

**BECOMING A GENDER EQUITY CONSULTANT:
A SELF-STUDY OF LEARNING AND STRUGGLE**

LEONIE SEATON

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements of the degree of
Doctor of Education

University of Technology, Sydney

2006

CERTIFICATE OF AUTHORSHIP

I certify that the work in this thesis has not previously been submitted for a degree nor has it been submitted as part of requirements for a degree except as fully acknowledged within the text.

I also certify that the thesis has been written by me. Any help that I have received in my research work and the preparation of the thesis itself has been acknowledged. In addition, I certify that all information sources and literature used are indicated in the thesis.

Signature of Candidate

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank the many people who contributed support for the creation of this thesis.

My supervisor, Dr Sandy Schuck who supported my development as a researcher over the period of my candidature. At various times she took on the roles of supervisor, mentor, friend, and confidante. Sandy always seemed to have exactly the right advice at the right time, according to my needs and the phase through which I was going.

The teachers with whom I worked who so generously gave of their time, and their expertise. I am indebted to their preparedness to welcome me into their schools as a researcher.

My partner, Michael, who gave me the time, space and support necessary to undertake this research project. He took on the lion's share of the running of our household, enabling me to work in the study unencumbered by domestic concerns, and regularly directed me into the study to "get the thing done."

My sons, Joel and Timothy, who came to understand my need to lock myself away in the study for long periods of time. Their support, encouragement and love have helped sustain me throughout the doctoral process.

My colleagues from the university writing group, lead by Dr Alison Lee. Discussions with Alison, Susan, Rachel, Damian and Donna assisted me to understand the writing process more clearly. Their support, advice and friendship have been invaluable.

Finally, I wish to thank Dr Peter Aubusson and Ian McDonnell for reading parts of this thesis and providing me with critical feedback.

Writing that developed from this thesis

Seaton, L. (2003) Moving beyond “tips for teachers”: Learning to be a gender equity – consultant – some methodological questions, Poster presented at the NSW IER meeting, August.

Seaton, L. (2003) Moving beyond “tips for teachers”: Learning to be a gender equity consultant. Paper presented at AARE Conference – Educational Research, Risks & Dilemmas, 29 November – 3 December, Auckland New Zealand.

Seaton, L. (2004) Learning to be a gender equity consultant: Listening to teachers. In D. Tidwell, L.M. Fitzgerald, & M.L. Heston (eds) *Journeys of hope: Risking self-study in a diverse world*. Proceedings of the Fifth International Conference on Self-Study of Teacher Education Practices, Herstmonceux Castle, U.K.

Seaton, L. (2006) Seeking collaboration in practitioner settings: Finding my self. Paper presented at the Sixth International Conference on Self-study of Teacher Education Practices, Herstmonceux Castle, U.K., July.

Seaton, L. & Schuck, S. (2006) Constructing ourselves as student and supervisor: A self-study of the doctoral process. In P. Aubusson & S. Schuck(eds) *Teacher learning and development: The mirror maze*, Dordrecht: Springer.

Contents

Acknowledgements	iii
Writing that developed from thesis	iv
Contents	v
Abstract	ix
PART 1:	1
OVERVIEW	2
Chapter 1 Becoming a gender equity consultant: A beginning.....	3
Introduction	3
1.1 Background to the study	3
1.2 Purpose of the study	7
1.3 Significance of the study	7
Outline of the thesis	9
Chapter 2 Teacher consultancy, teacher professional learning in gender equity and self-study.....	12
Introduction	12
2.1 Teacher consultancy.....	13
2.2 Teacher professional development.....	19
2.3 Gender equity in school education.....	23
2.4 Self-study of teacher education practices.....	33
Conclusion	44
Chapter 3 Researching my teacher consultancy practice: Methodology	47
Introduction	47
3.1 Choice of methodology	48
3.2 The research sites	56
<i>Selection and description of the sites and participants</i>	56
3.3 Methods.....	61
<i>Journal recordings</i>	63
<i>Field notes</i>	64

3.4 Field text Analysis	66
3.5 Ethical and practical dilemmas in the research	71
<i>Interactions with participants</i>	71
<i>Critical friend relationship</i>	73
<i>Choice of methods</i>	74
<i>Methods of analysis</i>	75
<i>Determining the value of the study</i>	76
Conclusion	79
PART II.....	81
OVERVIEW	82
CHAPTER 4 “We tend to use consultants to help move us further along”: Multiple views of my role as a consultant.	86
Introduction.....	86
4.1 My initial view of my role as a gender equity consultant to teachers.....	87
4.2 Teachers’ views of my role as a consultant	97
4.3 Views about consultancy within the Gender Equity Unit.....	103
4.4 New insights into my role	109
Conclusion	118
Chapter 5 “We all have our stereotypes”: Participation in learning about gender equity	121
Introduction.....	121
5.1 Talking about gender: who is <i>allowed</i> to participate?	122
5.2 Talking about gender: who is <i>invited</i> to participate?	127
5.3 Talking about gender: who is <i>expected</i> to participate?	134
Conclusion	138
Chapter 6 “I thought all the gender issues would be with the older children”: New stories of gender equity consultancy	141
Introduction.....	141
6.1 Social skills program at Brownley Heights Public School	142
6.2 Critical literacy at Eden Hills Public School.....	150

6.3 Exploring gender issues across the Key Learning Areas at Brownley Heights Public School.....	157
Conclusion	165
PART III	167
OVERVIEW	168
Chapter 7 Self-study as professional learning for teacher consultancy	169
The unique and uncertain situation comes to be understood through the attempt to change it, and changed through the attempt to understand it.....	169
Introduction	169
7.1 Becoming a gender equity consultant	171
<i>‘Becoming’ is a process of construction and reconstruction.....</i>	171
<i>Multiple interpretations add depth to knowledge about teaching teachers.....</i>	177
<i>Constraints of context can be overcome through a reconstruction of ways of being in particular settings</i>	180
7.2 Self-study for my professional learning about teacher consultancy	182
<i>Through knowing the self, one comes to see others more clearly.....</i>	182
7.3 The implications of my self-study for other teacher consultants	185
<i>Context matters</i>	185
<i>Relationships hold the key to professional learning</i>	188
<i>Time is an essential element.....</i>	191
Conclusion	192
REFERENCES.....	195
List of tables	
Table 1: Reports, inquiries and policies developed at national and NSW state levels.....	24
Table 2 Schedule of school visits.....	59
Table 3 Interview/data collection schedule for schools.....	60
APPENDIX 1 – Transcription example	
APPENDIX 2 – History of Gender Equity reforms and programs in Australia	
APPENDIX 3 – <i>Girls and boys at school: Gender equity strategy</i>	
APPENDIX 4 – Research documents	

GLOSSARY

AP Assistant Principal – In NSW government primary schools assistant principal is the first promotion position above classroom teacher.

BST Basic Skills Test - In NSW government school students in Years 3 and 5 sit annually for Basic Skills Tests in literacy and numeracy.

DET The NSW Department of Education and Training – this is the largest employing body in the Southern Hemisphere

DP Deputy Principal – In NSW government primary schools deputy principal is the second promotion position above classroom teacher. This is followed by principal, the status of which depends on the number of students enrolled in the school.

GEU Gender Equity Unit was a unit within the DET when the study was undertaken. It's role was to support schools to implement gender equity initiatives. It c no longer exists as a separate entity, having been subsumed into a broader equity unit.

KLAs Key Learning Areas - In NSW the primary school curriculum is divided into six key learning areas. These are English, Mathematics, Human Society and Its Environment (HSIE), Science and Technology, Physical Education, Health and Personal Development (PDHPE) and Creative and Practical Arts (CAPA).

P&C Parents and Citizens groups are part of most public schools in NSW. They are run by parents and undertake duties such as fundraising, running after school care for students, running school bands and canteens.

Scope and sequence plans Often schools develop scope and sequence plans

for when they will teacher particular units of particular subjects. These plans show the range of teaching from Kindergarten to Year 6.

Stage Grades in NSW public schools are divided into four stages. Early Stage 1 – K Stage 1 - Years 1 and 2, Stage 2 – Years 3 and 4, Stage 3 – Years 5 and 6.

SDD Staff Development Day - In NSW public schools there three days set aside which are pupil free. These days are for teacher professional learning.

TAFE Technical and Further Education – In NSW this is a section of the DET providing after secondary school education in technical and non-degree areas.

SEO Senior Education Officer is a position within the DET for teacher consultants.

NOTES ON TEXT

The body of this thesis is written in Times New Roman, 12 point. Quotes from literature are presented in Arial font, 10 point and indented right and left. Quotes from field texts are presented in Tahoma font, 10 point and indented right and left..

ABSTRACT

This thesis is an exploration of my practice as a teacher consultant in the area of gender equity. Focusing on my consultancy practice with teachers in primary school settings, the study explores my development as a teacher consultant.

The study is a self-study in teacher education practices and considers the following questions:

- How do I experience and understand my practice as a gender equity consultant?
- How can I improve my practice as a consultant?
- How does self-study contribute to professional learning about consultancy?

My learning about consultancy is explored using narrative inquiry methods including field notes, journal entries, in-depth and focus group interviews with participating teachers, and reflections on critical friend interactions. These methods were used to develop stories of teacher professional learning and consultancy that informed my understandings about my work with teachers, and subsequent changes to practice.

I argue that the process of becoming a teacher consultant is one of continual construction and reconstruction as one reflects on and reframes experience, based on interactions with teachers, colleagues and the professional literature. This process of reconstruction enables one to come more clearly to know the self in practice, and therefore, better understand the needs of others in teacher professional learning contexts. Finally I argue that self-study of teacher education practices offers teacher consultants the means to investigate their practice in ways which result in transformative learning about their support of professional learning for teachers in school settings.

This study has implications for self-study of teacher education practices as it expands this methodology to include its usefulness for understanding the practice of teacher consultants supporting the professional learning of experienced teachers in schools.