been done on the cheap, like everything.

The teachers’ responses were clearly shaped by previous policy procedures and the current contexts within which the CSF was expected to be implemented. Returning to Tetlock’s three predictors of resistance, I will present the teachers’ views in relation to each predictor (For the sake of brevity not all the teachers’ comments have been included here. For a full report see Edwards, 2000).

a) the standard is unreasonably high and requires unethical behaviour to achieve it.

5. They’re asking us to do too much. The correction load in English is ludicrous. For English teachers you can’t just correct tick the box in the classroom.

13. At our faculty level there’s a decision that Year 7 students are at level X when in fact they’re all over the place.

27 There’s no time to do even the things we need to do.
32. But the logic of covering your own back dictates that most Year 7 are (reported as being) at the Beginning of Level 5. It’s almost farcical.

48. It (Reporting) is based on this mythical state-wide standard.

57 There just isn’t time to keep up to date. There’s no time to discuss issues with my peers.

64 The workload has increased absolutely. There used to be time at recess and lunch for a break but now it’s more serious.

b) the standards are set in procedurally unjust manner (employees’ perspectives ignored)

5 The biggest changes were in reporting practices and we had no say in that.

25. We’ve just got to fit in with the State machine.

43 We’re just the teachers expected to carry out what they say is an ‘improvement’.

43. Standards swing back and forth and we don’t get to make the choices.

57. The CSF was me being put upon. My professionalism was ignored. Just do it.

60. We’re being dictated to. More like receivers than doers.

c) the standards are unnecessary for organisational survival.

5. Seeing things treated as political footballs feeds the cynicism – LOTE, Australian Studies, Sport.

13. It seems to me that the intent of the CSF is largely political – getting teachers back into line, accountability and improving the DoE image.

24. Overall I think it’s been a huge PR exercise.

25. The CSF changes are mostly cosmetic.

43 My initial reaction to the CSF was ‘bullshit’. I still don’t know how it all works.

53. They just change the labels and dress it up in flashy names.

The trust capital among teachers and administrators towards the DoE is clearly almost non-existent. If systemic changes are to have any hope of success the contexts of such changes must be taken into account by policymakers. It would appear also an extraordinary effort must be made to increase the trust capital between the Department of Education and the teachers being told to implement such changes.

The evidence from the teachers also clearly shows that Tetlock’s three predictors of resistance have been amply satisfied. Firstly, the teachers believed that the CSF required them to carry out ethically and educationally questionable practices, particularly in reporting. Secondly, the teachers believed that their professional judgement had not been sought by the DoE in the planning stages and that they were unjustly excluded. Finally, the teachers
did not view the CSF as necessary for organisational survival. Rather they viewed the CSF as a public relations, cosmetic and political exercise.

What were the teachers seeking to do?

If then the teachers’ resistance grew from the manner in which the reform was mandated to them within contexts corrosive of trust capital, what principles guided the teachers in their responses to the CSF? The evidence from the study shows that the teachers were guided by two principles – what they considered to be useful or important for their students and what they judged to be educationally effective (Again, a representative sample of comments will be presented).

- **Looking after the students**

  5 I know we’ve been told by the Key Learning Area Manager not to get into too much correction but you can’t have students doing work and all you do is tick it.

  23. I work through the CSF and choose what I think is important for the students

  32 My teaching is based on the children. The CSF didn’t suit my approach.

  57. The variety in my teaching is driven by the students’ needs. My work is pitched at the kids.

  90 We’re told not to correct ourselves silly. But kids need rewards for producing something, they need feedback on how they’re going. The advice isn’t very realistic.

- **Drawing on experience**

  13. I’ve used my intuition and experience to decide what I’ll use but in the end my focus is on teaching the individual

  24 I’m not static but there are some things I do because it’s the only way I know how to do them or I’ve found out from experience that it works and gets the best results.

  43 You get by on streetsmarts and colleagues

  57. Most teachers have their own framework for deciding what they’ll do in the classroom and that they get from experience.

  89. As far as I am concerned the CSF had no impact on my teaching. I looked at the texts we were going to teach and worked up material based on them.
Conclusion

This paper began with a case where the Government challenged the right of social workers to exercise their professional judgement by resisting Government policy. Too often resistance has been portrayed as negative and contrary. In fact resistance can be informed by the ethical and experiential concerns of professionals wishing to exercise their professional judgement. The factors which impact on that professional judgement can also be the result of a number of other conditions such as the historical and contemporary contexts of the policy's implementation, the procedures adopted in the framing of the policy and the participation or otherwise of the teachers in those procedures. Perhaps where reforms are resisted it is not only poorly developed policy or negative contexts that will shape the teachers' responses.

The evidence presented in this paper point to the central role of trust in policy implementation. If Governments behave in ways that demonstrate a lack of trust in teachers, they should hardly be surprised if teachers reciprocate. The entire milieu of mistrust surrounding the CSF needs to be examined if future policy plans are to succeed. If trust capital is seriously depleted even before the policy enters the teachers' lives, what hope is there for its successful implementation as intended? The pity in all of this is that so often Governments display a propensity to create and coerce docile teacher technicians rather than seeking to persuade, through evidence and argument, autonomous professional teachers.

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