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

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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 …….

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Contents

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.

PART I

THE STUDY

OVERVIEW

Part 1 of this thesis consists of three chapters that position the study in terms of background information, relevant literature and methodology. The purpose of these chapters is to set the scene of the study, linking the research to my personal and professional background, literature from relevant fields of knowledge and to provide an argument for undertaking a self-study of teacher education practices.

I provide the reader with information that guided the development of the study and argue for the direction I have taken as the most useful for my purpose of professional learning about teacher consultancy. This part lays the foundation for the remainder of the thesis, by providing a justification for the study and for its methodology.

I begin by establishing the personal and professional need for the study to support my professional learning about my practice as a teacher consultant. This is followed by mapping the current study against knowledge in the various fields of relevance to my thesis. This part concludes with an explanation of the ways in which I constructed the evidence and subsequently used this evidence as a basis for analysing and changing my practice.

Chapter 1 Becoming a gender equity consultant: A beginning

Introduction

"Just whose feminist barrow are you pushing?" demanded Barry angrily.

This was not what I expected to hear as a newly appointed senior education officer in the New South Wales Department of Education and Training's Gender Equity Unit (GEU), working with a small group of teachers on a 'girls and information technology' project. Barry's anger and obvious distress provided a pivotal moment for me as a teacher consultant. It led me to consider how I might best go about examining my practice as a consultant. My aim was to change my work with teachers to improve my support of them as learners about gender as an educational issue.

This thesis is a self-study of teacher education practices. The study is framed within a sociocultural perspective, which emphasises the dynamic interaction between individual human activities and cultural, historical and institutional settings (Wertsch, Rio & Alvarez, 1995).

In this chapter, I discuss the personal and professional background to my study, the purpose of my study and the significance of this thesis. I conclude the chapter with an outline of the thesis.

1.1 Background to the study

In a manner similar to that experienced by many Department of Education and Training (DET) consultants, I was seconded to the state office of the Department as a senior education officer in the Gender Equity Unit for a three year period. Prior to this appointment I was an assistant principal in a government primary school[1] in Sydney.

[1] In New South Wales, primary schools operate from Kindergarten to Year 6.

Becoming a consultant was a struggle as I attempted to deal with many issues which I regarded as problematic but which seemed to be unproblematic to the DET. These issues included the lack of professional development for my role as a consultant, my concern about being labelled as "expert" in the area of gender equity, and teacher expectations of my consultancy role. I was also concerned about how I might link the gender equity policy that I was supporting schools to implement, to classroom and wider school practice.

As a newly appointed consultant, I was troubled by the lack of professional development that was provided or expected by the DET for newly appointed consultants. My job description included the provision of professional development to teachers to support their implementation of the DET's gender equity policy - *Girls and boys at school: Gender equity strategy* (NSW Department of School Education, 1996). I was familiar with the policy as I had been the gender equity contact in my school when the policy was released. I was also familiar with the support documents that had been sent to schools to assist teachers to implement the policy as I had used them to lead various teacher professional development sessions. However, I was not experienced in the process of supporting teacher professional learning across a variety of school contexts with which I was not familiar. I wanted, and needed to undertake some form of professional learning to support me to explore and better understand my practice as a consultant.

When I began my position as a senior education officer (SEO), I was given a desk on which were a collection of books on gender in school education, a computer and storage files that contained the work of the previous SEO. The Gender Equity Unit (GEU) included two SEO positions, but in 2001 the other officer was on maternity leave. For the first school term of my appointment there was no replacement for the other position. In Term 2 the position was filled temporarily by a student welfare consultant and in Terms 3 and 4 the position was again unfilled. This position was subsequently filled temporarily for twelve months at the beginning of 2002 by a head teacher of English from a boys' high school.

I spent the first week of my appointment reading the previous SEO's files to familiarise myself with the work he had done in the unit. I also began to read some of the books that were on my desk. In my second week, I attended a professional development session for teachers presented by the manager of the unit, at a high school in the south of Sydney. This session, together with the reading through various documents and books in the previous week, was the extent of my professional development for my job as an SEO. The default position seemed to be that I had been successful at interview in securing the job, I was a competent classroom teacher with a level of knowledge about gender equity and therefore, I was capable of doing the job.

At the same time as I was struggling with the above issues, I found myself positioned by teachers and the DET as a gender equity 'expert'. Such positioning was an almost daily source of tension for me as I regarded myself as a learner in several ways. First, I was learning about gender as an educational issue from the perspective of a policy framed within a social constructionist discourse. Second, I was learning to be a teacher educator of experienced teachers, with limited resources to undertake this task. Finally, I was learning about my role as a senior education officer in a large, bureaucratic department of education. Whilst I felt myself to be a learner in these three ways, I also needed to present myself as a competent consultant to teachers and the wider DET community. This public positioning and private anxiety provided tensions which led me to self-study of my practice as a way of overcoming the dissonance I experienced and supporting my professional learning about consultancy.

Added to the lack of professional development for my new position, and my worry about my being positioned as "expert", was a concern related to the nature of support afforded to teachers by many DET consultants at the time. Unfortunately, much of the work I was undertaking as a consultant at the invitation of schools involved short one-off sessions to large groups of teachers. One contributing factor to this situation was the lack of funding for the GEU to support schools to undertake more extensive professional development with a gender focus. At the time, there was also limited DET provision of funding for

professional development in schools (Ramsey, 2000). This situation created tension for me as a consultant as one-off presentations to teachers meant that there was little opportunity to engage teachers in meaningful conversations about what the gender equity strategy might mean for their teaching and learning programs, and for their students.

The DET's gender equity policy, *Girls and Boys at School* (1996) builds on a history of addressing the needs of boys and girls in Australian schools as outlined in Chapter 2. The policy is underpinned by a framing of gender as a social construction, a perspective with which many teachers are not familiar (see, for example, Alloway, 2001; Butorac & Lymon, 1998; Foster, Kimmel & Skelton, 2001). My developing understandings about gender issues in school education settings led me to believe that it was essential that teachers were supported to engage with the theoretical underpinnings of the policy. Such support for teachers was important to me as I hold strong beliefs about the importance of incorporating principles of gender equity into all curriculum and school management areas to ensure equitable and socially just outcomes of schooling for all girls and boys.

My belief in the value of supporting teachers' engagement with the policy in a deep way led to a further tension for me as a newly appointed consultant was how to move from the expectation of many teachers that I provide them with 'tips' for addressing gender issues in their teaching to ways of working with teachers that actively challenged them to consider what gender equity meant for their teaching practice and their students. In NSW, gender equity is understood as a cross-curriculum perspective to be included in teaching in all Key Learning Areas, along with Aboriginal, multicultural and environmental perspectives. Gender equity is not a new educational issue in NSW, yet there exists a certain lack of understanding of, and engagement with, the DET's gender equity policy, and the notion of what cross-curriculum perspectives mean for teaching and learning, as well as overt resistance to gender as an educational issue as indicated by the incident with Barry discussed in the introduction to this chapter. The purpose of my self-study is discussed in the following section.

1.2 Purpose of the study

The focus of this study is my professional learning as a teacher consultant during the three years of my consultancy. The fundamental reason for undertaking a self-study was to develop my understanding of my practice as a consultant in order to improve my work with teachers. By investigating my experiences as a consultant, I clarify the assumptions I brought to my practice and the impact these had on my work with teachers. I provide details of the interactions with teachers which assisted me to reframe my thinking about my practice and subsequently make changes to my work. Finally, I explore self-study as a methodology for professional learning about my practice as a gender equity consultant, and teacher consultancy in general.

This study is guided by 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?

Whilst the focus of my study is *my* learning about the consultancy process, following Korthagen and Lunenberg (2004), the purposes for this account of my learning are three-fold. The first purpose is to improve my practice as a consultant. The second, is to draw attention to the tensions inherent in systemic teacher consultancy positions in a large department of education. The third is to identify issues of importance to the work of teacher consultants in general. Finally, my purpose is also to draw attention to the tensions inherent in consultancy within a large bureaucracy such as the NSW DET. I argue that self-study of teacher education practices provides the capacity for effective learning about practice in these three domains.

1.3 Significance of the study

There is a large body of literature investigating the professional learning of teachers supported by educational consultants. The focus of these studies tends to be on teacher

practice and the effectiveness of various change processes within schools, with the work of consultants being taken as given and unproblematised. Consultants are often positioned as experts, with teachers cast in passive roles as receivers of knowledge (Little, 1992).

Studies that focus on the practice of consultants tend to provide descriptions of the consultancy process with the aim of developing recommendations for consultants to follow when working with schools. The few studies that investigate the perspectives of consultants on their work with teachers are useful to my study as they provide insights into the dilemmas faced by teacher consultants. My study adds to this body of knowledge by going beyond an exploration of the dilemmas of practice that I experienced as a consultant. I expand the focus on consultancy by describing both the ways in which I struggled to manage the tensions I experienced by reflecting on and reframing my practice, and the resultant changes I made to my practice.

Australian research indicates that one of the main obstacles to gender reform in schools is teachers' lack of understanding about gender as an educational issue (see Butorac & Lymon, 1998; Kenway & Willis, 1997; Lingard, Martino, Mills & Bahr, 2002). Through an investigation of the roles, relationships and contexts of my work as a gender equity consultant, I provide details of the ways in which I supported teachers to develop their understandings about gender equity in education.

My learning about my practice as a consultant was informed by interactions with the teachers with whom I worked and with a wide body of literature to which I turned as I sought ways of interpreting my field texts[2]. The representation of this interaction between me, participating teachers and relevant literature, indicates to the reader the dynamic process of meaning-making as interpretation is socially constructed through shared experiences (Ely, Vinz, Anzul & Downing, 1997, p.80). The methodology of self-study

[2] 'Field texts' is a term derived from the work of Clandinin and Connelly (2000) to denote the types of records that are normally called data. Narrative inquirers use the term 'field texts' as these records are created within the field rather than being found or discovered (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000).

provided me with the means to study my professional practice setting in a way that highlighted the priorities and concerns that shaped my work as a consultant as I sought to align my beliefs and the enactment of my consultancy practice.

Initially, my developing understandings of my self in relation to the teachers with whom I worked revealed many dissonances between my beliefs and the enactment of my consultancy. Exploration of these dissonances provided the basis for a reframing of my practice as I made changes to my work with teachers. The account of my learning about consultancy presented herein contributes to knowledge about self-study through an illustration of the way in which the methodology provides the opportunity for learning about and improving teacher consultancy practice.

The self-study of teacher education practices literature mainly comprises research undertaken by educators working with preservice teachers in higher education settings. Little study in this area is undertaken by teacher consultants working with experienced teachers in schools. I argue that my thesis adds to the current body of self-study literature by extending the methodology to an area where its use is currently negligible, and its potential for pushing forward understanding and improvement of practice vast.

1.4 Outline of the thesis

This thesis is presented in three parts. Part I provides the framework for the thesis. This framework developed alongside the process of field text construction (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) and analysis and was expanded over the period of the study.

Central to my study is the positioning of teachers and consultants within the professional learning process and the impact of this on the change process in schools. This idea is explored in Chapter 2 where I locate my study in relation to current literature in the fields of teacher consultancy, professional development, gender reform in schools and self-study of teacher education practices.

The methodology that frames this study is self-study of teacher education practices. An examination of the characteristics of this methodology and its relevance to the current study takes place in Chapter 3. This chapter also provides detailed information of the context of the study as well as describing the methods of analysis used in the interpretation of the field texts. I explain my decision to represent my interpretation of field texts in several layers to provide insights into the iterative nature of my interpretation as I moved between my experiences with teachers and the literature that informed my study.

In Part II, I explore the field texts that I constructed through my self-study. I provide my interpretations of my experiences as a consultant in several layers which offer various insights into my practice. My interpretations underpin changes to practice made as a result of my reflection on my experiences and subsequent reframings of practice.

I consider my initial understandings about consultancy and the assumptions that I brought to my work in Chapter 4. My understandings are explored alongside those of the teachers participating in the study, indicating the tensions that existed in my work with teachers. I explore my early consultancy experiences, that acted as catalysts for assisting me to reframe my practice.

Teacher and parent participation in learning about gender as an educational issue is considered in Chapter 5. I explore three critical incidents of participation through a process of talking about gender – who is allowed to participate, who is invited to participate and who is expected to participate in conversations about gender in schools.

Chapter 6 provides details of the changes that I made to my practice following my experiences examined in Chapters 4 and 5. I consider the ways in which my reframing of practice was informed by my reflections on my experiences and my reading of self-study and other relevant literature.

Part III concludes this thesis with reflections on my learning through this self-study. In Chapter 7 I discuss my study in terms of three areas of focus: the process of learning to be a gender equity consultant, the strength of self-study for professional learning about consultancy and the relevance of my study for other teacher consultants.

Conclusion

The central thesis of my study is that in order to improve our practice as consultants we need to understand the ways in which we experience our work with teachers. By developing understandings of our practice we can make changes to our work as teacher consultants that improve professional learning for ourselves and the teachers with whom we work.

Whilst I undertook my self-study for my own professional development, my work goes beyond my personal practice. By making visible my struggle in learning to be a gender equity consultant, I indicate the usefulness of self-study for professional learning about teacher consultancy in general. This struggle includes seeking to overcome the discrepancy between personal beliefs and practice as a consultant, as well as constraints of context encountered in schools. As well. I highlight the systemic dissonance that is a part of consultancy within large, hierarchical departments of education.

I argue that my “insider perspective” (Korthagen & Lunenberg, 2004, p.226) offers other teacher consultants the opportunity to consider their professional learning needs as they reflect on their own consultancy practice in their efforts to improve practice. Such reflection will support those committed to improving teacher consultancy in schools, in turn, supporting improved teacher professional learning.

Chapter 2 Teacher consultancy, teacher professional learning in gender equity and self-study.

Introduction

Through this study I explore how I experienced and understood my work as a gender equity consultant in order to improve my practice working with teachers. I also investigate the possibilities of self-study of teacher education practices as a means of professional learning about my consultancy in particular, and teacher consultancy in general.

The purpose of this chapter is to examine relevant literature in a number of fields that are related to my project. First, I discuss literature concerning teacher consultancy and teacher professional development to investigate the positioning of consultants and teachers in this literature and also to locate my project in relation to others in these two areas. My review of the literature suggests that there have been few studies of teacher consultancy or teacher professional development exploring either of these areas from the perspective of the teacher consultants themselves.

Second, as my work is in the area of gender equity, I consider relevant literature on gender equity policy implementation and gender reforms in school education in Australia. I investigate this body of literature to determine the factors which work to facilitate or impede gender reform in schools.

Finally, an exploration of the self-study in teacher education practices literature emphasises the suitability of this methodology as a way of supporting practitioner professional development. Much of this literature centres on self-study of practitioners working with pre-service teacher education students. I explore the appropriateness of this methodology for professional learning in the area of teacher consultancy.

2.1 Teacher consultancy

In this section I focus on literature in the area of teacher consultancy. First, I explore literature that discusses the enactment of consultancy, arguing that the construction of teachers and consultants within the process will impact on the way in which consultants work with teachers in schools. I then move to explore research investigating consultancy practice. Finally, I investigate professional learning for teacher consultancy, indicating the lack of research in this area.

Consultation is often a part of organisational change as groups seek information on which to base their decisions to improve the organisation. In their discussion of organisational change, Power, Reynolds and Sultmann (1992) conclude that a consultant is "one who helps people understand what they already know and assists them to locate and fill gaps in their knowledge" (p.1). They argue that consultants facilitate change by assisting people to see what needs to be done and supporting them to do so, rather than being directly responsible for the change process.

Schools are tending to mirror this use of consultants to support change, using consultants from within education systems as well as external consultants such as academics from universities and groups operating for profit (Fullan, 2001). Internal consultants within the DET are employed to support schools in the implementation of various government policies and programs. Such consultants have backgrounds as teachers and are often employed on a three year contract basis, as I was in my role within the Gender Equity Unit.

A large part of the literature on educational consultancy offers a handbook approach as to how the consultancy process might be conducted, with many writers offering a set of skills that they argue are required for effectively working with teachers. Power et al. (1992) argue that the skills of diagnosis, communication, process design, facilitation, negotiation and content knowledge are prerequisites for working with teachers. Block (1999) identifies consulting processes as: entry, contracting, problem identification, feedback, engagement, implementation, extension and termination. He couples these with technical and

interpersonal skills. These writers provide extensive discussion on the sets of skills that they propose are needed by consultants. Schools and their teachers are described in managerial terms as ‘systems’, ‘clients’ or ‘service populations’. The common approach seems to be that all educational consultants need to do is follow a generic list of skills and processes to facilitate the change process in schools.

Many approaches to consultancy work from this basis of technical rationalism which constructs consultancy as a set of generic processes. Power is placed with the consultant as the knower, whilst teachers are cast in passive roles as receivers of knowledge “typically serving as audience for a performance staged by others” (Little, 1992, p. 177). Implicit in a technical rational approach is that consultants present expert knowledge about teaching to teachers, who are then expected to use this knowledge in their work with students.

Schön (1995) describes a technical rational approach to professional practice as one which treats such practice as problem solving whilst ignoring the process of problem setting by which practitioners “define the decision to be made, the ends to be achieved and the means which may be chosen” (p.40). Schön describes problems of practice as constructed from “problematic situations which are puzzling, troubling and uncertain” (p.40) rather than as given. He argues that such problems are not able to be solved with generic solutions or by means of applying specific skills and processes. Rather, Schön describes practitioners as speaking “of experience, trial and error, intuition and muddling through” (p.43) as they seek to solve problems of practice. Using Schön’s description of professional practice, lists of generic processes for consultancy do not seem to be the most effective way to support professional learning for consultants. Other ways of supporting consultants to understand and improve their practice need to be developed which focus on the ways in which practitioners frame the problematic situations of their practice and then undertake to solve such problems.

Writers in the area of teacher professional learning argue that the way in which consultancy is enacted will be influenced by the consultant’s construction of the teachers at the heart of

the professional development experience. Where teachers are regarded merely as passive implementers of consultant facilitated change, the role of the consultant will be somewhat different to that assumed when teachers are regarded as active learners with an equal status to consultants in the professional learning process (Bradley, 1987). If a consultant regards her role as the transmission of knowledge to teachers about a particular policy or program, then the consultant takes on a technical rational approach to her work. The assumption in this approach is that the consultant can somehow get teachers to "do what the knowers know they should" (Clandinin & Connelly, 1995, p. 68). In this situation, consultants are cast as knowers carrying with them the "sacred theory-practice story" (Clandinin, 1995, p.28) that teachers should apply to their teaching practice.

Few studies have explored practising consultants' beliefs and assumptions about teacher learning, however, the research of Spillane (2002) in North America signals the importance of this aspect of teacher consultancy. Spillane found that the majority of consultants in his study, focusing on professional development in the areas of mathematics and science, held a behaviourist perspective of teacher learning, believing "that teaching teachers centered on the transmission of knowledge from expert to novice" (p.387). The majority of participating consultants were found to use a technical rational approach of telling and showing as the main strategy for teacher professional development. A small number of consultants in the study worked with teachers from a situated perspective, regarding teachers as active agents in their own learning and collaboratively implementing learning experiences with teachers that were grounded in their day-to-day work.

Interviews with participating teachers in the above study indicated that the experiences of those whose district consultant worked from a situated perspective differed significantly from those whose professional development was delivered from a behaviourist perspective. The teachers from the situated-orientated district identified many formal and informal opportunities for their continuing learning about mathematics including study groups, workshops, conversations with colleagues and discussions with academics from a nearby university. In contrast, those teachers working with officials holding a behaviourist

perspective tended to limit their discussion about ongoing learning to looking for activities that they could use in their classrooms.

Various stances held by consultants towards the teachers with whom they worked were also found by Le Fevre and Richardson (2002) in their study of literacy consultants working with experienced teachers. The consultants in the study held a variety of views about supporting teacher professional learning. These ranged from a technical rational approach that favoured professional development as direct instruction to support teacher implementation of a particular program, to a more collaborative way of working that took a teacher inquiry approach to professional development. Interviews with participating consultants revealed several elements that they perceived as characterising successful staff development. First, there was a belief in the need for teachers in the program to be supportive of the program. Second, the consultants believed in the importance of changing teacher beliefs and conceptions. This is discussed in connection with the need to build the trust and confidence of the teachers in the various programs being introduced to the schools.

The consultants also spoke of dilemmas they faced in their work. The first of these was how to build trust while "pushing things along" (p.493). One consultant discussed the subtle difference between congeniality, which teachers seemed to favour, and collegiality where teachers could critique their own understandings in a safe, supportive professional environment. A further dilemma that arose for consultants was how to provide a balance between individual autonomy and external direction to undertake change. Finally, consultants also felt that there was tension around who set the agenda for the professional development activities within the project.

While both the studies discussed above provide information about dilemmas and tensions faced by consultants in their practice with teachers, neither of them explore ways of addressing these issues. The work of Ainscow and Southworth (1996) goes some way towards filling this gap in the literature. These researchers are critical of research literature

in the area of consultancy which concludes with lists of recommendations that imply that working with schools involves “the application of a series of recipe-like responses that will readily fit any context” (p.247). Rather, they argue for the need to recognise the context of professional learning in schools as “personal, idiosyncratic and micropolitical” (p.250) so that consultants are better able to respond to “the personal and political dramas that are an inherent part of each and every school” (p.250).

Through their school improvement work as consultants with school leaders in North America, Ainscow and Southworth found that the participating teachers valued their support as consultants in:

- pushing thinking forward by encouraging teachers to view issues from different perspectives
- framing problematic issues and considering a number of possible ways of working with these issues
- encouraging partnerships between teachers in the school
- providing incentives to keep going with the work through discussions that assisted teachers to have a clearer sense of the direction of their work
- modelling collaborative ways of working with colleagues.

While the above points provide consultants with factors to consider in their work with teachers, there is still a need to explore how consultants take such information into account in terms of their own professional development.

Studies that specifically investigate professional development for school consultants are few. The vast majority of studies tend to focus on teacher professional learning and how the work of consultants has improved teaching and learning in schools (for example, see the range of studies reviewed by Fullan, 2001). One study that does explore professional development for teacher consultants is that undertaken by Ross and Regan (1995) with eight consultants in Ontario. The study involved consultants presenting a narrative that they felt indicated the way in which they attempted to bring about teacher growth in some aspect

of their work. Each narrative was presented to pairs of principals, peer consultants and the researchers who provided feedback on the effectiveness of the consultancy process relayed in the narrative. The study explored consultants' responses to the feedback given about their work from peers, principals and researchers. The researchers found that consultants valued the opportunity to receive feedback on their work from their peers but that they rarely implemented changes to their practice as a result of such feedback. The consultants largely ignored feedback provided by the researchers and were negative about feedback from principals.

Ross and Egan point out that most of the consultant participants became involved in the project to gain ideas about new strategies they could add to what they regarded as their effective practice, rather than seeing the project as a means of extensive professional development. The project was limited in that the feedback provided to consultants was based on only one story of practice told by each consultant. Those giving feedback were not directly involved in the consultancy incident under consideration; therefore their understanding of the story was limited to the information provided by consultants. Ross and Egan claim that their study confirms past research that story-telling is an effective means to assist practitioners to reflect on their practice. I argue that reflection is of little use as a professional learning tool if there is no subsequent change to practice. In contrast, my project is an explicit attempt on my part to not only reflect on my practice, but to use my reflections, supported by feedback from my critical friend and the teachers with whom I worked, as well as my interactions with the professional literature, to make changes to my practice as a consultant.

This review of consultancy literature reveals several gaps in this area of study. First, while there have been studies that explore consultants' beliefs about teacher learning (Le Fevre & Richardson, 2002; Spillane, 2002 discussed above) these studies are limited to discussing the problems faced by consultants, and conclude with suggestions for improving the consultancy process. There is a lack of research, which investigates how consultants use such recommendations from research to develop ways of improving their practice. Second,

literature focusing on professional development for consultants provides either a handbook approach to consultancy with lists of generic skills to be applied or offers limited strategies for the professional development of consultants. There are no studies which explore consultancy practice from the perspective of a practitioner aiming to understand and improve her practice. My study provides knowledge about this process of professional learning for a teacher consultant.

2.2 Teacher professional development

In this section I explore the literature on teacher professional development that has influenced my study. In particular, I focus on literature that explores the positioning of teachers within the professional development process. This body of literature has relevance to my study for two reasons. First, my work as a consultant focused on teacher professional development in the area of gender equity. Second, my aim in undertaking my study was to provide personal professional development for my work as a consultant.

Views of professional development for teachers have changed markedly over the past century. During this period, there has been a change from a situation where there was no particular training for those becoming teachers to a position where teachers are viewed as lifelong learners with distinct professional development needs at different stages of their teaching careers (Oja, 1989).

Blackman (1989) argues that professional development is a function of the way in which teacher roles are viewed. He asserts that if teachers are viewed as technicians, then professional development will focus on the methods and techniques of teaching. If teachers are viewed as functioning in isolation, Blackman continues, professional development will focus on classroom activities. However, if teachers are viewed as active participants in their own learning about practice, professional development will relate to “decision making, practice and professional knowledge” (p.2).

The professional development literature also indicates a change from a perception of teachers as a homogenous group who merely implement various curriculum packages, to an understanding of the individual teacher as a person whose professional development needs will be influenced by a unique life history. A teacher's professional development needs will be impacted on by the social, cultural and historical setting within which she teaches (Blackman, 1989). Candy (1991) argues for the need to take into account the ways in which an individual's personal constructs act as a perceptual filter through which they observe, experience and evaluate any given professional development experience.

Fullan and Hargreaves (1992) extend the notion of the individual teacher involved in professional development to include the impact of the teaching context on the individuals' beliefs and understandings. They argue that successful professional development is framed in such a way that takes into consideration the teacher's purpose, the teacher as a person, the real world context within which a teacher works and the culture of teaching, including the individual's working relationships within a given school context and with others outside the school (p.5).

Hargreaves (1996) further develops the idea of working with individual teachers' understandings in his work in the area of policy implementation and school reform. He argues that professional development in the area of policy implementation needs to be a process undertaken in individual school communities where teachers talk about, process and inquire about and reformulate policy to best suit the needs of their students. Hargreaves suggests the removal of the word 'implementation' from the process with the aim of creating networks "of teachers who engage in dialogue [and]… the sharing of good practices" (p.115) around a particular policy. He argues that rather than conduits of policy implementation, teachers should be regarded as agents of policy realisation and professional development should be structured accordingly.

The importance of context and the individual teacher in professional development is also emphasised in the work of Gallego, Hollingsworth and Whitenack (2001) which explores their theory of relational knowing within the educational reform process. Relational knowing is described by Gallego et al. as

> …the braiding of knowledge of curriculum and instruction, knowledge of self and other in relationship, and knowledge of critical action… (p.261).

They describe the ways in which relational knowing between teachers and teacher educators supports successful professional development work within the school context. Gallego et al. demonstrate the significance of focusing on more than curriculum change in their work with teachers. They highlight the importance of focusing on the context of the individual school so that teachers and consultants alike become aware of the ways in which their work takes place in relation to the others with whom they work. These researchers argue that professional development needs to provide teachers with the time to develop understandings and skills which assist them to take critical action leading to equity for all students.

Following a meta-analysis of teacher professional development research, Hawley and Valli (1999) synthesised the findings to develop a set of principles for effective professional development. These principles state that professional development should:

- be driven by analysis of the differences between goals and standards for students learning and student performance
- be derived from the identification of teachers' learning needs and that these needs determine the process to be used
- be primarily school-based and integral to school operations
- be organised around collaborative problem-solving
- be continuous and ongoing, involving follow-up and support for further learning, including support from external sources

- incorporate evaluation of multiple sources of information on outcomes for students and implementation processes
- involve opportunities to engage in developing a theoretical understanding of the knowledge and skills to be learned
- be integrated into a change process that deals with impediments to and facilitators of student learning. (p. 137)

Hawley and Valli argue that whilst there is consensus amongst researchers as to what constitutes effective professional development, the problem facing school systems is how to translate these principles into the everyday practice of schools. In terms of my study, this meta-analysis highlights issues that I needed to take into consideration in my planning with schools as I supported teachers' work in the area of gender equity.

The New South Wales report - *Quality matters. Revitalising teaching: Critical times, critical choices* (Ramsey, 2000), indicates support for Hawley and Valli's conclusion about the lack of translation of research findings about teacher professional development into major reform in schools. The report indicates that the majority of teacher professional development in NSW public schools at the time took place on school development days and is described in a submission to the review as "rudimentary and sometimes superficial" (p.82). The focus of professional development is described as mostly orientated towards meeting employer priorities and the experiences offered do not usually translate into improvements in the quality of teaching or improved learning outcomes for students (pp.82-83). Ramsey reported that this approach to professional development was coupled with a decline in teacher participation in relevant continuing education and a decline in overall professional development funding in NSW. He argued for a refocusing of professional development strategies so that teachers are able to exercise greater control over their own professional learning rather than seeing professional development as something done to them (p.84).

Research in the area of teacher professional development points to the need for teachers to be positioned as individuals with particular needs within the learning process. These needs will be impacted on by a variety of factors including personal beliefs and purpose, and school context. The challenge for teacher consultants is how to translate principles such as those developed by Hawley and Valli into their everyday practice working with teachers in schools. Consultants need to "take account of how context matters in shaping the practices of teaching and the perspectives of teachers" (Little, 1999, p.256).

My study describes explicitly a process of personal professional learning about my work as a consultant. The work context that is the focus of my study is professional development for teachers in the area of gender equity. I investigate the ways in which I was able to take account of current research about teacher professional development as I worked to improve my practice supporting primary school teachers. I wanted to take control of my own professional learning in a way that would support me to learn about and improve my practice. I argue that by investigating my own practice, I show the importance of such a process for all teacher consultants intent on improving the work they undertake in schools with teachers.

2.3 Gender equity in school education

As my work as a consultant is in the area of gender equity, I now turn to a discussion of the development of educational policies focusing on gender issues, at both the national and NSW state levels in Australia, to provide an important historical background to gender equity reform in schools. I also explore research literature in the area of gender equity policy implementation and reform in NSW and Australia as this body of work provides an understanding of the issues facing those working in the area of gender reform in schools.

Over the past twenty years there have been a number of educational policies produced at a national, state and territory level in Australia that focus on gender as an educational issue. The changing terminology used within these policies indicates the shifts in emphasis that

have occurred in the thinking about gender within the Australian school system. An examination of gender policies within Australia and New South Wales illustrates the ways in which gender has been theorised within these policies and, consequently, presented to teachers through the various policies at national and state levels. Table 1 provides an overview of the various gender policies developed in Australia and NSW over the past thirty years as well as some of the related evaluations and reports. Appendix 1 offers a detailed outline of these policies and their implementation, providing more in-depth historical and contextual information about NSW and Australian gender policy.

Table 1: Reports, inquiries and policies developed at national and NSW state levels

National	**New South Wales**
1975 Girls, School and Society (Schools Commission)	1980 Towards Non-Sexist Education Policies and Guidelines for Schools Pre-School-Year12
1987 National Policy for the Education of Girls in Australian Schools	1987/88 Non-Sexist Education Program Evaluation; Review of Single Sex Classes in Co-Education Schools; Report of the Girls' Technology Strategy Working Party
	1989 Girls' Education Strategy
1991 Review of the National Policy for the Education of Girls in Australian Schools	1993 Evaluation of Educational Outcomes for Girls in NSW Secondary Schools
1993 National Action Plan for the Education of Girls 1993-1997	1994 Report of the Inquiry into Boys' Education
1996 Gender Equity: A Framework for Australian Schools	1996 Girls and Boys at School: Gender Equity Strategy 1996-2001
2000/1 Inquiry into the education of boys	
2002 Boys: Getting it Right	
	2006 Boys' and Girls' education policies are currently being considered by the NSW Minister for Education and Training

As can be seen in Table 1, the focus of gender policies in Australia moved from a specific focus on the education of girls to a more general focus on gender equity policies, focusing on the education of boys and girls. Since 1996, both in Australia and internationally, there has been a significant move to a focus on boys' education. In 2000/2001 the federal government undertook a national inquiry into the education of boys. This resulted in the report Boys: Getting it Right (2002). In 2003 a rewriting of Gender Equity: A Framework for Australian Schools commenced with a view to including boys' educational issues in any new document. In NSW, the policy Girls and Boys at School: Gender Equity Strategy 1996-2001 is still in use, awaiting changes in gender policy at the national level to emerge before a decision is made on the direction for a new policy. At the time of writing (April, 2006) new directions in both these areas have not been released.

It is not my intention to discuss this change in focus from girls' educational needs to those of boys, as a number of writers both inside and outside Australia provide an overview of the ways in which this change has occurred (see Yates, 1997; Gilbert & Gilbert, 1998; Skelton, 2001; Foster, Kimmel & Skelton, 2001). However, what is relevant to my project concerns the ways in which teachers are informed about, and react to, this new focus on boys' education. Yates (2000) indicates that the current public and popular focus on boys' education derives from two simple themes: that boys are doing less well in final school examinations than girls; and that what is needed to fix this is a focus on the educational needs of boys. Both themes have been the focus for media attention in Australia over the past decade and would also seem to underpin federal government moves to focus on boys' education (see foreword to Meeting the Challenge: Guiding Principles for Success from the Boys' Education Lighthouse Schools Programme Stage One, 2003). Alloway (2001) suggests that teachers are tending to gain their knowledge about gender issues from the media, the focus of which over the past ten years has been a supposed crisis in boys' education. She argues that the ways in which teachers read these media reports and the vast array of popular texts that position boys as the 'newly disadvantaged' in educational terms (Gilbert and Gilbert, 1998), impacts on the gender equity focus within schools.

Across a period of some thirty years in Australia, gender policies in schools have changed considerably. These changes in policy direction at national and state levels have relevance to my study of my practice as a gender equity consultant, as the language used and focus of the various policies impact on teachers' understandings about gender as an educational issue and, therefore, on their ways of working with gender equity policy. I have limited my discussion to research in Australia due to the specific nature of the gender policies in this country. However, I acknowledge that there has been considerable variation between gender policies across the various states and territories from which many of the participating schools in the studies below were drawn.

In Australia, funding was made available during the 1990s for projects to support the implementation of the National Policy on the Education of Girls in Australian Schools, and later, the National Action Plan for the Education of Girls 1993-1997. These projects offer insights into the ways in which some schools implemented the various gender policies that were developed at state level in response to the national policy and action plan for girls' education. These studies also provide insights into the barriers facing those working in the area of gender reform in schools. With the focus of gender initiatives in Australia in the early 1980s and early 1990s on improving girls' post-school outcomes, the majority of the initiatives in the area were implemented within secondary schools. However, many studies have shown that the primary school is a site where children learn powerful lessons about gender through both the formal and informal curricula (e.g., Clark, 1990; Kamler, Maclean, Reid & Simpson, 1994; Thorne, 1999). I discuss a variety of gender reform studies undertaken in primary schools below, drawing from them factors that work to either facilitate or impede change in schools.

In 1993, Large undertook a study investigating the ways in which the National Policy on the Education of Girls in Australian Schools (1989) was taken up in primary schools in both Victoria and the Australian Capital Territory. Of particular relevance to my study are three areas of the project: the reasons that some teachers in the schools took up gender

equity issues; successful strategies for policy implementation; and analysis of the barriers to the initiatives implemented within the various schools.

Issues of uptake amongst teachers included several factors, the most highly rated being involvement in professional development programs on gender equity, having daughters, personal life experiences and observation of inequalities experienced by girls in the participating schools. Interestingly, policy documents were not mentioned specifically by teachers although there was mention of gender equity publications published by the various departments of education in the states included in the research.

The most successful schools in the project were those that undertook a whole school approach to bring about change. This approach meant that discussion about gender equity was commonplace amongst teachers and the aims of the various programs were clearly understood by all within the school community, including parents. These schools also had principals who genuinely supported and endorsed the gender equity programs and gender equity was regarded as an ongoing task for the school, rather than a short term priority. Whilst there were factors facilitating gender reform, there were many barriers to gender equity programs highlighted by the project. These included lack of understanding about gender issues within the school community, individuals feeling threatened by the process, one-off professional development days on gender equity and insufficient resources to support the programs.

Davies (1996) broadened the focus of research into the implementation of the national action plan by undertaking to “gain greater insight into the little-studied area of management practices and school organisation as they affect, and are affected by, gender equity initiatives” (p.2). Whilst there were successes in some of the project schools, the teachers in the study found it difficult to bring about small changes such as the establishment of a gender equity committee or the development of practices for dealing with sex-based harassment. Similarly to Large (1993), Davis found principal support for gender reform and teacher knowledge about gender issues as critical to the success of

initiatives. However, Davis extends understanding about the problem of gender reform with her focus on the emotional struggle of the teachers involved in implementing the gender initiatives.

> Revisions to curriculum and to teaching practices do not automatically follow from access to appropriate rhetoric or knowledge of policy or even commitment. The actual struggle that is described here, which shakes old patterns and beliefs, is quite fundamental to the process. Such desire for change … needs not only collegial support and access to specific knowledges, but the freedom and authority to engage in genuine personal and social struggle. (p.241)

The issue of the emotional aspect of gender reform is highlighted by Blackmore (1998). She points to the difficulty of gender reform, arguing that it requires both reflection on the part of teachers as well as collective action within schools. Blackmore argues that this reflection includes looking at one's own gender subjectivities as well as the long held cultural and institutional beliefs and practices which operate within a given school context. She also points to the connection between power relationships within schools and the emotional and intellectual responses of individuals to gender reform.

Research into the progress made in gender reform through the implementation of the national action plan was built on by Kenway, Willis, Blackmore and Rennie (1997). Their study explored the ways in which gender reformers in Australian schools understood and enacted policy and how others within schools reacted to the work of gender reformers. Kenway et al. report that policy implementation varied greatly from school to school within their study, with policies being translated, interpreted and implemented very much on an individual basis in different schools and within schools. They also found that many of the gender reform strategies that were in place in schools focused on raising the awareness of teachers about gender issues with the assumption that such awareness would lead to changes to teaching practices and gender inequities in schools in general. However,

> ...raising their awareness of gender was not enough to effect change. We made the case that teachers' knowledge about the social construction of knowledge, skill and merit was crucial to reform, but that their knowledge about their own gendered identities was also crucial.... The most powerful knowledge for gender reform includes knowledge about power, about how to act differently in the immediate, everyday world and about how to be an advocate for change. (p.202)

Teacher knowledge about gender issues and power were not the only factors to determine the effectiveness or otherwise of gender reforms. Kenway et al. argue that the "mysterious gap" (p.200) between the "hope" of gender policies and what actually happens in schools is the result of a number of issues. These include uneven relationships of power within schools, teachers' feelings of professional responsibility for gender reform, support or resistance for gender reform through the organisational structures in specific schools and individual teachers' responses to gender reform.

Kenway et al. recommend that further work by gender reformers needs to focus very closely on teacher and school culture to examine how teachers and students are positioned by the dominant and subordinate discourses within a given school. They also stress the need to avoid a one-theory-fits-all perspective and to explore how teachers read and rewrite gender equity policies in particular ways in particular school contexts.

Connell's (1996) argument that "…gender is embedded in the institutional arrangements through which a school functions: divisions of labor, authority patterns, and so on" (p.213) offers a further way of viewing the difficulties in gender reform described by Kenway et al. (1997) and Davies (1996). Connell (1987) conceptualises the gender relations in a given institution as its "gender regime" (p.120). According to Connell, the gender regime of a school comprises four types of relationships that intersect: power relations – authority among teachers and students; division of labor – work specialisations among teachers as well as informal specialisations among students; patterns of emotion – often associated with specific roles within the school; and symbolisation – dress codes, formal and informal language codes and the gendering of knowledge. These gender regimes will work within

school settings to endorse, challenge or resist gender reforms. I have borrowed the concept of gender regime from Connell to support my analysis and interpretation of some of the events that impacted upon my work at the various schools in the project.

The research of Collins, Batten, Ainley and Getty (1996) was commissioned to gather data to gauge progress of implementation of the national girls' education policy as well as to inform the development of Gender Equity: A Framework for Australian Schools (1996). The two overriding questions for the study were
How do young people experience gender at school?
What are schools, as institutions, doing in a planned way about the construction of gender? (p.5)

This study indicates that the national policy for girls made significant changes for girls in many schools, in terms of support for girls to undertake subjects traditionally regarded as the domain of boys and access to resources. However, teacher knowledge about gender issues and the impact of these on boys and girls at school was still problematic as were changes to curriculum to incorporate teaching and learning about gender construction, and school action, rather than rhetoric, in student reported incidents of sex-based harassment. The lack of teacher knowledge about how gender issues may impact on student outcomes, as well as the need for a curriculum basis for work with students on gender construction, are both areas that were fundamental concerns for me in my work as a consultant.

The recurring theme of a lack of teacher knowledge about gender issues that is found within the above studies, points to the significance of this factor for gender reform. This is further highlighted by Butorac and Lymon (1998) in their project to develop a resource for schools to use to determine their gender needs and action they might take to bring about gender equity reform.

Butorac and Lymon indicate that in the participating schools, teacher knowledge about gender issues was built over a period of time and was extensive. They found that it was

difficult to separate teachers' data-gathering strategies about gender issues from teacher knowledge about gender equity as data gathering was not a discrete act. Teacher knowledge about gender issues was found to be an accumulation of observation, discussing issues with others, professional development and conscious data-gathering activities.

Butorac and Lymon argue that the sense made by teachers of any data gathered is critical to the work of gender reform. They found the participating teachers operated from a variety of interpretive frameworks when discussing gender issues and the data that teachers used as a basis for gender initiatives. These interpretive frameworks ranged from biologically driven interpretations of differences between girls and boys, to interpretations based upon theories of socialisation, through to interpretations that focused on knowledge of gender as socially constructed. Butorac and Lymon also found that teachers sometimes moved between these frameworks as they sought to explain the behaviour of their students. The researchers emphasise the importance of understanding the interpretive frameworks used by teachers as these will determine how teachers react to various gender issues within the school setting, or even whether gender issues are recognised at all.

With the move to a focus on boys' education in the mid-nineties across Australia, came a similar focus for government funded research into gender issues in this direction at a national level in Australia. One such project was that undertaken by Lingard, Martino, Mills and Bahr (2002) which explored the ways in which schools were addressing the educational needs of boys. These researchers report that many schools across Australia have implemented a variety of boys' education programs with varying levels of success. They also note that most schools seem to be implementing strategies in the area of boys' education "without informed systemic policy or support" (p.130). This is problematic when considered alongside the findings of Kenway et al. (1997) that many teachers are working from a basis of commonsense understandings about gender equity and also Alloway's (2001) assertion that many teachers are working from understandings about gender derived from media articles and the work of popular writers.

Lingard et al. found that the most effective schools in the research were those that had a strong commitment to the educational needs of both girls and boys, framed within a thoughtfully developed gender equity policy that did not see girls and boys as competing victims. Finally, these researchers note the importance of

> ... enhancing teacher threshold knowledges and broader understandings about the impact and effect of gender concepts, family, school and community environment, peer culture, student-teacher relationships on both boys' and girls' attitudes, expectations and engagement with schooling. (p.132)

The gender reform projects reviewed above explore gender reform from the perspective of teachers and school administrators. They outline many factors that worked to either impede or facilitate gender reform in participating schools. In summary, the factors that facilitate gender reform include:

- a whole school approach
- supportive leadership, especially from school principals
- an approach that regards work in the area as an ongoing task rather than a short-term issue
- a curriculum focus to exploring gender issues with students.

The factors my literature review reveals as impeding gender reform in schools include:

- lack of teacher knowledge about gender as en educational issue and the range of interpretative frameworks with which teachers approach gender reform
- insufficient resources to support change
- the use of one-off professional development sessions
- a generic approach to gender reform that ignores individual school contexts, relationships of power operating within schools and the ways in which individual teachers read and translate gender policy into practice.

Whilst the literature I have discussed in this section explores facilitating factors of, and barriers to, gender reform faced by those working with schools, there is little investigation of attempts to overcome these barriers through changes to consultancy practice. Abt-Perkins, Dale and Hauschildt (1998) argue that teachers in schools have difficulty addressing equity issues in their teaching and learning programs partly due to their life experiences and partly because teacher education programs have not prepared them to do so. Such information suggests that teachers require support to develop their understandings about gender as an educational issue.

My review of literature in the areas of teacher consultancy, teacher professional development and gender equity reform in schools provided me with many considerations for my own study. These included: how to take into account the positions adopted by teachers and my own positioning of them in the professional development process; teacher understanding and knowledge about gender as an educational issue; and how to structure my work with teachers in ways that would be relevant to their work with students. My literature review also revealed a silence in the literature in the area of the improvement of consultancy practice from the personal perspective of a consultant. My aim in undertaking my study was to structure my research in such a way as to provide evidence of my learning across the areas suggested by my literature review. Self-study in teacher education practices provided me with the means to achieve my aim. The appropriateness of this approach to professional learning about teacher consultancy is discussed in the following section.

2.4 Self-study of teacher education practices

In this section I discuss the relevance of self-study of teacher education practices to my study as a means of professional learning for my work as a consultant to school teachers. I sought a way of investigating my work which would not only support my efforts to develop understandings about my experiences as a consultant, but also assist me to make improvements to my practice, thereby indicating the value of self-study for professional learning about consultancy. Central to my project are questions of how to improve my

practice as a consultant in particular, and how to contribute to knowledge about professional learning for consultants in general.

Self-study in the area of teacher education has grown out of the work of many related fields of study such as action research, reflective practice and practical inquiry and has only been contextualised within the research of teaching and teacher education since the early 90s (Loughran, 2004, p.152). This research area gained formal recognition in 1992 with the development of the American Educational Research Association special interest group, 'Self-study of Teacher Education Practices'.

Zeichner (1999) describes much of the self-study research as providing 'a deep and critical look at practices and structures in teacher education" (p.11) in a way that works to inform the practices of teacher educators as well as contributing to knowledge in the area of teacher education. Through this contribution to knowledge, self-study provides a means for personal professional development and also the enhancement of understandings of teacher education practices, processes, programs and contexts (Cole & Knowles, 1998b).

Much of the self-study research is conducted by teacher educators working in universities. However, the focus of self-study on personal professional learning and improvement of practice offers a useful framework for my own research and professional situation as a DET consultant. This has been found to be the case by a growing band of researchers, other than university based teacher educators, who have also undertaken self-study into their practice. These include educational developers (Wilcox, 1998; Stockley & Mighty, 2004), school teachers (Senese, 2002; 2004) and academics in the area of occupational therapy (Paterson, 2004). It is widely acknowledged that teacher educators are not only located in universities, but are also school-based and in consultancy positions such as mine. Hence this area of research is highly relevant to understanding and improving the practice of teacher consultants. The common element amongst self-study researchers is a sense of dissatisfaction with existing practice and a desire to improve that practice (Loughran, 2002).

A lack of professional development for their roles has drawn many beginning teacher educators to self-study (see Guilfoyle, 1995; Guilfoyle, Hamilton, Pinnegar & Placier, 1995; Nicol, 1997; Rios, McDaniel & Stowell, 1998) as they struggled to make sense of their new roles. Korthagen and Russell (1995) describe the process of becoming a university-based teacher educator as often occurring without formal training or professional support. The scenario of becoming a university-based teacher educator after a period of being a good teacher seems to be similar to the situation for teacher consultants, as is the situation of being left alone to get on with the job once in the position – the assumption being that teaching teachers is little more than the delivery of tips and strategies. Berry (2004) describes learning to teach teachers as a "private struggle" (p. 1298) with teacher educators learning to teach through trial-and-error strategies that often rely upon intuition (Kremer-Hayon & Zuzovsky, 1995). This process has parallels with learning to be a teacher consultant.

Whilst beginning teacher educators who have moved into their roles from classroom teaching are learning about their new roles, they often undergo shifts in their professional identities that impact on their understandings of themselves as teachers and teacher educators. Dinkelman, Margolis and Sikkenga (2006) describe teachers transitioning from the classroom to the teacher educator role searching for confidence in their new role as well as struggling with a tension created by what they perceive as the dichotomy between "the real and the intellectual" (p.20) when exploring the distinction between the roles of classroom teacher and teacher educator. The work of Dinkelman et al. resonates with my struggle to construct my identity as a teacher educator, moving in a way similar to the two teacher educators in the study, from a position of confidence and certainty about my role as a classroom teacher to one where I experienced uncertainty as I struggled to learn a new professional role.

The work of Miller (1990) on the possibilities and dilemmas of collaborative inquiry provides interesting insights that further illuminate my reasons for the selection of self-

study as a framework for the research. Miller's discussion of dissonance in the research process resonates with my own experiences as a consultant discussed in Chapter 1.

> Points of dissonance are pinpricks in our consciousness; they sometimes sting at inopportune moments when we are most concerned with maintaining a smooth and unruffled countenance. We become adept at brushing away the annoyance, shooing the discrepancy from our line of vision, as we wave away a fly that has hovered too close to the edges of our personal space. Only when the buzzing becomes too persistent, when the sting finally penetrates beneath surface awareness, are we forced to directly confront the sources of dissonance that disrupt our equilibrium, our sense of balance in the world. (p. 85)

Miller describes the 'stings' from the points of dissonance in collaborative work with others as being the impetus for an examination of the assumptions we hold about our work, that is, what forces us to explore what we are including and excluding in our collaborations. She highlights the interactive and changing relationship between individual and collective understandings that needs to be taken into account in the research process. It was the dissonance I experienced in my early work as a consultant that drew me to self-study. I wanted a framework for my research that would assist me to clarify the assumptions about working with teachers and gender issues in education that I brought to my work as a consultant.

There is a similar focus on assumptions held by individuals in the self-study literature. Loughran (2004a) describes self-study as offering practitioners the opportunity for an examination of the "taken-for-granted assumptions of practice" (p.186) that inform teaching and learning experiences. He argues that an examination of the incongruities between beliefs about practice and actions in practice assists to reveal the various ways in which different individuals interpret a given situation, leading to a reshaping of practice. Loughran highlights this exploration of personal assumptions as helping to more closely align practitioners' intentions and actions. Similarly, Allender (2004) points to the exploration of unacknowledged motives as opening the teacher educator to change and

Wilkes (1998) highlights the strength of self-study as being "not what we know about ourselves, but the continual quest for what we do not know about ourselves" (p. 206).

Kuzmic (2002) extends the idea of self-study to include the notion of self-in-relation-to-others in his discussion of his work with pre-service teachers. He argues that unless self-study is undertaken in such a way that honours the voices of all participants, then it risks "perpetuating and failing to challenge the very boundaries, marginalization, and relations of power and privilege" (p. 233) that may exist in practice. Kirk (2005) describes the discontinuities and dissonances between self and other as providing the sources of insights in self-study as the researcher pays sustained attention to the positions in which the researcher places herself and is placed by others. This notion of positioning by the self and others is particularly relevant to my study as I sought ways to understand the ways in which I positioned myself and was positioned by teachers as a consultant. I also wanted to better understand the impact on my work of the way in which I positioned teachers in the professional learning process. Bodone, Guðónsdóttir and Dalmau (2004) call on self-study researchers to examine the ways in which their examination of self is interwoven with context (p. 772) – something which I do by exploring both my reflections about my practice and the ways in which these reflections were underpinned by feedback from the teachers with whom I worked.

The concept of context is added to the discussion of self in self-study by Abt-Perkins, Dale and Hauschildt (1998) whose self-study research indicated the necessity for exploring the ways in which "who we are" changes in relation to "where we are" and "how personal commitments are often shaped by the possibilities and the constraints of the contexts in which we do our work as teachers" (p. 84). The importance of contextual constraints upon self-study is also highlighted by Wilcox (1998) in her discussion of her work as an educational developer at a Canadian university.

> Educational development happens in the spaces of possibility defined by intentions and constraints in local, specific and immediate situations. Constraints

> on individuals' educational intentions present problems that must be dealt with, and they provide a frame from which development can take place. An effective educator asks what learning is possible in a given context, pushes these limits as far as possible, and accepts the limits that can be changed. There is a tension between the situatedness of teaching problems and the human capacity for transcending boundaries, that is, the ability to step outside boundaries and reimagine. (p.71)

In a similar way, the work of teacher consultants is often defined by the possibilities and constraints within various school contexts and across groups of teachers within the same school setting. However, just as Wilcox argues for the need for educational developers to assume responsibility for transforming work situations into educational settings, I argue that teacher consultants need to respond to school situations and develop their practice "so that it is effective in that situation" (Wilcox, p.71).

As a way of gauging the effectiveness of their practice, self-study researchers undertake reflective research that delves into the researcher's own "self, practices and programs" (Lighthall, 2004, p.216). The concept of reflection that forms the basis for many self-study investigations is largely drawn from the work of Donald Schön (1983, 1987). Schön discusses two notions of reflection – reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action. The former denotes the thinking that teachers use to reshape what they are doing whilst they are actually doing it. The latter describes the thinking that occurs after a teaching session in order to discover how "knowing-in-action may have contributed to an unexpected outcome" (Schön, 1987, p.26).

Whilst Schön's work goes some way to describe the reflection that occurs when I am thinking about my practice, I argue that the notion of reflection-for-action developed by Norlander-Case, Reagan and Case (1999) adds a third dimension which more fully describes my thought processes when working with teachers. Reflection-for-action is described by Norlander-Case et al. as the thinking that occurs when teachers make decisions during the planning phase of their work. Reflection-for-action works alongside

Schön's reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action to describe the thought processes that occur before, during and after a particular teaching session and adds to Schön's work in a way that reflects my own thought processes as a consultant more fully than the original two processes of reflection described by Schön.

The process of reflection in self-study becomes reflexive when the researcher becomes critical of her 'self' as researcher and teacher educator in a way that leads to fundamental changes to the self of the researcher (Feldman, Paugh & Mills, 2004, p.970). Such reflexivity includes a sustained attention to the positioning of the researcher in practice and the positioning of the researcher by others through constant questioning of what is done and why (Kirk, 2005). The ongoing reflexive analysis of practice involved in self-study supports the practitioner to extend the boundaries of their thinking about writing, researching, teaching and teacher education so that decisions about practice become conscious (Knowles & Cole, 1995, p. 92).

However, self-study is more than personal reflection, reflexivity and reframing. Loughran and Northfield (1998) argue that:

> Reflection is a personal process of thinking, refining, reframing and developing actions. Self-study takes these processes and makes them public, thus leading to another series of processes that need to reside outside the individual….Self-study can be considered as an extension of reflection on practice, with aspirations that go beyond professional development and move to wider consideration of ideas. (p.15)

Therefore, self-study aims to make connections with others so that the experiences of the individual can be shown to be relevant to a wider audience. Bullough and Pinnegar (2001) argue that it is within "the space between self and practice" (p.15) that the self-study researcher aims to make connections with others in the field so that the work has relevance beyond the practice of the individual. I concede that my study may not be transferable (following Lincoln & Guba, 1985) to the work of other consultants. However, I argue that

by providing information about the contexts of my study, I make it possible for readers to discover recognisable similarities with their work as consultants working with teachers in schools. Where the reader is able to make connections with the context of their own work as a consultant, my project will have meaning beyond my own professional learning. My study extends knowledge in the area of self-study of teacher education practices by indicating the relevance of the methodology to professional learning for teacher consultants.

To assist the self-study researcher to connect with the wider work of practitioners, many use a critical friend to test the trustworthiness of their reflections. Costa and Kallick (1993) offer the following definition of a critical friend:

> … a trusted friend who asks provocative questions, provides data to be examined through another lens, and offers a critique of a person's work as a friend. A critical friend takes the time to fully understand the context of the work presented and the outcomes the person or group is working towards. The friend is an advocate for the success of that work. (p. 50)

Festernmacher (1994) highlights the role of the critical friend as asking questions at crucial moments. He describes the critical friend as playing a major role in teacher learning by providing prompts for eliciting an individual's rationales and reasoning behind a given practice.

Much has been written about critical friends, however, a large body of this work focuses on the critical friend role undertaken within university/school partnerships focusing on school improvement projects, with academics taking on the role of critical friends to schools (see Swaffield, 2004; McBeath & Mortimer, 2001). The concept of critical friend within these particular studies differs from the understanding of the critical friend role within my study and within the self-study literature in general in that within self-study the role is more

collaborative and equal than advisory. Therefore, I have explored the concept of critical friend found in the self-study literature.

Within the context of self-study, Bass, Anderson-Paton and Allender (2002) argue that critical friendship is crucial to self-study, causing “a clash of world views – making reflection reflexivity” (p.61) so that reflection is pushed “past defensiveness into transformative learning” (p.67). These researchers draw on the work of Gradin and Carter (2001) to define reflexivity as the process of assisting the individual to examine their own views and assumptions in response to input from another. Bass et al. argue that reflexivity assists the individual to open their thinking to challenges about their practice rather than merely justifying their actions.

Loughran (2002) describes reflexivity supported by a critical friend as enabling those that undertake self-study to reframe their thinking about a situation from different perspectives. Such reframing enables teacher educators to adapt, adjust and alter “their practice in response to the needs and concerns of their students in their context” (p. 242). The reflexive aspect of self-study also provides the individual with the means to make connections between what she believes and the ways these beliefs are translated into action (Tidwell & Heston, 1998). Thus, it is reflection, undertaken with the support of a critical friend that often provides the basis for a reframing of practice in self-study.

Whilst much of the self-study research incorporates critical friendship into the process, often the critical friend relationship is presented as smooth and unproblematic in nature. I have found the studies that focus on problems within the critical friend relationship to be relevant to my project as they provide insights into these problems and offer considerations for undertaking such a relationship as part of the research process.

An examination of the tensions that arose between two researchers working as critical friends to each other was undertaken by Schuck and Segal (2002). They found there was tension around the personal exchanges made about each other's practice as pre-service teacher educators of mathematics and science respectively. Schuck and Segal make a case for the following elements in a self-study critical friendship:

- the development of trust as a first step in the process
- equal status as self-study researchers to prevent dilemmas of researcher/critiquer occurring
- private sharing of work prior to public dissemination.

Whilst these elements may be important to the effectiveness of working with a critical friend, they will not necessarily make the process any more comfortable. Crafton and Smolin (2004) assert that mutual engagement with a critical friend during self-study does not imply mutual agreement. However, they found that the tensions and dilemmas they experienced in working together to explore critical reflection as a means of shaping their personal and professional identities assisted them to transform their practice as teacher educators.

Two problematic assumptions with regard to critical friends are highlighted by Schuck and Russell (2005) in their study of Schuck's support as a critical friend for Russell's self-study of his teacher education practices. The first of these concerned the expectations held by Russell and Schuck about the role of the critical friend. The second was the unequal status felt by Schuck, an issue noted by Schuck and Segal above. Discussion between the two researchers resolved that, in their project, the role of the critical friend was one of offering support and encouraging reflection. The study reveals the importance of exploring the expectations and concerns of both parties early in the relationship. It also highlights the importance of providing the critical friend with feedback on how the needs of the practitioner are being met.

The critical friend relationship asks individuals to open themselves to the critique of others and to question self-understanding. This may lead to a level of discomfort and misunderstanding between individuals as documented by Schuck and Segal (2002). The process of self-analysis is risky business and an awareness of and respect for this is vital for the confidence and security of participants. It is important that participants be aware of the need for openness, honesty and sensitivity in the process (Bamford, 2001; Schuck & Segal, 2002).

A further element of critical friendship within self-study, identified as professional intimacy, is described by Fitzgerald, East, Heston and Miller (2002) in their work around successful critical friend relationships. Professional intimacy is found in

> …a community where we can talk and care about teaching, and speak about our teaching lives and what they are like for us, sharing how we fail and what we struggle with in teaching. (p.77)

Fitzgerald et al. emphasise that where professional intimacy was lacking from the critical friend relationships within their self-study efforts, that the work was not as successful as their previous self-studies where professional intimacy was present.

> …we were too easily caught up in looking at teaching and learning through the traditional lens of objectivity. The lived experience of teaching and learning, and failing at teaching and learning, were somehow not deemed worthy of respect, and thus authentic and shared reflection upon our own practices simply could not take place. (p.78)

The self-study of teacher education practice literature discussed in this section indicates several factors that underpin the appropriateness of this methodology as a frame for professional learning about teacher consultancy. First, the aim of self-study is to develop deep understandings that assist practitioners to improve their practice. Second, self-study is premised from a perspective that begins with dilemmas of practice that assist the researcher

to focus on the self within practice, so that practitioners are able to better understand the implications of their assumptions and any incongruities that may exist between personal beliefs and the actualities of day to day work in the field. Third, in self-study, context matters so that research focuses on specific dilemmas of practice particular to the researcher. However, self-study does not end at this exploration of the particular as researchers in the field seek to make clear the ways in which the knowledge they generate connects to the work of others exploring teacher education practices (LaBoskey, 2005). Finally, self-study seeks to support professional learning about practice through the process of collaboration that focuses on reflection and subsequent reframing of practice. Such collaboration often takes the form of critical friendship. The elements of self-study highlighted in this section were the significant factors that drew me to the methodology as a way of supporting my professional learning about my consultancy practice. In the following chapter I relate my study more specifically to self-study methodology.

Conclusion

This chapter has considered literature in the areas of teacher consultancy, professional development and gender reform in Australia. The chapter has also examined self-study of teacher education practices as a suitable framework for a study focusing on my professional development as a gender equity consultant to teachers.

My review of relevant literature indicates that there are areas of understanding about teacher consultancy that are currently lacking in the research literature. First, there is a need to explore ways in which teacher consultants learn about their practice in order to make improvements to their work in schools with teachers. Whilst research has explored teacher consultancy and provided information about problems in the process of consultant-led professional development, there is a silence in the literature about consultants working to improve their practice. Second, there is a need for research which examines how consultants translate the findings from research on teacher professional development into their everyday practice supporting teacher learning in schools, in ways that do not rely on technical rationalist approaches. Finally, current literature explores gender reform in

schools, highlighting the importance of various issues including teacher knowledge about gender issues in schools, the emotional aspect of gender reform and whole school approaches to change in this area. However, there is little research available that explores measures to improve gender reform from the perspective of teacher consultants working in the field.

My exploration of the self-study of teacher education practices literature indicates that this methodology provides an appropriate framework for an investigation of consultancy practice aimed at improving work in the field. Self-study provides the researcher with support to understand the ways in which personal assumptions may impact on the reality of what takes place in daily teacher education practice. A focus on the dissonance between personal and professional assumptions and the realities of practice provides self-study researchers with the basis for better understanding of and improved professional practice.

It is important to note here that not all literature used in this study has been presented in this review of literature. Other literature was drawn on as needed in the analysis of my field texts and is introduced where relevant in Chapters 4, 5 and 6.

The following chapter examines the way in which my study matches the characteristics of self-study developed by LaBoskey (2004). It also provides information on the context of the study, participating teachers and the ways in which field texts were constructed and subsequently analysed. Issues and dilemmas are also examined to determine the impact of these on the study.

Chapter 3 Researching my teacher consultancy practice: Methodology

Introduction

As discussed in Chapters 1 and 2, my research aim was to explore my experiences and understandings of my work as a gender equity consultant with a view to improving my practice as well as informing other consultants' practice. In order to achieve this aim, I needed a methodology that would enable me to undertake my research alongside, within, and through my actual practice as I worked in schools with teachers. This need led me to self-study of teacher education practices as a methodology within which to frame my study.

As introduced in Chapter 1, the following questions provided a framework for my study:

- How do I experience and understand my work as a gender equity consultant to teachers in schools?
- How can I improve my practice as a gender equity consultant?
- How does my self-study contribute to knowledge about professional learning for teacher consultants?

In this chapter I outline the aim of self-study of teacher education practices and provide a rationale for my choice of this research methodology for the study. I begin by discussing the use of a qualitative approach to the research and also explain the decision to undertake a self-study using narrative inquiry methods as an appropriate approach to answering the research questions. This is followed by a description of the research sites and participants, and the field texts that were constructed during the research process. I discuss the analysis I applied to my field texts and how this, in turn, informed my thesis writing. I conclude with an exploration of the issues and dilemmas that arose as a result of the methodology used in the research.

3.1 Choice of methodology

In this section, I explain the methodological decisions that I made to conduct my study. I argue that the appropriateness of my choice of methodology is indicated by the characteristics of self-study identified by prominent researchers in the field. The ways in which my study meets these characteristics are discussed below.

I sought a methodology that would provide me with a vehicle to undertake a professional learning process as a teacher consultant. I also wanted to use a methodology that would assist me to understand my practice from the perspective of both the teachers with whom I worked and my work colleague who acted as a critical friend. This was important as I needed to ensure that changes to my practice were based on my own critical reflection informed by the perspectives of relevant others. Finally, I sought to conduct a study that indicated the appropriateness of self-study as a means of professional learning about teacher consultancy.

With these aims in mind, a qualitative approach offered the most appropriate way of answering the research questions. Denzin and Lincoln (1998) describe qualitative research as providing the means to "study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them" (p. 3). Given that I worked in a variety of school contexts, a qualitative approach enabled me to explore the idiosyncrasies of these multiple contexts by investigating the ways in which the social experiences of professional development were created and given meaning by the individuals involved, including myself (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998).

A qualitative approach also offered the possibility of investigating multiple aspects of my practice so that I might move towards developing a comprehensive picture of the social dynamics of the contexts and the relationships under investigation (Patton, 1990). At the same time, a qualitative approach enabled me to explore the connections that tie these multiple experiences together, an essential feature of qualitative research (Kincheloe, 1991). For me, these aspects of qualitative methodology meant that I was able to explore

my work with teachers across several schools, using information from multiple sites to support my reflections on my practice, as well as subsequent changes that I made to my work with teachers.

The purpose of my research led me to self-study of teacher education practices as a methodology for my study. In Chapter 2, I discussed the significance of self-study for professional learning about, and improvement of, teacher education practices. In this section I provide a rationale for my selection of self-study as a methodology for studying my professional practice as a consultant.

The aim of focusing on teaching experience for self-study practitioners is to enable teaching and research to inform one another (Loughran, 2004c). Self-study aims to "both generate knowledge of teaching and enhance our own pedagogy by immediately applying what we have learned" (LaBoskey, 2004a, p. 858). Self-study of teacher education practices offered me a way of simultaneously engaging in and investigating my practice as a consultant. Whilst this investigation contributed to my professional learning, at the same time it extended the "stories of teacher educators – teacher educators' stories of self" concept developed by Craig (2006, p.113) around her work as an academic working with schools, to include an exploration of a teacher consultant's practice working within a large bureaucracy.

Russell and Loughran (2005) argue that self-study, by assisting teacher educators "to understand their personal roles more fully" (p.104), also has more long-range goals that provide "contexts of productive learning" in teacher education and schooling, following from Sarason (1998, p.141). I argue that my self-study created contexts of productive learning for myself, the teachers with whom I worked and, therefore, the students of these teachers. This indicates the appropriateness of the methodology in supporting other teacher consultants to also establish such contexts within the spheres of their own practice.

I now describe the ways in which my study addresses the characteristics of self-study methodology identified by LaBoskey (2004a) following her meta-analysis of self-study literature. The characteristics that LaBoskey identifies as providing a conceptual framework for the methodology of self-study are that:

- it is initiated by and focused on self
- it is improvement-aimed
- it is interactive at one or more stages of the process
- it uses multiple, mainly qualitative methods of data gathering, analysis and representation
- it advances the field through the construction, testing, sharing and re-testing of exemplars of teaching practice (p.820-821).

Initiated by and focused on self

Through self-study, researchers seek to use what they learn in their investigations to understand and improve their 'selves' in practice (Feldman, Paugh & Mills, 2004, p.971). Rather than searching for the solution to a given problem, self-study researchers search for meaning as they seek to explore a "tension, dilemma or contradiction" in their practice (Loughran, 2004b, p.27). Whitehead (2000) refers to such dilemmas as "living contradictions" in practice, arguing that self-study assists the researcher to step back from personal experience to examine such contradictions in a more detached manner. Whitehead argues that self-study allows for an understanding of the many 'selves' involved in collaborative work with teachers. That is, not only are the understandings of the self-as-teacher explored in self-study, but this is done by making explicit the understandings and frameworks of the self-as-researcher so that a further dimension is added to the research process. The idea of exploring the multiple positionings in self-study is useful to my research as I regard myself as assuming several positions within this particular self-study. The positions I adopted include that of Department of Education and Training (DET) consultant/teacher educator, beginning researcher and learner as I learned about my role as

a consultant to teachers. At the same time, I was positioned as gender equity expert by teachers and the DET.

As noted in chapter 1, I began my self-study as a means of learning about my self in my role as a consultant. I view my self as the starting point for my development as a consultant and a researcher, agreeing with Kirk (2005, p. 233) that it is the place from which I can identify what I need to do to improve my practice and how I might go about doing that. My study is therefore focusing on my self as I work as a consultant. I explore the ways in which I constructed and reconstructed myself as a teacher consultant over a period of three years. I also examine how the positions in which I placed myself, and was placed by others, were shaped by both my experiences prior to beginning my consultancy and my experiences over the duration of my time as a teacher consultant. This process enabled me to more fully the multiple positions I constructed for myself, and the impact that my assumptions and beliefs, once examined, had on my work as a consultant. Self-study also enabled me to locate my position as a consultant within a large bureaucracy, so that I could better understand how I was positioned by the people with whom I worked, and the system itself.

Improvement-aimed

My self-study was initiated by a desire on my part to improve my practice as a consultant. I sought to develop deep understandings about the work I was undertaking with teachers in order to examine my practice and make changes to improve the work that I was doing in schools. I also wanted to explore self-study as a means for professional learning about consultancy in general.

At the beginning of my appointment as a consultant I was offered virtually no opportunities for learning about my role. Discussion with other DET teacher consultants in similar positions to mine indicate that this is the case for most teacher consultants. My choice of self-study as a methodology was based upon the premise that I would learn about my role in a way that would allow me to make improvements to my practice, and in so doing,

explore the strength of self-study as a methodology for others wishing to improve their practice in the field of teacher consultancy.

Tidwell and Fitzgerald (2004) provide a useful analysis of the way in which self-study supports an improvement of practice. They describe self-study as a cyclical spiral whereby the teacher-researcher uses the cognitive element of knowledge to plan instruction. Planning instruction is influenced by the moral and ethical views about learning held by the educator. They describe a third, narrative element that involves the teacher educator taking account of events in the learning environment to then determine changes to instruction. This practice creates a spiral as the process of reflection changes the knowledge of the teacher and challenges the beliefs held, thereby effecting the planning of instruction (p.86). My field texts reveal the ways in which I critique my practice as I explore my knowledge about teacher professional learning, alongside the assumptions that underpin this knowledge. I also employ Tidwell and Fitzgerald's third element of narrative to explore teachers' stories of professional learning in the contexts of various schools to support changes to my practice.

My desire to improve my practice was also underpinned by the need to resolve the tensions created by a number of 'critical incidents' that occurred early in my work as a consultant. Kelchtermans and Hamilton (2004) argue that critical incidents are often identified as significant in retrospect as teachers reflect on a given experience and attribute significant meaning to it. The occurrence of the critical incidents that are described in Chapter 5 provided me with insights that caused me to rethink my practice as a consultant and seek to improve the ways in which I was working with teachers.

Interactive at one or more stages of the process

The interactivity of self-study is exemplified by the ways in which the researcher seeks to interact with colleagues and research texts to gain support in reframing of beliefs and changes to practice that occur following personal investigation of experiences (Pinnegar, 1998). Thus, the experiences of practice are understood "in relation to and through the lived

realities, experiences, and perspectives" (Kuzmic, 2002, p.233) of others within the context of the experience. Self-study researchers may chose to undertake a variety of interactive processes to support their reframing of practice, including interactions with colleagues in different professional practice contexts, teacher education students, and texts such as professional literature (LaBoskey, 2004a).

My study is interactive in several ways. First, it is my interactions with the teachers with whom I worked that provide many of the field texts on which my reflections about my practice are based. It is also the teachers' perspectives on my practice that largely support the reframing of my practice. These interactions are discussed throughout Chapters 4, 5 and 6.

Second, I interacted with the body of professional literature, some of which is included in Chapter 2, to assist me to understand my personal experiences as a consultant and to reframe my thinking about consultancy. The literature also assisted me to develop multiple perspectives on my experiences so that I am able to offer the reader several ways of interpreting my experiences as a consultant. This process is discussed in section 3.4 of this chapter when I describe the ways in which I chose to analyse my field texts.

Third, the process of undertaking the doctorate as a self-study of my consultancy involved interactions within the university. This included my doctoral supervisor, and a group of doctoral students who formed a writing group led by another academic within the university. Interactions with all these people supported my examination of practice and encouraged me to reflect clearly on my experiences as a consultant. They also assisted me to reframe my practice through the discussions we had around the development of my thinking about my research and through the writing of the thesis.

Finally, my study involves limited interactions with a colleague consultant with whom I shared my experiences of practice. This critical friend relationship, together with

interaction with various texts resulted in different perspectives which challenged my assumptions about my work.

The various types of interactions listed in this section provided me different perspectives that expanded the range of interpretations available to me in terms of understanding my consultancy experiences (LaBoskey, 2004a). The range and variety of interactions meant that my reframings of understanding regarding my practice were based on connections with people in my work contexts, the academic world of my university and the broader international field of self-study of teacher education practices.

Uses multiple, mainly qualitative methods of data gathering, analysis and representation
To undertake my study, I wanted to use methods that would allow me to incorporate the voices of the teachers with whom I worked. My experience as a consultant revealed to me that teachers tended to talk of their teaching experiences narratively. Teachers often prefaced their contributions to discussion with openings such as “At my school” or “The other day in my class” as they went on to explain their own connections to the topic under discussion. Kelchtermans and Hamilton (2004) describe the narrative form as the way in which teachers talk spontaneously about their work (p.805). In order to explore these narratives of experience, I chose to use narrative inquiry methods based on the work of Clandinin and Connelly (2000). I discuss the methods used in detail in section 3.3.

The field texts I composed within this study include journal entries, field notes, critical friend conversations, in-depth and focus group interviews. The analysis that I applied to my field texts was an iterative process in which I turned to the work of Clandinin and Connelly, Loughran and other researchers to search for ways of interpreting my experiences. My interpretation is presented in layers in the following chapter of this thesis as I seek to represent for the reader the circuitous nature of the interpretive process.

Advances the field through the construction, testing, sharing and re-testing of exemplars of teaching practice

I provide readers with a study of my professional practice in several ways. First, I provide detailed field texts of my experiences as a consultant. Second, I provide details about my methods for transforming my field texts into findings. Third, I establish links between my field texts, findings and interpretations. I argue that my study will be useful to other consultants wanting to explore their experiences as consultants with the aim of improving their practice. My experience as a consultant is the resource for my research as I seek to improve "my own way of being" a teacher consultant, and this may, in turn, influence others in the area of teacher consultancy seeking to improve their practice (Feldman et al., 2004, p.973).

Besides the changes to my practice, self-study methodology enabled me to explore the transformations to my professional identity that came about as a result of my project (LaBoskey, 2006). By explicitly examining the personal assumptions that were part of my practice over the period of my study, I assert that I have provided the reader with insights into the on-going development of my professional identity. In this thesis, this development moves from an exploration of the limitations of my assumptions as a beginning teacher consultant to my realisation at the conclusion of my writing that my professional identity will continue to develop as I continue to investigate my professional practice through self-study. By documenting this often uncomfortable process, I provide other teacher consultants with an invitation to enter conversations about how they might use self-study to research and improve their practice with teachers. Such dialogue would begin a process whereby the expertise of DET consultants is no longer taken-for-granted as teacher consultants themselves explore the possibilities of self-study for their own professional learning. By undertaking my self-study as part of the doctoral process I also provide other teacher consultants with an exemplar of investigation of practice that meets rigorous academic standards.

The use of LaBoskey's (2004a) characteristics of self-study provided me with a clear methodological position within which to situate my project. By paying attention to these five characteristics, I have provided other teacher consultants with the means to analyse my study in terms of usefulness for professional learning about their own practice. The aim of such analysis is to provide opportunities for dialogue that will improve the professional practice settings of teacher consultants and enhance the professional learning contexts of the teachers with whom we work (LaBoskey, 2004a, p. 860).

3.2 The research sites

Having established the rationale for my choice of methodology, I now provide information about the research sites and the teachers participating in my project. I also briefly outline the professional learning implemented with teachers at the project schools and the schedule for field text construction.

Selection and description of the sites and participants

The research sites for my project consisted of three schools, the DET Gender Equity Unit, which was my place of employment for the period of the study, and the university where I was enrolled as a doctoral candidate. As a consultant for the NSW DET, I worked with government schools. My work was mainly with primary schools, which, in NSW, range from Kindergarten to Year 6 and are co-educational.

The three schools in the study were selected by purposeful sampling. They were selected on the basis that they would provide "information rich cases for study in depth" (Patton, 1990, p.169). Personnel from the schools approached the Gender Equity Unit for support and asked me to work with them over an extended period of time. I worked with many other schools during the research period, but this was usually for a limited period of one or two hours. The three participating schools provided me with natural contexts for the research in that I had not structured the sites for the purpose of research but chose to explore the consultation process as it occurred naturally at these sites.

The fact that the consultation process occurred naturally rather than being structured for the purposes of the study meant that the research provided me with valuable information about those aspects of my practice which might be effective in other contexts. That is, the research had a level of transferability for my learning about my role as a consultant and teacher educator. Similarly, whilst I do not make a claim for transferability to other teacher consultants' practice, I do believe that by undertaking the research in naturally occurring settings, there may be a certain element of recognition for other teacher consultants as they make connections as readers themselves, and then go on to discover similarities by analogy and extrapolation to their own situations (Eisner, 1998). I do make a claim for the transferability of self-study as a methodology to enhance practice in other professional settings.

Each of the research sites is discussed below to provide information about the context of my study, the professional learning that I led at each school site, and the participants who volunteered to participate in the study. Pseudonyms have been used for all schools and participants.

Brownley Heights Public School

Brownley Heights Public School has a student population of approximately 450 and is situated in a middle class suburb of Sydney. I worked with staff at Brownley Heights over a period of three years; however, it was the work that I undertook with the school during 2002 and 2003 that is the focus of this study. I supported the school in the development of a K-6 social skills program in 2002 and worked with teachers on ways of incorporating gender perspectives into their teaching and learning programs at a staff development day (SDD) in 2003. In NSW, government schools have three pupil free SDDs per year allocated to professional development for teachers.

Joanne and Linda, with whom I worked on the social skills program, were both assistant principals (APs) at the school. At the time of the research Joanne had been a teacher for twenty-four years and was teaching a composite Kindergarten/Year 1 class. Linda had been

teaching for fourteen years. She was teaching a multi-age class of Years 4 to 6. Joanne and Linda were interviewed following the development of the social skills program in 2002.

Classroom teachers from Brownley Heights who participated in the study included Noelle with thirty-two years teaching experience who was teaching Kindergarten, Leanne, a Year 2 teacher of 12 years experience and Sandra, an AP and Year 6 teacher with twenty-two years experience. These three teachers were interviewed after the 2003 SDD.

Eden Hills Public School

Eden Hills Public School has a student population of approximately 470 students and is in a middle class suburban area of Sydney. I worked with Eden Hills Public School across 2002. This included a SDD session with all teachers at the school exploring gender issues in teaching and learning, a parent meeting on gender as an educational issue and a professional development day with selected teachers looking at gender issues through a critical literacy approach to the teaching of English. The participants from Eden Hills Public School were the AP Claire, Amanda, a Year 1 teacher and David a Year 6 teacher. Claire had sixteen years teaching experience. Amanda had been teaching for six years. David had been teaching for eight years.

Warner Public School

Warner Public School has a student population of just over 700 and a classroom teaching staff of 28. The school is in a mainly middle class socio-economic area; however, there are pockets of poverty and extreme wealth represented in the school population. Thirty-two percent of the students are from non-English speaking background. My work as a consultant at Warner Public School took place in 2002. I attended a meeting of the school's Gender Equity Committee, worked with staff on a SDD on a curriculum approach to gender equity and supported the committee in the development of the school's Gender Equity Policy.

The seven participants in the study from Warner were members of the school's Gender Equity Committee. The chair of the committee was Michael, the deputy principal (DP) of the school. He had been teaching for twenty-two years. Julie was a teacher in her third year of teaching and was teaching Kindergarten. Janet was also a Kindergarten teacher, with twenty-six years of teaching experience. Mary had been teaching for twenty-eight years and was teaching Year 2, whilst Jackie had eighteen years of experience as a classroom teacher and was teaching Year 1. Pamela had been teaching for twenty-one years and was teaching Year 3. Brian had seventeen years experience as a classroom teacher and was teaching Year 6. I conducted a focus group interview with these teachers in September 2002.

Table 2 indicates the times that I worked with the schools in the study and Table 3 indicates the interview schedule for each school.

Table 2 Schedule of school visits

School	**2001**	**2002**	**2003**
Brownley Heights	*April* - SDD	*July/September* – Social skills writing days	*July* - SDD
Eden Hills		*February* – meeting with AP *April* – SDD *August* – parent meeting *October* – professional development day	
Warner		*June* – meeting with Gender Equity committee *July* – SDD *September* – Gender Equity Policy meeting	

Table 3 Interview/data collection schedule for schools

School	Interviews
Brownley Heights	*November 2002* - AP interviews *September 2003* – Teacher and AP interviews
Eden Hills	*February 2002* Interview with AP *November 2002* – Interviews with AP and teachers
Warner	*June 2002* Interview with DP/ meeting with Gender Equity Committee *September 2002* Focus Group interview with participating teachers

Gender Equity Unit

The fourth site for the research was my place of work, the Gender Equity Unit of the DET. This unit operates to support government schools across New South Wales in the implementation of the policy *Girls and Boys at School: Gender Equity Strategy*. This site was included as it is my place of work and it is within this site that the critical friend component of the research took place.

A colleague in the Gender Equity Unit was my critical friend for the study. This was Ian who was also a senior education officer in the Gender Equity Unit. Ian had worked in the unit since the beginning of 2002 and had a background as a high school English teacher. As there were only two senior education officers in the Gender Equity Unit, Ian and I consulted regularly on the work we undertook with schools. Ian agreed to be a critical friend for the research as he felt this relationship would also support the work he was doing with schools.

The University

A fifth site of the study was the university where I was enrolled as a doctoral student. This was the site for my discussions with my supervisor and for my work within a university doctoral writing project, both processes that impacted on my understanding about myself and my practice as a consultant.

3.3 Methods

In this section I provide a rationale for the use of narrative inquiry methods as appropriate for conducting my self-study. I also provide details of the various methods employed within the study.

Narrative inquiry is used to make sense of an experience as it is lived, allowing “one to understand how teacher knowledge is narratively composed, embodied in a person and expressed in practice" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p.124). This view of research is one of collaboration between researcher and participants, over time, in specific places and in social interactions within specific contexts and, as such, the methods sit comfortably within a self-study framework.

Clandinin and Connelly (2000) base their narrative inquiry methods on Dewey’s concepts of experience that explain experience as both personal and social and also as continuous, with new experiences growing out of past ones and becoming part of future experiences. Personal narratives work to situate the knowledge of teachers within their school contexts (Jensen, Foster & Eddy, 1997).

The narratives participants construct of their experiences are regarded as the closest we can come to that experience, with narratives having “a sense of coming out of a personal and social history” (Clandinin and Connelly, 1994, p. 415). These narratives educate people about themselves and provide insights into individuals’ experiences to others, including researchers, who may be new to a given community. Van Manen (1997) describes

narratives as examples of practical theorising which function as “experiential case material on which pedagogic reflection is possible” (p.121).

Personal narratives create a form of knowledge that is directly linked to experience (Gitlin & Russell, 1994). They offer educators an effective way to arrange, understand and organise their educational experiences (which are traditionally unexamined) into a shape, themes and a frame for interpretation (Mishler, 1986; Jalongo, Isenberg & Gerbracht, 1995; Seidman, 1998).

Records that are normally referred to as ‘data’ are described as ‘field texts’ within the field of narrative inquiry. Field texts refer to the texts that are created, rather than being found or discovered, by participants and researchers to represent aspects of experience within the research field (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p.92). In this section I explain the purpose of the various field texts constructed within my research and the ways in which each was utilised over the period of the research.

Narrative inquiry methods provided me with three different types of field texts. First, these methods provided participating teachers with the means to discuss their professional learning experiences, through participation in interviews. Second, I was able to use narrative inquiry methods to construct journal entries which provided me with the means to develop deep understandings about my experiences as a teacher consultant. Third, I was able to construct field texts exploring my transformation as a teacher educator, as I explored my past and present experiences in order to inform my reframing of practice.

A further factor in the decision to use narrative inquiry methods was the desire to make connections with an audience of teachers and educators. The power of narrative lies in the relationship with the reader, who may use the narrative to reflect on his or her own experiences or actively engage in dialogue regarding the implications raised by the narrative. Via these processes, the reader becomes a co-participant in the narrative (Van Manen, 1997; Ellis & Bochner, 2000).

The field texts used in this study include those describing experiences from my perspective through:

- journal recordings
- field notes

and texts describing the experiences and perspectives of my participants through:

- critical friend conversations
- in-depth interviews with teachers
- focus group interview with teachers.

Listing my field texts as above may give the impression that they are distinct from each other. This is not the case as the texts are very much interwoven, with my journal often including description similar to that found in my field notes, or reflections on critical friend conversations and interview excerpts. The result is that my field texts are interwoven throughout my whole study (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000).

Journal recordings

My journal recordings were made over the course of the years in which the study took place. Writing in my journal gave me an opportunity to reflect on the experiences I had both within schools and with my work colleague, providing me with starting points to explore my "personal practical knowledge" (Connelly & Clandinin, 1988, p. 39) about teacher consultancy.

Writing in the journal allowed me to "puzzle out" (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000, p.103) the experiences I had with teachers as I sought ways of improving my practice. My journal writing also provided a powerful method for documenting and learning from experience (Holly & Mcloughlin, 1989).

The journal entries provide an account of the ways in which my judgments about my practice were "transformed as [I was] challenged by new and contradictory information"

(Groundwater-Smith, 1988, p.256). My entries are the foundation for the claim that I make about the authenticity of my changes to practice being based on systematic inquiry that is underpinned by reflection.

Field notes

I made extensive field notes following my visits to the various school sites in the study. In these notes I provided details of the settings for my work with teachers and recorded what occurred during visits to the various schools.

The field notes I made at the school sites allowed me to recall many details of my experiences at each school. These notes assisted me to move back and forth between full involvement with participants and distance from them (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000).

Critical friend conversations

The conversations with my work colleague were audio-taped and form part of the critical friend research text. These conversations took place as issues arose in our work with schools and occurred at various times over the course of the study.

The critical friend conversations with my colleague provided me with a different view of my work as a consultant with teachers. They provided me with a basis for further reflection on my work as well as a means to developing deeper understanding of my own taken-for-granted assumptions about the consultancy process. The timing of these conversations was flexible rather than being determined by a particular interview schedule. The direction of the conversations was determined by both our needs in terms of the concerns we had at various times about our work with particular schools.

In-depth interviews

One in-depth, semi-structured, individual interview was conducted with each participant at Eden Hills and Brownley Heights Public Schools, and with Michael at Warner Public School. The interviews at Eden Hills and Brownley Heights were used to develop

understanding of the gender equity professional development experiences of the teachers and the meaning that they made of these experiences (Seidman, 1998). My interview with Michael at Warner had the purpose of providing background to the gender equity focus within the school.

I chose to use in-depth interviews with the teachers in the study, as I believed such field texts would provide me with information about my work with teachers in various schools, which would be useful to the self-study process. I viewed the teachers in the study as critical friends in that I asked them to tell me their stories of the gender equity professional development experiences we had shared.

The use of open-ended questions meant that participants could discuss their experiences in ways that were meaningful to them. The structure of the interviews was flexible in that the questions were adapted to suit the context of each school site and I was able to explore further for more meaning when this was unclear. The questions provided "a frame within which participants [could] shape their accounts of experience" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 110).

The interviews lasted for between thirty and forty-five minutes and were audio-taped. Taping the interviews meant that I could return to the recordings as often as necessary to clarify meaning. The result was that I was able to use the stories of experience told by the teachers, to reflect on my practice personally and as a basis for conversations with my critical friend in the Gender Equity Unit. This reflection assisted me to make changes to my practice as a consultant, based upon the resultant reframing of my perspectives.

Focus group interview

I used a focus group interview with the teachers at Warner Public School. Focus group interviews allow participants to react to and build upon the responses of other participants (Gredler, 1996). I used open-ended questions which allowed for choice of direction by the respondents (Wiersma, 1995) and for a discussion format.

The questions used were similar to those used for the in-depth interviews and sought to gain information about the usefulness for participants of the professional development strategies I had used. I also sought information about any changes that they had made to their teaching practice as a consequence of their professional development experiences. The interview lasted for approximately ninety minutes and was audio-taped.

3.4 Field text Analysis

I now move to a discussion of the ways in which I analysed my field texts. I outline the iterative nature of the process of analysis, interpretation and representation as I reflected on my experiences.

My field text analysis was an ongoing process that commenced in the early part of the study and continued throughout the period of the research. I needed to continuously analyse the field texts that I composed, as what occurred at one school site informed my reflections, journal entries, critical friend conversations, interactions with the professional literature, and subsequent reframing of my practice within the other school contexts.

I transcribed the information arising from interviews and critical friend conversations using a word processing program on a computer. I used these transcriptions to explore participants' experiences and understandings. I read through my transcriptions many times, using an inductive approach which looked for patterns, tensions and themes that emerged from the field texts (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Emerging issues were used as a basis for categorisation of my stories of experience, alongside those of my participants (Patton, 1990).

As I read over my transcriptions I made notes to myself about what I was learning about my practice as a consultant. I continually asked myself the question – what is the meaning of this? This questioning also assisted me to explore various themes within the field texts. The analysis and interpretive processes were not linear; rather they were recursive and

spiralling processes as I returned again and again to my transcriptions, journal entries and field notes seeking clarification of my thoughts and reflections. I also returned continually to the professional literature I was reading as a way of developing my interpretations, clarifying my reflections and revising my thinking. It is important to note here the temporal nature of my research text. It is a text about "what has been, what is now, and what is becoming" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p.146), and is elusive in a similar way to Tidwell and Fitzgerald's (2004) goal of beliefs and values exemplified in practice in their cyclical spiral of self-study discussed in section 3.1.

To represent the iterative process of my analysis I have written two of my interpretive-analytic chapters in layers which detail the different work on which I drew at various stages of my project. This process is outlined in the introduction to part II of the thesis. Whilst I drew on the work of many writers in the fields of gender equity and self-study, the work of Jean Clandinin, Michael Connelly and John Loughran, discussed below, were major influences in my field text analysis.

It was a return to the work of Clandinin and Connelly (1995), and their metaphor of the professional knowledge landscape, which provided one of the bases for my analysis and interpretation of my narratives of experience as a consultant. The metaphor of the professional knowledge landscape also provided me with a means of interpreting the ways in which my participants experienced the work I undertook with them. Clandinin and Connelly use the metaphor of landscape to describe teacher professional knowledge. They argue that this landscape is "composed of relationships among people, places and things" (p.5) including the in-classroom spaces and the communal, professional, out-of-classroom spaces of schools. Clandinin and Connelly argue that within the private spaces of their classrooms, teachers are able to enact their "personal practical knowledge", which is described as

> that body of convictions and meanings, conscious and unconscious, that have arisen from experience (intimate, social and traditional) and that are expressed in a person's practice. (p.7)

The work undertaken by teachers in their classrooms gives rise to what Clandinin and Connelly call “secret stories” of teacher practice; the classroom being described as a safe place that is generally free from scrutiny where teachers are “free to live stories of practice” (Clandinin & Connelly,1995, p.13). However, when teachers enter the out-of-classroom places on the landscape, Clandinin and Connelly argue that they enter an area “littered with imposed prescriptions” (Clandinin & Connelly, 1996, p.24) that have been funnelled down the “conduit” by administrators, policy makers, consultants and others – all of which enter the landscape with implied directions for teacher action. They describe these funnelled directives as “sacred” stories, many of which have a theory-driven approach in which practice is shaped by ideas from above and outside the classroom (Clandinin & Connelly, 1998). They argue that this often gives rise to a situation where the secret stories of classroom practice are in conflict with the sacred stories of school change. The result is that teachers often tell “cover” stories which are disconnected from their teaching situations, to portray themselves “as certain, expert people” (p.15). The “secret” stories of classroom experience often remain unexpressed. I use Clandinin and Connelly’s description of the dilemmas faced by teachers within the professional knowledge landscape to explore my practice as a consultant, to assist me to analyse my field texts and to consider the subsequent changes that I made to my practice in an attempt to connect with teachers’ classroom practice. Their work also assisted me to understand the consultancy process in general and to think about the implications of my project for the wider educational community.

Clandinin and Connelly’s secret, sacred and cover stories also applied to my own experiences as I lived the cover story of an educational consultant, in which I was positioned as an ‘expert’ in the area of gender equity. My secret story was that I was learning about my role as a consultant and about gender as an educational issue. At the same time, I was exploring the meaning of the sacred story of the gender equity policy which was the basis for the work I undertook with teachers and schools.

My analysis and interpretation also owe much to Loughran's (1997) principles of pedagogy in teacher education, which are discussed below. These principles are a recognition of and response to the shifts that occur in teachers' thinking so that learning about teaching

> is a dynamic, challenging and interactive process which encourages individuals to learn and reflect upon their experiences and to pursue their pedagogical development in ways that are thoughtful and meaningful (p. 68).

Whilst Loughran was writing from the perspective of a science educator working with pre-service teachers, I argue that his principles of pedagogy that focus on relationships, purpose and modelling apply equally to my work with experienced teachers in the area of gender equity professional development.

Loughran firstly describes **relationships** in teacher education as foremost in that he believes the ability to mould one's teaching so that it closely aligns with teachers' learning needs is enhanced through knowing those one is teaching. This involves establishing a trusting relationship so that understandings and beliefs can be challenged in a professional, non-judgemental manner rather than in personal ways. Loughran points to the need for the teacher educator to trust that teachers will be encouraged to grapple with the major concepts and ideas under consideration, by the learning environment that is created. He also argues for the importance of acknowledging the independence of learners in choosing to take up the issues under consideration as part of their own teaching practice. In my analysis, I explore my experiences as a consultant for instances where relationships involving trust and independence were or were not present in my work. I then use these explorations to interpret my developing understandings about my consultancy practice and as a basis for reframing these understandings.

Secondly, **purpose** is regarded as important by Loughran in that the teaching of teachers needs to be purposeful from the perspective of both the teacher educator and the teacher. This purposefulness involves engagement and challenge so that there is the likelihood of

learners reconsidering their existing knowledge in light of their learning experiences. Loughran argues that it is through engagement and challenge that learners develop an "active and persistent commitment to understand subject matter" (p. 61). I sought to investigate ways in which I was able to engage and challenge teachers, and thus encourage them, to reconsider their existing knowledge as they worked on issues of gender equity.

Finally, Loughran argues for the importance of **modelling** in teacher education as a way of assisting learners to understand various aspects of pedagogy. Rather than providing teachers with a model of how to teach, Loughran describes modelling as providing teachers with opportunities to

> …better understand the pedagogical purpose, to experience some of the likely learning outcomes as a result of the experience... and to allow them to make their own decisions about how they might incorporate that into their own practice. (p. 62)

These three principles developed by Loughran formed another layer for my analysis and interpretation of my work as a consultant and assisted me to further reflect on my practice and to subsequently reframe the work I was undertaking with teachers.

My perspectives on the stories I was telling and the stories of the teachers with whom I worked changed as a result of my reflections and my reading of the literature. By continually returning to the teachers' stories, reflecting on these and my own understandings and seeking clarification from the literature, I sought to understand how I might reframe my practice in ways that would be meaningful for the teachers with whom I worked. At the same time, I sought to develop my own understanding of my role as a consultant and to provide others with a way of considering their practice in order to advance the use of self-study as a means of improving teacher consultancy. This process has been a continual back and forth process that was ongoing throughout the period of my study, and beyond. The work of the researchers and writers that I drew on to assist me to analyse and interpret my experiences in this study provided me with more than the tools of

analysis; it provided me with powerful means for reflecting on and understanding my professional practice.

3.5 Ethical and practical dilemmas in the research

There were a number of tensions, ethical considerations and practical dilemmas that arose as a consequence of the methodology selected for this research. These factors are explored below in the areas of interactions with participants, discussion of the critical friend relationship, the choice of methods and the process of analysis. I conclude this section with a discussion on the value of my study.

Interactions with participants

The research sites were selected for inclusion in the study because they were schools with which I was working in my capacity as a consultant. My position as a consultant employed by the DET placed me in a certain position of authority. When I visited schools I was often introduced to teachers as the "gender equity expert". I felt uncomfortable about being positioned as such. It was my concern about being positioned as expert by schools and the DET, coupled with the desire to work with teachers in ways that integrated their professional development needs into the consultancy process that were at the heart of my self-study. I was learning about my role and I wanted to ensure that the work I was undertaking with teachers responded to their needs in ways that they would find useful for their teaching practice.

Kuzmic (2002) recognises this issue of authority when he argues for the need for self-study to assist practitioners to move beyond the binary of teacher educator/teacher by providing a space for the lives, concerns, perspectives and struggles of teachers in researchers' studies of self. He argues that self-study cannot only be about the researcher's practice; it must understand this practice in relation to "the lived realities, experiences, and perspectives of those with whom we are involved" (p.233). I consider my practice in relation to the experiences and perspectives of my participants by including their voices through the

various stories they told of their gender equity professional development experiences. It was often feedback from the participating teachers which provided the dissonance that underpinned much of my reflection on my practice.

There was potential for a conflict of interest as I undertook the dual role of consultant and researcher. This dual role may have affected some participants' interview responses in that they may have felt obliged to answer positively about their professional development experiences. In an effort to overcome this problem I made it clear to participants that the aim of the study was to assist me to improve my practice. I hoped that by reinforcing the notion that the study was a professional development undertaking for me, that the teachers involved would approach the interviews with honesty, telling their stories truthfully from their perspective.

My role as a consultant also raised the issue that some participants may have felt obligated to participate in the research. By explaining the voluntary nature of participation from the outset, I hoped to overcome this problem. Participants were also informed that they were free to withdraw from the research at any time (see copy of letter of consent in Appendix).

I also needed to be aware of my responsibility towards the research participants in terms of the ways in which any research texts might impact on their lives. To minimise any impact I used pseudonyms to protect the confidentiality of participants. However, the small number of participants at each site means that they are easily recognisable. To overcome this problem, the purpose of the research was discussed with participants, all of whom were volunteers in the study; all consented to the use of the field texts constructed.

A further issue for me was my relationship with my critical friend and our conversations. I needed to discuss what occurred in various schools with Ian as I sought to reflect on my practice but I also needed to ensure that I did not disclose anything that was confidential or that might impact negatively on any of my participants. I needed to ensure that I had a clear view of what was my research and what was my work. This was not easy as my research

informed my work, which in turn informed my research. To protect the confidentiality and anonymity of my participants I discussed issues that arose at the various schools with Ian in fairly general terms which did not reveal the identities of various participants.

Critical friend relationship

When I began my study I wanted to collaborate with someone in a way that would challenge me to critique my practice as a consultant. The question was who? As noted in Chapter 1 (section 1.1), during the first twelve months of my appointment I had a work colleague at the same level as myself for one term only. The second senior education officer position was filled temporarily for a year at the beginning of 2002, at which point the staff of the gender equity unit responsible for working with schools consisted of the manager and two senior education officers, Ian and me. After Ian's first term in the position I approached him and asked if he would be interested in collaborating with me to critique my practice as a consultant. Ian agreed as he felt that such collaboration would also assist him in his work with schools.

Whilst Ian agreed to the collaboration, there were several compounding issues that meant that the relationship was problematic. These issues include lack of clarity regarding the critical friend relationship, only one participant undertaking research into their practice, lack of opportunity within the workplace to focus on critiquing practice, and power and status issues that impacted negatively on the relationship. Whilst the relationship with Ian was not successful, I have taken note of Schuck and Russell's (2005) call to self-study researchers to document and revisit critical friendships in order to create an additional layer to self-study research beyond the studying and reframing of teaching practice. In Chapters 4 and 5 issues regarding critical friendship are discussed in greater detail in relation to field texts exploring my critical friend relationship with Ian.

Given the issues raised above, it may not seem surprising that the critical friend relationship within my study was not successful. In seeking more successful interactions to support my self-study, I turned to relevant professional literature to challenge my reflections on my

practice and inform my personal experiences (LaBoskey, 2004a). However, the failure of the collaboration with Ian provided me with much to consider in the area of collaboration for those working outside the university setting that is the usual context of many self-studies. These considerations are discussed in Chapter 7 of this thesis.

Choice of methods

The methods used in this study were chosen in the belief that a wide variety of field texts would provide me with a richness of stories on which to base my interpretations. However, it is important to note that the very process of deciding the types of field texts to construct involved a process of selection on my part, as did the process of selecting what to attend to in the field or what to give emphasis to in my analysis. The decisions that I made as I foregrounded one or another aspect of experience, whilst making other aspects of an experience less visible or even invisible (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000), have influenced the final text that is presented to the reader.

By entering into the field of each school I was impacting on the stories of the teachers involved in the research. Each of the field texts constructed has positive and negative implications for the research, as discussed below.

It is important to note that the field notes that I wrote after each school visit are my representation of my experiences in each school context. I determined incidents and aspects of each setting to which I would pay attention and which I would include in my notes. The result is that there are many parts of each context that have been ignored. Within my field notes I tended to position my self differently at various times – sometimes distancing myself from events, at other times representing myself as an active participant in events that occurred.

I acknowledge that my journal entries are interpretive, based on my assumptions about what was or was not important to me at the time. They could have been presented in many other ways that may have resulted in different interpretations. However, I believe that the

advantage of using my journal as a field text is that it provides a rich source of information about my experiences and the reflective processes that were integral to the reframing of my practice, documenting as it does much of the struggle that was my self-study.

One disadvantage of face-to-face interviews that I needed to address in my project is that participants may give the researcher answers that they think the researcher wants. I attempted to overcome this problem by exploring answers for greater detail if responses were not clear or seemed contradictory. A further problem is that the questions asked were determined by me and, therefore, reflected my biases and provided a framework within which participants had to frame their accounts of their experiences (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). To overcome this issue I used open-ended questions, which meant that the participants could take any direction they saw as relevant. I was also interested in constructing field texts that would support me to explore my practice, therefore it was important that I asked questions that I saw as relevant to providing me with the information that I needed to undertake the research process. However, I also acknowledge that issues such as my verbal and non-verbal reactions to participants' responses will have influenced the direction of the interviews, the detail about experiences that participants chose to provide and the time spent on various points.

My selection of questions and leading of the focus group interview raises concerns similar to those discussed above. Focus group interviews may also be problematic if individuals do not feel free to express their opinions due to the public position in which they are placed. Participants may also be dominated by certain individuals to the exclusion of others. I attempted to overcome these problems by clearly establishing the purpose of the interview at the outset and by inviting all to participate throughout the interview. Where answers were vague I asked questions to explore participants' responses further.

Methods of analysis

In this thesis I have chosen to tell a particular story, based upon a particular method of analysis. There are other stories that could have been told. The narratives that I have

presented are a function of my interaction with the participants and their words (Seidman, 1998) as well as with the literature that provides a basis for my analysis. My interpretations of the field texts indicate the meaning that I have made of my experiences and those of my participants. This meaning develops from my personal perspectives and background as detailed in Chapter 1.

Determining the value of the study

Pinnegar (1998, p.33) argues that rather than certainty, self-study researchers seek to demonstrate evidence in their practice, of the understandings they have gained through their study. It is this evidence, put forward for the scrutiny of others that provides the warrant for knowing in self-study research (p.32).

Issues of validity and reliability have been the basis for much writing in the qualitative research field, with many writers suggesting various ways for the researcher to deal with these issues (see Eisner, 1998; Denzin & Lincoln, 1998; Merriam, 1998). Indeed, Wolcott (1990) argues that researchers need to look other than to validity for criteria appropriate to the approaches and purposes of qualitative research. Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggest the term 'credibility' to replace the notion of internal validity to take into account the possible "multiple constructed realities" (p.295) of the participants of a study. They describe credibility as satisfied when the readers of a study agree with the reconstructions made by the investigator.

Following on from Feldman (2003) I argue that the credibility of my self-study research is increased by highlighting the ways that the representations of research are constructed in self-study. Feldman suggests this can be done through –

- providing clear and detailed description of how data were collected and what count as data in a given study
- providing clear and detailed descriptions of how representations from the data are constructed
- exploring multiple ways to represent the same self-study

- providing evidence of the value of changes to practice.

Below I use Feldman's suggestions to indicate the ways in which I have aimed to demonstrate the credibility of my self-study.

Provide clear and detailed description of how data were collected and what counts as data in a given study. In earlier sections of this chapter I have provided details of how and when field texts were developed. I have also described what counted as field texts within my self-study.

Provide clear and detailed descriptions of how representations from the data are constructed. Representations were constructed as I returned to my field texts including journal entries, the critical friend conversations and the interviews. These texts provided the basis for my reflections about my practice as a consultant. I also returned continually to the literature as a source of ideas for possible ways of understanding my experiences.

Explore multiple ways of representing the same self-study. I have provided multiple representations by presenting my initial interpretations of my experiences, followed by further layers of interpretation drawing on Clandinin and Connelly's (1995) professional knowledge landscape metaphor, the principles of pedagogy in teacher education developed by Loughran (1997) and the work of other writers in various research fields. This process provided me with alternative approaches to considering my field texts and was particularly useful in supporting my developing understandings about my role as a consultant.

Provide evidence of the value of changes to practice. Chapter 6 indicates changes that I have made to my practice. I argue that these changes, made on the basis of discussions with teachers, conversations with my critical friend, personal reflection and interaction with relevant literature, as presented in Chapters 4 and 5, have a greater claim to trustworthiness than changes made on an ad hoc basis. My journal entries over time also reveal the value of the self-study to my understanding about my work as a consultant.

Reliability, or the extent to which research findings can be replicated (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998), is also a controversial issue in the qualitative research literature. Merriam (1998) describes reliability as based upon the assumption that there is a single reality, the repeated study of which will provide the same results. She argues that the multifaceted, highly contextualised nature of qualitative research means that replication of a study would not yield the same results. Merriam borrows the term 'dependability' from Lincoln and Guba (1985) as a term more suited to qualitative research, arguing that the point is not whether findings can be replicated but whether readers of a particular study concur that the findings are consistent with the data gathered. She argues, in a manner similar to Feldman (2003), that by making clear the assumptions behind the study, using multiple methods of data collection and by clearly detailing how data were collected, researchers can ensure that their findings are dependable.

LaBoskey (2004b) argues that the aim of self-study has never been generalisability, but rather 'trustworthiness' through individuals testing their knowledge in their own practice and by making their claims available to the community so that other researchers can also do so (p.1175). The term 'trustworthiness' is borrowed by LaBoskey from Mishler (1990) who claims that trustworthiness is evidenced in exemplars of practice documenting normal practice within a given community, that other researchers can rely on in their own investigations (p.853). It seems that whether one uses the term 'credibility', 'dependability' or 'trustworthiness' the aim is similar – to provide the reader with transparent information by which to judge the usefulness of a given study for furthering knowledge in the field. By documenting my practice as a consultant and providing details of the ways in which my knowledge about consultancy developed and resulted in improvement to my practice, I argue that I provide other consultants with evidence to consider in their own quests for betterment.

Conclusion

My research project is a self-study in teacher education practices which enabled me to undertake an in-depth exploration of how I experienced and understood my work as a gender equity consultant for the purpose of improving my work with teachers.
Self-study methodology supported me to reframe my practice with experienced teachers in ways to which I was able to respond with action (LaBoskey, 2004a, p. 825). I argue that these changes indicate improvements as evidenced in the following chapters.

Self-study of teacher education practices as a methodology within which to frame my research offers other teacher consultants a way of supporting their professional learning. I claim that this advances the field of self-study by providing an in-depth investigation of a teacher consultancy, which is situated in a large bureaucratic department of education, rather than in the formal learning context of a university, as is usual for most self-studies. My self-study acknowledges the importance of self-study methodology as a process for **all** working in the area of teacher professional learning and aiming to improve their practice.

This chapter concludes part I of my thesis, in which I have provided background to my study, explored the literature that supports the need for my project and discussed my methodological choice. Part II provides details of my field texts and my interpretations thereof. Chapters 4, 5 and 6 present the findings from the study and include analysis and interpretation of my experiences in the field. These three chapters explore the following major areas that emerged from my analysis:

- multiple views of consultancy
- issues of participation on the professional knowledge landscape of consultancy
- making connections with teachers' understandings about gender equity.

Consequently, Chapter 4 considers the various views of consultancy held by myself and the teachers with whom I worked. Chapter 5 considers issues of teacher and parent participation in learning about gender issues that impacted on my work as a consultant within the three schools that were the sites for the study. Chapter 6 considers the ways in

which changes to my practice as a result of my reframing my understanding about consultancy made connections with the understandings of the participating teachers in the area of gender equity.

PART II

STORIES OF LEARNING TO BE

OVERVIEW

Part II consists of three chapters in which I turn to the field texts that I constructed over the period of the study – the evidence of my self-study and the basis for changes that I made to my practice as a consultant. I explore the field texts and provide the reader with my interpretations of my experiences as a teacher consultant. These experiences contributed to my developing understandings about my gender equity consultancy, in particular, and about educational consultancy in general.

Chapter 4 examines multiple perspectives on my role as a consultant. I begin with my early understandings about my work. I then explore my role from the perspective of the teachers with whom I worked, as well as discussing the systemic approach to consultancy within the New South Wales Department of Education and Training.

The purpose of Chapter 5 is to investigate teacher and parent participation in learning about gender, within the three school sites of the research. The chapter presents 'critical incidents' in my experiences as a consultant which were pivotal to my learning about my self and my practice. These incidents underpinned my reflections on my work and my subsequent reframings of practice that provided the basis for the changes that I made to the enactment of my consultancy.

Chapter 6 provides an account of the changes that I made to my practice. The chapter presents evidence for the strength of self-study as professional learning about consultancy practice.

In Chapters 4, 5 and 6 I present my interpretation of field texts in layers. The process of interpretation has been an iterative process as I moved between the experiences I had in the schools where I was working, reflections on these experiences in light of the literature that informed my understandings about my practice as a consultant, and discussions with my critical friend. My returning again and again to the literature was an attempt to gain new

insights into my work with teachers. As my study developed I turned more and more to relevant research literature as I sought critique for my developing understandings. This process became crucial to me due to the failure of my critical friend relationship (discussed in Chapter 4), as I sought other interactions that would assist me to reframe my practice.

In his discussion on quality in self-study, Feldman (2003) argues for the need for self-study researchers to provide "multiple representations that support and challenge one another" (p. 28). Such multiple representations indicate clearly the ways in which self-study researchers construct their stories of being teacher educators. As LaBoskey (2004) argues

> Garnering multiple perspectives on our professional practice settings helps to challenge our assumptions and biases, reveal our inconsistencies, expand our potential interpretations, and triangulate our findings. (p.849)

I have chosen to represent the interpretation of my field texts by writing in layers to indicate my "emergent, relative and changing perspectives" (Ely, Vinz, Anzul & Downing, 1997, p.78), and the diverse ways in which I interpreted my experiences over time. By representing my interpretations in layers I indicate how my conclusions about my experiences changed, and broadened, as I viewed them from a variety of different perspectives. As Ely et al. explain, part of the purpose of a layered approach to representation is to present the "messiness" of attempts to understand experience and to

> …own up to the fact that speculation and uncertainty remain even after we have written our best possible drafts. We constantly remind ourselves when writing that we want to construct artful versions of experience that offer a complex sense of the **lived** rather than the **reported** (p. 88, emphasis in original).

Representation in layers also assists to remind us that

> …research is discovery, bringing together multicoloured threads of meaning in endless patterns of momentary emphasis and compactness, and then entangling

> them into new webs of meaning – always elusive, shimmering and fascinating.
> (Ely et al., 1997, p.95)

Through the use of layers of representation, I indicate the ways in which my understandings about my experiences as a consultant shifted and changed as new insights surfaced and took shape (Ely et al., 1997). The representation of my interpretations in layers also reveals to the reader the ways in which I interacted with professional literature to inform my personal experiences as a consultant (LaBoskey, 2004, p.849). Each layer of interpretation builds upon the previous layer to reveal the ways in which my understanding about my work as a consultant grew as I considered new ways of interpreting my field texts. The layers are presented chronologically to some extent but they are also developmental, indicating the diverse ways in which I was able to interpret and construct my experiences.

The use of layers of interpretation has assisted my developing understanding of the multiple stories possible within my research story, highlighting the dynamic quality of interpretation. This manner of representation has also assisted me to explore the journey towards understanding that I have experienced through my self-study - a journey where I often stumbled from surety to doubt rather than from doubt to surety (Clandinin & Connelly, 2004, p.593).

My initial interpretations, represented in layer 1 in each section of the following three chapters, were arrived at with some measure of initial surety. A return to the literature and subsequent reflection resulted in a reframing of my original interpretations to include new insights into my work as a consultant, as represented in each layer 2. The third layer of interpretation engages the dynamics of self-study and indicates the ways in which the self-study process supported my learning about consultancy. It is important to acknowledge here that not all research literature referred to in the following three chapters is included in Chapter 2 where I review literature relevant to the development of my study. This is due to the fact that I sought relevant literature during the analysis of my field texts to assist me to better understand my practice. The research texts I used actually became critical friends,

providing me with a means to critique my understandings, as I reflected on my work with participating teachers.

CHAPTER 4 “We tend to use consultants to help move us further along”: Multiple views of my role as a consultant.

Introduction

The central purpose of my self-study of my practice as a gender equity consultant was to improve the work that I undertook with teachers. In order to improve my practice, I needed to explore how I experienced and understood my role as a consultant. The insights into my consultancy work with teachers that developed from this exploration led me to reframe my practice and make changes to the work that I undertook with teachers. My research also assisted me to develop understandings about the tensions inherent in consultancy within a large bureaucratic department of education, as I was able to understand how I was positioned by teachers and the department itself. This led to me gaining deep knowledge of how I positioned myself in relation to the positioning by others and how I might go about changing such constructions to improve my practice.

I begin this first chapter exploring my field texts, by examining my initial understandings and assumptions about my role as a consultant in section 4.1. I have included my views about my work as a gender equity consultant to indicate the ways in which my assumptions, beliefs and understandings about consultancy were initially at odds with the ways in which I enacted my work with teachers.

Section 4.2 follows with an investigation of the expectations for my role as a consultant held by the teachers involved in my project. I have included an exploration of various expectations for my role in order to indicate how my understandings about my gender equity consultancy developed through my interaction with these differing views. The expectations for my role held by others were also selected because they often differed from my views, providing me with a measure of dissonance that I needed to explore in order to more fully understand my own view of my role as a gender equity consultant.

In Section 4.3 I investigate the views about consultancy within the Gender Equity Unit. I explore views held by a colleague in the unit as well as the implicit, systemic expectations about consultancy that I derived from my employer- the New South Wales Department of Education and Training (DET).

Finally, Section 4.4 offers an exploration of a snapshot of my practice that provided me with the initial catalyst for new ways of thinking about how I might enact my consultancy. This section provides an exploration of the ways in which feedback from teachers with whom I worked and my reflection on this feedback, supported by my reading of relevant research literature, enabled me to re-vision the possibilities of my work with teachers in schools.

Within each section, there are four components. The first component is an orientation to the section, foregrounding the theme of the section through presentation of relevant field texts and commentary. The following three components are my layers of interpretation, discussed in the overview to part II. In this chapter, layer 1 indicates the use I made of the work of Loughran (1997) on principles of pedagogy in teacher education to initially interpret my field texts. Layer 2 provides a second reading of my field texts using Clandinin and Connelly's (1995) professional knowledge landscape metaphor. Finally, layer 3 extends the meaning of my field texts through reference to the general body of literature on self-study of teacher education practices. Besides providing me with tools for interpretation, my interactions with the work of the writers cited throughout this chapter provided insights which were the basis for my reframing of my practice as a consultant.

4.1 My initial view of my role as a gender equity consultant to teachers

This section explores my initial understandings about my role as a consultant in the area of gender equity. I begin with a description of the ideas about consultancy that I brought to my position in the DET Gender Equity Unit, as well as those that underpinned my construction

of myself as a consultant in the early period of my consultancy work. This is followed by three layers of interpretation of my understandings about my role.

Orientation

My initial understandings about teacher consultancy were based more on what I did not want to be as a consultant than on what the role might be. As a classroom teacher, I had sat through many staff development sessions in which various DET consultants "walked" the staff through a variety of syllabus documents, support documents and policies – perhaps followed by a quick activity to see if the teachers understood what they had just been told. I was often frustrated by these sessions as I was quite capable of reading the documents for myself and really wanted to know what the new syllabus, or document, meant for my classroom practice.

As a coordinator of professional development in my school, I had frequently invited DET consultants to work with the staff, seeing them as experts in their field. I was often dissatisfied with much that was undertaken in the name of teacher professional development in that it never seemed to engage teachers in discussion about their own classroom practice.

As a consultant, I wanted to make connections for teachers between the gender equity strategy and their teaching practice, in ways that would support the work that they were already doing in their classrooms. However, the way in which my work as a consultant was structured provided me with little scope to develop understandings as to how I might make such connections with the teachers with whom I worked. Most of my invitations from schools to work with teachers were for one-off, short sessions in which it was expected that I talk to teachers on various topics such as boys and literacy, engaging boys in schooling, and exploring gender in school communities. Such professional development sessions provided little opportunity for me to do anything other than talk "at" large groups of teachers on the requested topic.

Throughout the period of my work as a consultant I read widely in the area of gender equity in education. This reading included current research and academic writing in the field, the Commonwealth Government document - *Gender Equity: A Framework for Australian schools* (MCEETYA, 1997), that underpinned the NSW gender equity strategy, and various Australian state government documents on gender equity in schools. My reading in these various areas formed the basis for my developing knowledge about gender in school education. However, this growth in my own knowledge about gender issues was not accompanied by developing understandings as to how I might enact my consultancy with teachers in ways that made connections with their personal understandings about gender issues in education and their teaching practice.

I felt strongly that part of my role as a gender equity consultant was to work with teachers to develop their understandings about gender as socially constructed, as this was the theoretical framework of the policy that I was employed to implement. I also believed that teachers needed clear understandings about the social justice aspect of gender equity so that they were aware of the ways in which their students' understandings about gender might impact upon their engagement with, and participation in, schooling.

I saw gender equity as a perspective that should be embedded in teaching and learning programs across all Key Learning Areas (KLAs), where appropriate, so that students recognised that knowledge about gender is constructed and therefore open to question. Therefore, I was keen to explore with teachers ways in which they could embed knowledge about gender issues in the work they were already doing with their students, rather than viewing work in the area of gender equity as one more thing for teachers to do. I believed that students needed to explore multiple perspectives on masculinities and femininities to assist them to develop awareness that ideas about gender were dynamic and varied across time, culture and geographic location.

Many schools with which I worked had programs in place that addressed bullying and sex-based harassment but these tended to be stand-alone programs without links to the teaching

and learning curriculum. These programs rarely included a gender perspective on the target behaviour. I believed that it was important for students to develop understandings of how ideas about masculinities and femininities were often implicated in incidences of bullying, sex-based harassment and homophobia.

An entry from my journal in the early period of my appointment as a consultant reveals my view of my role as a consultant working with teachers at this time.

> I see my role as a consultant as being to work with teachers on their understandings about gender. The policy that I work with is framed from a perspective of gender as a social construction. Few teachers have this understanding and my concern is how I go about supporting teachers to work with a policy that's based on a theory of which the teachers have little or no knowledge. How can teachers explore ideas about gender with their students if they don't understand gender as constructed? Informal discussions with some teachers that I've worked with indicate that they see gender as biologically determined – boys are boys/lots of testosterone/ that's just the way they are etc. How do I change people's thinking when they are so sure that they know what gender is all about? (Journal September, 2001)

This journal entry from the early period of my work as a consultant indicates that I felt much certainty about my role and highlights my assurance about the correctness of my beliefs about what teachers needed to know. In fact, at the time of writing the above journal entry, **I** was the one who was so sure that **I** knew what gender was all about that I had a crusade-like approach to my work. I thought that it was my mission to ensure that I "fixed up" all the teachers with whom I worked so that they understood about the importance of gender issues in their work with students. My perception of my role as a consultant was of being in control of what was to be presented to teachers so that they received the "right" message about gender equity.

Paradoxically, whilst I held clear and certain views about what I thought teachers needed, I did not consider myself an expert in the field of gender equity as revealed by the following journal entry.

> Once again I was introduced to the teachers today as the "gender equity expert". I really dislike this title. I feel like a fraud as I know that I am learning about gender equity and am only a step or two ahead of the teachers that I am talking to. To me the term "expert" means someone with thorough knowledge about something and that's not how I see myself at all. (Journal, October 2001)

The early part of my work as a consultant involved many hours of reading current research in the area of gender and education. I read widely and thoroughly enjoyed the knowledge I was gaining about the field of my work. However, I was aware that the only real difference between me and the teachers with whom I worked was that I had the luxury of time to read and reflect about gender issues scheduled into my work load. A focus on gender equity was also my sole workplace responsibility, unlike primary school teachers who teach across all KLAs.

I felt that the title of expert was imposed upon me by teachers rather than adopted comfortably by me to describe myself. I often discussed this concern with my doctoral supervisor who suggested that compared to many teachers I *was* developing a level of expertise in the area. However, I felt that I had a long way to go before I could rightly claim the title of expert, if ever.

My unease about the label of expert was compounded by the knowledge that the DET does envisage consultants as experts in their fields. It was my role to support teachers to implement the gender equity policy and such a role required a level of expertise. However, the fact that there was no provision for me to learn about the process of consultancy was problematic. The issue for me was that I was new to my position and learning about gender equity and how to be a consultant as I visited schools to present professional development sessions. I knew that I had much to learn about gender equity, in particular, and

consultancy, in general however, I did not initially take the time to consider how I might undertake my work differently. Nor was there an expectation in my workplace that I should spend any time learning about working with teachers. In fact, when I submitted my research application to undertake study into my practice as a consultant to the DET for approval, the director of my unit suggested that such research might be a conflict of interest.

Layer 1: Principles of pedagogy

Loughran's (1997) principles of pedagogy in teacher education provided me with an initial means of interpreting my understandings of my consultancy role (see Chapter 3 for a full discussion of the way in which these principles are applied to my analysis). In this layer of interpretation I focus on Loughran's principles of 'relationship' and 'purpose'.

Whilst I decried the ways in which many DET consultants had constructed many of my professional learning experiences as a classroom teacher, my early work as a consultant was in a similar vein. This was partly due to the fact that much of my work in schools involved one-off presentations; therefore I had no opportunity to develop relationships with the groups of teachers with whom I was working, so that I might be responsive to their needs. However, my early construction of myself as a consultant also determined the manner of my ways of working with teachers.

The journal entry of September, 2001 indicates that I tended to see myself as responsible for providing teachers with "absolute direction, definition and understanding" (Loughran, 1997, p.59) about gender issues in education because I saw myself as knowing what they needed. Rather than viewing teacher professional learning as a shared responsibility, I saw myself as responsible for the learning of the teachers with whom I worked. By assuming total control of what occurred in professional development settings, I did not acknowledge teachers as independent learners or trust that the knowledge about gender that they brought to the professional learning experience would support their learning new ideas about gender issues. I was aiming for convergence of learning rather than understanding that there would

be a breadth of understanding arising from any given professional development experience (Loughran, 1997, p.60).

Whilst my journal entry of October, 2001 indicates that I didn't see myself as an expert, the reality of my work context, and my own construction of myself as a consultant, meant that I was assuming "a role of 'expert' in total control of the direction" of the teacher professional development which I was leading (Loughran, 1997, p. 60). I provided no real opportunity for individual teachers to raise issues or concerns about the gender equity policy and what it might mean for their classroom practice. This was not part of my thinking about my role as a consultant during the early period of my work.

My initial work as a consultant had a very clear purpose – to make teachers understand gender as socially constructed. Rather than viewing my work as a starting point for teachers to engage in learning about gender as an educational issue, the reality of my limited time with teachers, and my assumptions about my role as a consultant, meant that there were limited opportunities for participating teachers to actively construct new ideas about gender as a result of the experiences provided. Whilst I was aware of the literature cited in Chapter 2, I did not use such knowledge to drive my practice. The context for my work with teachers that I initially created meant that there was no provision made for "a range of attitudes, views and practices [to be] purposefully explored" (Loughran, 1997 p. 65) such that teachers could consider their knowledge about gender issues in light of the content under consideration. It was be undertaking my self-study that I was able to use my knowledge of literature to support my reframing of practice.

Layer 2: Professional knowledge landscape

Viewed using Clandinin and Connelly's (1995) metaphor of the professional knowledge landscape, my initial approach to my work as a consultant indicates that I was taking no account of teachers' personal practical knowledge about gender equity. I regarded my role as being to carry the 'sacred story' of the gender equity policy into schools and deliver it to the teachers. I gave my own accounts of research findings in the area of gender equity and

discussed policy directions with teachers. My approach to my work was a moral one. The sacred gender equity story that I delivered came with a moral expectation that teachers would do something to rectify their understandings and, consequently, their teaching practice.

I stated that I was keen to challenge teacher understandings about gender but there was no expectation on my part that the teachers with whom I worked had any real agency in the work that they might undertake in the area. My approach was that the gender equity policy was there to be implemented. I did not see the possibility of using the policy as the basis for discussions with teachers as to how they might use it to explore the various problems they had identified in their school settings. It was to be taken as given. Clandinin and Connelly (1995) describe this approach to working with teachers as "a conduit of shoulds" (p.11).

My initial construction of myself as a consultant may be understood as a 'cover story' (Clandinin & Connelly, 1995) whereby I portrayed myself to teachers and others on my professional knowledge landscape, as an expert person in the area of gender equity, despite my discomfort with this label. I consider my professional knowledge landscape as including the schools within which I worked and the infrastructure of the DET state office which was also my place of work. Unlike teachers in schools, who Clandinin and Connelly describe as having the safety of classroom spaces to live their secret stories of practice, I had no such place on my professional knowledge landscape to live my 'secret story' of learning to be a gender equity consultant. This experience was similar to my experiences of promotion from classroom teacher to executive teacher and assistant principal. Each time I had received a promotion within the school system, there had been virtually no professional development opportunities or mentoring for me to learn my new role. The approach of the DET, or at least the schools where I worked, was that once you received a promotion you understood the new role and could competently undertake all that was required of the position.

When I began my position as Senior Education Officer with the Gender Equity Unit, there was an unspoken expectation that I would very quickly become an expert in the area of gender in school education and be able to work effectively with schools as a consultant. I was encouraged by my manager to read widely in the field of gender and school education, but this contributed to the sacred story of the gender equity strategy and my cover story of expertise rather than supporting my growth as a teacher educator. Therefore, at the same time that I was living my cover story of expertise, I was complicit in applying the sacred story of policy to the professional development work that I undertook in schools. I was telling teachers the theoretical, abstract story of the gender equity policy and expecting them to apply this to their teaching. Thus, on appointment to the position of teacher consultant, I took on the role as prescribed by the educational conduit (Clandinin & Connelly, 1995) of the DET. I did not understand at that stage that, whilst I may not have been capable of changing the pervasive sacred story of theory-driven practice (Craig, 2006), I did have agency in determining the ways in which I related to teachers in schools. Such insight was to develop over the course of my self-study.

Layer 3: Moving forward through self-study

My approach to my work as a consultant was initially based on the naïve premise that, by my carefully explaining to teachers that ideas about gender were socially constructed, they would somehow gain immediate understanding and subsequently change their teaching practice to be more gender inclusive. Like Abt-Perkins, Dale and Hauschildt (1998) in their self-study focussing on race, class and gender inequities with pre-service teachers, I behaved like a missionary with an agenda (p.91). In a similar way to Abt-Perkins et al., my perspective was part of my problem in that I saw myself as teaching “others”, wanting to provide teachers with answers, give them direction and lead them in the area of gender equity. This is how I initially constructed my role as a gender equity consultant. I was imposing my professional development agenda on the teachers with whom I worked, tending to view teachers as resistant to my views of what I thought they needed in terms of professional learning about gender issues if they offered views about gender that differed from my own.

By stating that I did not see myself as an expert in the field of gender equity, but by assuming the mantle of expertise thrust upon me in my various work contexts, I was a living contradiction (Whitehead, 2000). This situation caused me to problematise my practice as a consultant as I sought to confront this contradiction (LaBoskey, 2004, p.829) and the dissonance it produced for me. This confrontation continued throughout the period of my self-study described in this thesis, as I sought to gain insights into my practice.

My initial construction of my self as consultant shows a desire to involve teachers in transformative professional learning, in which teachers would be involved in a continuous evolution of their own understanding and perspectives as they sought to address the needs of students (Schulte, 2004, p.712). However, my way of going about such transformative work with teachers were indeed limited. Rather than developing strategies to assist teachers to "think critically and challenge ideas of how power and control are constructed in the world and mapped onto themselves" (p.712), I used my authority as consultant to lecture teachers as to why they should include gender perspectives in their teaching. My field texts in Chapter 6 indicate the ways in which, through my self-study, I was able to improve my ways of applying a more transformative approach to my work

I began my work as a consultant with very clear views about my role working with teachers. As my self-study developed, I began to think more deeply about my consultancy and my views about my role moved from initial surety to doubt (Clandinin & Connelly, 2004, p.593). I continued to believe that it was important that teachers had some knowledge of the theoretical basis of the gender equity policy and the implications of this for their teaching practice. However, the ways in which I sought to work with teachers to develop their knowledge about gender as an educational issue changed over time as a result of my reflections upon my role as a consultant and the feedback that I received from the participating teachers. These changes are discussed in Chapter 6.

4.2 Teachers' views of my role as a consultant

In this section I explore the ways in which the participating teachers' views about my role as a consultant impacted on the work that I was asked to undertake in schools and also on my own understandings about my role. The teachers at the various project schools held a variety of expectations for my role as a consultant. These expectations were often at odds with my own view of my role. The tensions that arose for me from this disparity of ideas about my role are discussed in this section.

Orientation

As discussed in the background to this study in section 1.1, at the time of undertaking the research there was very little professional development funding provided to schools by the DET. The result was that much work undertaken in this area was in the form of short one-off presentations to teachers on SDDs. However, commencing in 2001, the GEU offered small grants to 30 schools across NSW to undertake gender equity initiatives. Both Eden Hills and Brownley Heights Public Schools were successful applicants for this funding, which they used to provide release time for teachers to work with me.

At Eden Hills and at Warner, the expectations of my role as a consultant were fairly similar. As discussed in Chapter 3, my initial work at Eden Hills involved a presentation to teachers at a staff development day (SDD). The request was that I focus upon boys' organisational, communication and group work skills in a ninety minute session with teachers. The expectation was that I would deliver 'tips for teachers' in the areas that they saw as of concern, in working with the boys in the school. I was not keen on this 'bag of tricks' approach to my work, as I believed that such an approach would do little to develop "deep knowledge of the best pedagogical practices" required for effective gender reform (Lingard, Martino, Mills & Bahr, 2002, p. 131). Specifically, I believed that such an approach to working with teachers would do little to engage them in understanding how students' ideas about gender may be implicated in their attitudes to school and their classroom behaviour.

However, I developed the session as requested, knowing that it was planned that I would work with the teachers on a more personal level later in the year. I developed a workshop which explored each of the areas of concern from a gender equity perspective using materials from Allard and Wilson's (1995) *Gender Dimensions* to provide the teachers with practical strategies that they could include in their classroom management and teaching and learning programs.

The teachers at Warner saw my role as providing them with units of work with a gender focus that they could use with their classes. I was invited to a meeting of the school's gender equity committee where I was introduced by Michael, the deputy principal, as "the gender equity expert". The committee requested that I develop a series of workshops for teachers for the upcoming SDD that I was to run, as indicated below.

> The lessons from the day will go into the library and it will be really good. It's part of our intention to provide further professional development activities to develop more units either through perspectives or through discrete units. We want to build up a wealth of gender equity materials that we can use. (Brian, June 2002)

> We want to provide the teachers with units to help them put gender perspectives into their teaching. We have done this for all sorts of areas and it's something the teachers here really value. (Pamela, June 2002)

I was not keen to merely provide teachers with set lessons to follow as I believed that this would not assist them in understanding the theoretical basis of the gender equity policy. My journal entry below reveals my disquiet.

> The school wants to develop a gender equity policy but the teachers just want lessons to put into their programs. I don't think this will change their ideas about gender issues much. I fear it will be a case of "done that lesson, onto the next thing". Will they have a good understanding of gender construction? Will they be

> able to transfer their learning to develop their own lessons? (Journal entry, June 2002)

This expectation that I would provide complete units and lessons was at odds with my understanding of my role as outlined in section 4.1 above. At the end of the meeting I asked the deputy principal, Michael for copies of any scope and sequence plans for various curriculum areas that the school had, to assist me to develop lessons that related to what the teachers were planning to teach in the following term. These were not available.

Layer 1: Principles of pedagogy

In this first layer of interpretation, I have drawn on Loughran's (1997) principles of modelling and purpose to explore others' expectations of my role as a gender equity consultant.

The request from Eden Hills to work with teachers in a one-off workshop session in an area that the school had identified as problematic was typical of the work that I undertook in many schools. By requesting that I present a two hour workshop as a series of ideas for working with the teachers' areas of concern for students, the assistant principal at Eden Hills was constructing me as the gender equity expert who could solve the problems the teachers had identified. Furthermore, I was complicit in this construction as I provided the teachers with opportunities to experience a variety of teaching strategies, but did not follow this with discussion of why the strategies might be useful for working with their students to support an improvement in the areas of concern. I modelled teaching strategies for the teachers without providing them with the opportunity to better understand the pedagogical purpose of the various strategies presented, or to discuss how they might include the strategies in their own teaching practice (Loughran, 1997, p.62).

Similarly, by asking me to develop a series of lessons or units that teachers could use in their teaching, the committee at Warner was constructing professional learning in the school as something presented to teachers as a package for them to take into their

classrooms to implement. The request from the committee for units of work positioned the teachers as dependent upon me as an 'expert' consultant for the provision of solutions to address the identified gender inequities in the school. It also indicates that they believed that the workshops would satisfy the learning needs of the teachers.

The teachers at Warner indicated that they felt that my role as a consultant was to provide them with examples of lessons with a gender equity focus. I regarded my role as being to assist teachers to embed understandings about gender in their teaching and learning programs, no matter what the content. The purpose that I saw for my work at Warner and the purpose the teachers had in mind were very different. Both parties had definite purposes in mind for the day, but these purposes were not clearly articulated to allow for discussion that may have led to the development of a common understanding of the purpose of the professional learning in the area of gender equity within the school.

Layer 2 Professional knowledge landscape

By asking me to provide workshops involving teaching strategies and sample lessons for teachers, those developing the professional learning plans at Eden Hills and Warner Public Schools were creating a story of professional development as something 'done to' teachers by outside experts. The expectation was that I would give the teachers something to take away and apply in their classrooms. The expectation was also that I would provide support for the teachers in the language of the conduit – I would advise them as to what they should do (Clandinin & Connelly, 1995, p. 132). By not providing the teachers with opportunities to discuss the strategies and lessons presented in terms of their own classroom experiences and personal practical knowledge about teaching, I was continuing this story of professional development at both schools.

Viewed using the professional knowledge landscape metaphor, my introduction to teachers at Warner as "the gender equity expert", coupled with the request that I develop lessons for the school to give to teachers to "help them put gender perspectives into their teaching" (Pamela, Focus Group Interview) applies the 'sacred' theory-practice story to professional

development in the school. The result is that teachers are constructed as having incomplete knowledge and in need of learning through professional development activities delivered by someone with 'expert' knowledge.

At Warner, the gender equity committee constructed professional development as "a time for formal activities in professional settings" (Clandinin & Connelly, 1995, p.127). The expectation of the school's gender equity committee was that I would develop something that the teachers could take back to their classrooms, put into their teaching and learning programs and use to teach their students about gender issues. The expectation was that I would design lessons to deliver ideas about gender equity to the professional knowledge landscape, "thereby bending teachers to new forms of knowledge" (Clandinin & Connelly, p. 129).

My meeting with the teachers at Warner indicated to me just how pervasive was the sacred story of consultants working with teachers and the extent to which the educational conduit (Clandinin & Connelly, 1995) shapes the expectations of consultants held by teachers (Craig, 2006). Like Craig (2006), I needed to reconcile myself to fact that there were entrenched "institutional forces encasing our activities" (p.110) that would impact on my work with teachers in schools, but that it was possible for me to develop ways of interacting with teachers that might overcome constraints of context of the various professional knowledge landscapes within which I was involved.

The story of professional development that was told on the professional knowledge landscapes at Eden Hills and Warner was one of experts from the conduit providing teachers with particular strategies and ready-made lessons for them to use with their students. By agreeing to develop such forms of professional development, I supported and continued this story of professional learning at both schools. If I wanted to improve my practice as a consultant, I believed that I needed to find ways to write new stories of professional learning with the teachers with whom I was working - stories that worked to overcome sacred stories poured into schools from the educational conduit.

Layer 3: Moving forward through self-study

The field texts discussed above reveal that there were many competing perspectives for me to consider as I developed understandings about my role as a consultant. There were the views of consultancy implicit in my workplace arrangements, views held by individual teachers, the views of school committees that sought my support for gender initiatives within schools and the views of my work colleague.

At the time the field texts were constructed, I felt unease about what was expected of me as a consultant by teachers, but I didn't feel any sense of agency as to how I might undertake my work with schools differently. I had been in the position for eighteen months and had only just decided to develop my doctoral research as a self-study of teacher education practices. I was learning to be a consultant and struggling with what this meant.

The request that I provide teachers with strategies and sample lessons to implement in their classrooms applied a "technical-transmission" (Beck, Freese & Kosnik, 2004) approach to my work. This was at odds with my desire to work with teachers in ways that were different to those that I had experienced as a teacher when consultants came to my schools to support teachers in their work. However, I did not initially take the time to consider how I might undertake my consultancy differently.

The expectations for my role held by others and my past experiences of consultancy as a teacher influenced my initial actions, reactions and interactions (Tidwell & Fitzgerald, 2004, p.83) as a consultant. I needed to find a way of connecting my stated beliefs about consultancy and my actions as a consultant. My self-study provided that connection. By reflecting on the expectations held for my consultancy by others, as well as the mismatch between my beliefs about my work and my enactment of my consultancy I was able to recognise the tensions inherent in my practice.

In my early work as a consultant I tended to focus almost entirely on the knowledge about gender issues that I had to share with teachers and not on how I was going to meet the

needs of the teachers with whom I was working. My focus was on myself. It was not until I began my self-study that I was able to begin to exemplify my beliefs and values through practice (Tidwell & Fitzgerald, 2004, p. 86) by giving consideration to others' expectations of me as a consultant, alongside my own expectations, as I attempted to dispel the dissonance that the differing expectations created for me.

By exploring the teacher professional learning environments that I worked within, and to some extent created, at each of the project schools, I was able to take account of the differing expectations held for my work, as well as what actually occurred at each school. This resulted in a reframing of my practice which assisted me to make changes to the subsequent work that I undertook in the project schools (these changes are discussed in Chapter 6). The feedback that I received from the teachers at Warner about the SDD activities and the second phase of my work at Brownley Heights provided the catalysts for me to make changes in my consultancy. These catalysts are discussed in section 4.4.

4.3 Views about consultancy within the Gender Equity Unit

Whilst the DET had no stated position on the role of consultants, implicit messages about expectations of the role were present in work arrangements within the GEU, models of consultancy enacted in everyday practice and the lack of professional learning about consultancy for people newly appointed to their roles. My critical friend, Ian, and I also disagreed about our roles as consultants working in schools. The views about consultancy within the GEU are the focus for discussion in this section.

Orientation

As outlined in Chapter 1 (section 1.1) the extent of my induction into my position in the Gender Equity Unit was to be given a desk and a computer, both containing the files of the previous senior education officer. My manager suggested that I spend a week familiarising myself with these files and reading some of the books that lined my new desk. In my second week I accompanied my manager on a visit to a new secondary college, where she

presented a session on gender equity to the teaching staff. This was an hour long presentation that focused on the strategy document and its implications for teaching.

The small amount of funding provided to the Gender Equity Unit, compared to the budgets of other DET units at the time, meant there was very little funding to work with individual schools for any length of time. The reality of my DET workplace meant that there was little opportunity to work with schools on gender issues in any real depth – a situation that I found frustrating and, at times, depressing. I often returned from SDD sessions with schools feeling disillusioned about my work and wondering what the point of my job was. The view of my role as a gender equity consultant implicit in the Gender Equity Unit work arrangements was one of developing my knowledge about gender in education through interactions with current literature in the area and presenting one-off sessions about gender issues to teachers at the requests of schools.

This situation changed to a certain extent with the offering of funding to schools to undertake gender equity initiatives in 2001. One of the conditions of funding was that GEU consultants work with schools to develop their initiatives, a condition that was accepted by Eden Hills and Warner Public Schools. Following my initial meeting with the Warner's Gender Equity Committee, I returned to the gender equity unit, where I discussed my disquiet about the request from Warner that I develop a series of workshops with Ian, my critical friend. I was concerned that I would be providing lesson plans that had no real link to the work that teachers were already doing in the school.

> Ian - If we can develop models of work that people can put into place this might assist them in their thinking about gender issues. You know, units of work that they can take away and use. This might lead to small shifts in their thinking.
>
> Leonie – I'm not so sure that by giving teachers units that you will have an impact on their understandings about gender. It may end up being just another unit of work to implement and when that's done it's on with the next one – no change to understanding about gender issues at all.

Ian – Yes but if we give teachers practical ways of including gender in their teaching programs it might lead to small shifts in understanding.

Leonie – Yeah and it may lead to no change at all!

Ian – If we don't give them units of work a lot of teachers won't deal with gender as an educational issue at all. They often don't know how to.

Leonie – I guess my frustration is that none of this is new. I also think you are doing teachers an injustice to assume that they need spoon feeding and can't develop teaching and learning programs for themselves. Maybe it's a primary/secondary thing but I think if we can show teachers how gender issues are already there in all the syllabus documents, that might help. Be explicit about the connection between where we are coming from and what's already there for them in the various syllabuses. I just don't think it's actually our job to sit around writing units of work. We don't have the funding to publish anything for the whole system so we would be doing a lot of work that would only go to one or two schools and there's already lots of things available for teachers to use.

Ian – There might be resources available but teachers aren't using them – lots don't know what is available to use and if they don't see gender as an issue for them in their teaching why would they even being looking for such resources.

Leonie – I agree and that's my point. We need to work with teachers to raise their awareness of gender as an issue for them in their teaching. Challenge them a bit.

Ian – Yes they need to be challenged but then they need something to help them put things into practice in their classrooms. (June 2002 – Critical Friend Conversation)

Ian reveals in our conversation that he sees the provision of sample lessons as an important part of our role as consultants. Following the above conversation, I was extremely upset with Ian as I felt that he, like the teachers, saw our role as being to provide schools with ready made packages that they could implement. I felt that Ian and I were approaching our consultancy work from different perspectives. I did not feel that he could provide the critiquing of practice that I needed to support my self-study as revealed by the journal entry below.

> Ian's thinking about our work seems really limited. He just wants to push units of work down teachers' throats. This approach will change nothing. Not sure that Ian's input is very productive. (June 2002, Journal Entry)

Prior to his appointment to the Gender Equity Unit, Ian had worked as a head teacher of English in a high school. He had discussed with me that, as a head teacher, he saw it as his responsibility to develop units of work for teachers in the faculty to implement. My previous experience had been as an assistant principal in a primary school. I had often worked with teachers to cooperatively program but did not ever merely provide teachers with units of work to implement. We worked together to develop teaching and learning programs relevant to our students and the school context. These differences in approaches to leadership in our previous work contexts, coupled with Ian's comments above, led me to feel that Ian and I were at odds about our role as gender equity consultants to teachers.

Layer 1: Principles of pedagogy

Using Loughran's principles of pedagogy, Ian's comments indicate that he, in a manner similar to the teachers at Eden Hills and Warner Public Schools, positions consultants as 'experts' who should provide teachers with solutions to gender equity issues in schools, in the form of lessons to mimic. He states that teachers often don't know how to deal with gender as a educational issue, and that the provision of units of work will change teachers' understandings about gender issues, implying that this will assist in growth of understanding about gender for teachers.

Neither Ian nor I, at this stage, indicate any trust that the teachers involved in the professional learning sessions will grasp the major concepts under consideration in the workshop without my 'expertise'. We both view the teachers as completely dependent on the consultant for their learning. Whilst I mention the desire to challenge the teachers, I do not address what I mean by this and how I might go about it. I did not have an understanding of how I might go about challenging the teachers to "reconsider their existing knowledge" (Loughran, 1997, p.61) in light of the information that I would be providing. Challenge was something I wanted to include in my work with teachers, but I spent no time thinking through how I might go about this process.

My conversation with Ian did little to address my concern about providing the teachers at Warner with sample lessons. Our conversation reveals the tension that existed for me between wanting to provide teachers with what they wanted in terms of professional development and my thoughts about teacher knowledge about gender issues in teaching. The conversation with Ian also reveals that whilst I was concerned about the differences between the expectations for my work held by teachers and my own view of my role, I was not yet at a stage in my learning about my work to make significant changes to my practice. Such agency to make changes to my practice developed over time.

Layer 2: Professional knowledge landscape

The application of Clandinin and Connelly's (1995) professional knowledge landscape metaphor to my conversation with Ian reveals that he believes that teachers need knowledge to be packaged neatly into workshops in an abstract way that removes the opportunity for teachers to develop understandings about the historical, narrative contexts of gender equity policy. Such a process of professional learning provides teachers with "no entry point for debate and discussion" of the materials funnelled down the conduit (Clandinin & Connelly, 1995, p.11). Ian's expectation was that I develop sample lessons that the teachers could take back to their classrooms and apply to their work with students. This story of professional development is one where teachers are provided with something to be applied to their classroom practice.

The view of teachers expressed by Ian is one of teachers that are resistant to change – "If we don't give them units of work lots of teachers won't deal with gender as an educational issue at all" (Ian, critical friend conversation, June 2002). Consultants, on the other hand, are constructed as being creative, providing teachers with imaginative ways to achieve reform (Clandinin & Connelly, 1995). Knowledge about gender issues is constructed, through this conversation, as something that teachers acquire through consultants, rather than coming from practice (Clandinin & Connelly, 2004). Consultancy is constructed as a process of providing knowledge for teachers, rather than supporting the development of teacher knowledge of the professional landscape.

Layer 3: Moving forward through self-study

In our conversation, Ian and I position ourselves as gender equity experts. My reaction to the expectation that I provide the teachers with example lessons indicates that I was at least questioning what had been asked of me. However, rather than seeking to delve deeply into this positioning of myself, I discussed the issue briefly with Ian, rejected his ideas concerning the problem and went on to develop the lessons as requested. I did not spend any more time questioning what had been requested.

Rather than playing a major role in the examination of my practice, the critical friendship with Ian was not sustained throughout the period of my research. Within the critical friendship aspect of my study, my focus was on Ian and the inadequacies I perceived in him as a critical friend, as revealed in the quote from my journal earlier in this section. Reflection on the critical friend process has assisted me to reframe this collaboration, highlighting several issues that contributed to the unsatisfactory nature of the association. The first problematic issue was that I did not discuss the process of critical friendship with Ian in any real depth. Schuck and Russell (2005) highlight the importance of both parties in a collaboration that aims to critique practice having a clear understanding of the expectations of such a relationship. My initial conversation with Ian mentioned meeting regularly to discuss issues of concern in our work but I did not thoroughly discuss with him

what my expectations were, nor give him the opportunity to raise any concerns about the process.

Secondly, I was undertaking doctoral study and Ian was not, therefore I had an interest in pursuing the relationship that did not exist for him. Whilst Ian agreed to discuss issues of concern with me, the relationship was not built on the basis of both participants being equally engaged in the research process as is the case for many self-studies that involve collaboration with colleagues (see Bass, Anderson-Patton & Allender, 2002; Guilfoyle, Placier, Hamilton & Pinnegar, 1995; Tidwell, 2002). I had a vested interested in the relationship – I needed a critical friend to challenge my understandings about my practice as I was involved in a research process. On the other hand, Ian was carrying out his duties within the gender equity unit as expected. He was receiving positive evaluations from teachers with whom he implemented professional learning activities. As Griffiths and Poursanidou (2005) ask – why would he want to collaborate with me at all? Critiquing of practice was my need – not Ian's.

Finally, Ian had been working in the unit for less time than I had and it was my role in the unit to support him in his work. He often accompanied me to schools as an observer so that he could learn about his role. At the time of the study, I focused on what I perceived as the inadequacy of Ian as a critical friend, given his relatively short time working in the unit. Reflecting back on the relationship has led me to realise that it would have been better to ask questions about my self in the process. Such questioning may have led me to understand the issues of perceived power and status that may have impacted negatively on the collaboration and that my self-study was about me rather than my colleague (Griffiths & Poursanidou, 2005; Schuck & Russell, 2005).

4.4 New insights into my role

In this section I explore a story of my practice as a consultant that played a pivotal part in my development of new understandings of my role as a consultant. The understandings that

developed as a result of my reflections about my role in this story provided the basis for a reframing of my practice so that I was able to make changes that saw my beliefs and my actions move into closer alignment than they had previously been.

Orientation

I now return to Warner Public School to investigate the work that I undertook with the teachers in this particular school. I explore the ways in which feedback from the teachers with whom I worked informed my reflections about my work and subsequent changes to my practice. I begin with the teachers' comments about the SDD and then go on to explore my learning about consultancy that developed as I reflected on the comments of the teachers.

In discussing my work at Warner, I explore the SDD workshops that I developed for the school from the teachers' perspectives. I asked the teachers to tell me about the effectiveness of the workshops in assisting them to include gender perspectives in their teaching and learning programs.

> There was a lot of positive comment about the day. It certainly showed how easy it is to incorporate gender equity issues into a program. It was appropriate for a big age range. It didn't just focus on younger or older [students]…. Some were more appropriate for younger and older but generally I think they were useful for all grades. You could adapt them to any grade or class. (Pamela – September 2002, focus group interview).

Pamela found the workshops informative and was able to transfer what she had learnt on the day to other areas of her teaching.

> The lessons raised gender issues in a subtle way and were very clever in that you looked at the packaging, you looked at the dynamics of the person on the packaging , then you started asking questions about the image that's being used. You are actually questioning all this and I was able to take that across into my

> literature unit. I was using the book 'My Dog' and we were able to look at the pictures and discuss that there were hardly any girls there, there was a war scene and I was able to come in and ask probing questions about the images used in the book. So that was just a small thing coming from your lessons. Looking at the text …exploring the pictures. (Pamela – September 2002, focus group interview)

Brian also found the day beneficial to the work he was undertaking with his students. He too talks about the transferability of the concepts about gender in the SDD activities to other areas of his teaching.

> It was a perspective so we could see it through literature, through HSIE, through PDHPE. It worked because it was multifaceted which is what perspectives are like in a school. With my Year 6 I find it's a case now of looking at the literature we study from different perspectives – who does what and where gender issues fit in so … and a lot of our discussion is challenging the kids' gender-based assumptions and they're very happy to take new ideas on board. For example who's in what position and how things are done. They're constantly asking "Where does this fit in?" They don't see that there should be any limitations because of a person's gender. So they can look at any area and transfer the thinking to that area. With different newspaper articles, for example, what people are doing and how they're responding to it – it's part of approaching it to the wide world – how it fits in with the class discussions. (Brian – September 2002, focus group interview)

However, not all teachers saw the need to include gender perspectives in their teaching and learning programs, as the following comments reveal.

> I haven't really done anything. I don't think Kindergarten children even know what a girl and a boy is sometimes. They're so self-centred. (Jane – September 2002, focus group interview)

> We looked at the books that we focused on that day and it's interesting a

> lot of the kids have already read them. I think they just look at it as an interesting story and when you try and bring up issues they just say that was great – what's the next thing? (Julie – September 2002, focus group interview)

Jane's comments reveal that she does not see her students' experiences as at all gendered; therefore she does not see the need to include gender perspectives in her work with students. Whilst Julie had incorporated some of the ideas from the staff development day into her teaching, she cites her students' reactions to questioning as a reason to not focus further on this area. Both these teachers provide examples of their students' actions and reactions to indicate why they do not see it as important to include gender perspectives in their work with students.

Mary has yet another understanding about including teaching about gender issues in her program.

> I haven't done it because I haven't programmed for it this term. I think if something came up in the classroom that I could then focus toward that, you know, if I found the boys cutting the girls out of a particular sport or tending to read one type of text with a gender bias then I think that then it's more relevant and I would actually target that.
>
> I mean you're always doing gender-based issues anyway. You do them without thinking. You know, when a problem arises you tend to deal with it then and there. If it is a major problem then you would go to these structured activities. If you find that it is a real issue within a class or a grade or a school you would have more of a tendency to really program specifically for it. (Mary – September 2002, focus group interview)

Rather than a perspective to be included in all teaching and learning, Mary sees teaching about gender as an area that is linked to problems within the school or classroom and as something that needs specific programming when problems arise. Whilst she mentions that

teachers “are always doing gender-based issues”, she links this to problems that may arise at any given time.

The various teachers’ comments above regarding the inclusion of gender perspectives in their teaching and learning programs reveal a variety of positions and understandings about gender. I acknowledge that teachers within a given school will be at many different positions on the continuum of understanding about gender as an educational issue and also that this continuum will by no means have a similar basis of understandings for all teachers. My experience at Warner indicated that providing teachers with ideas for including gender issues in various KLAs was effective in assisting some teachers to understand the ways in which they might include teaching about gender in their teaching and learning programs. Nevertheless, the provision of example lessons had not made connections for all teachers at the school. My journal entry below indicates my initial thoughts about my work at Warner.

> I’m disappointed that not all teachers saw the point of including a gender perspective in the work they are undertaking with their students. I think the problem may have been that the lesson samples were randomly selected and had no real connection to the planned work of the teachers - although this wasn’t necessary for Brian and Pamela. I guess that it depends on the teacher’s understandings about gender and where they are on the continuum. Perhaps Ian is right in that some people need more guidance with explicit examples than others. (Leonie – December 2002, Journal entry)

The lessons used at Warner had been selected as isolated ideas and were not linked to the teaching and learning programs of the teachers. I initially felt that if I could link examples of work to the teaching and learning programs planned by teachers, this would be a more effective way of assisting teachers to include gender perspectives in their work as it would make better connections for teachers. However, further reflection made me realise that the example lessons were not really the problem at Warner. Rather, the way in which I had conducted the day seemed to be the real problem.

Layer 1: Principles of pedagogy

In this interpretation of my field texts constructed with the teachers at Warner, I draw from Loughran's (1997) principles of pedagogy for teacher education – namely those of relationships, purpose and modelling.

My work at Warner contained virtually none of Loughran's principles. My initial visit to the school to meet with the Gender Equity Committee, followed by my working with the staff on the SDD had not involved any real opportunity for relationship building based upon the notions of trust and independence put forward by Loughran. During this early stage of my consultancy I did not see my work as a two-way process of learning. As indicated in section 4.2, I initially assumed a mantle of expertise in my work that did not allow for me to be responsive to the needs of the teachers with whom I worked. Whilst I did consult with the Gender Equity committee at the school prior to the SDD, and develop the day in line with their request, my main focus during the day was on my performance as a consultant. Moreover, as is revealed in chapter 5, I did not ensure that the learning environment for the teachers was one in which participants felt safe and comfortable to offer their personal ideas about gender construction.

The notion of independence in the learning environment was also not present in my pedagogy. Rather than a "diversity of outcomes" (Loughran, 1997, p.60), I was expecting a convergence of learning, whereby all teachers would arrive at the same conclusion about the importance of including a gender perspective in their teaching and learning programs.

My purpose for the work that I undertook at Warner was to engage the teachers in learning about gender as a social construction and to challenge their thinking about the implications of this for their teaching. However, my structuring of the day did not allow this purpose to be achieved. If I had provided time for the teachers to come together after the lesson workshops to reflect on and discuss their understandings of what the teaching strategies might mean for their teaching practice, the outcome of the day may have been different. There may have been an opportunity for the teachers to understand the connection between

the pedagogy used and the content of the lessons (Loughran, 1997, p.61). By not providing time to discuss the purpose of the lessons, I failed to provide opportunities for the teachers to consider their own understandings about gender issues in their teaching alongside the new ideas that were presented.

I also needed to be explicit about the purpose of the experiences that I had planned. Had I articulated the purpose of the day as being to engage the teachers in thinking about the implications of gender issues for their teaching rather than merely providing experiences that were not discussed, the teachers may have been better challenged to synthesise the ideas and concepts under consideration. Rather than merely providing lessons for the teachers to mimic, I could have used the example lessons far more effectively as a basis for teacher discussion about gender as an educational issue. By not providing the teachers with time to discuss their experiences with the lessons, I did not give them the opportunity to reflect on the implications of the ideas underpinning the lessons for their own teaching. Such discussion and reflection may have assisted the teachers to better understand the pedagogical purposes of the experiences as well as the range of student learning outcomes that could result from participation in such lessons (Loughran, 1997, p.62).

The limited timeframe within which I was working at Warner might be seen as a major constraint, precluding any real inclusion of Loughran's principles of pedagogy on my part in the work that I undertook. However, I realised that unless I attempted to include some aspects of these principles in my work as a consultant, my work with teachers would be fairly limited and do little to change teachers' thinking about gender as an educational issue.

Layer 2: Professional knowledge landscape

Clandinin and Connelly's (1995) professional knowledge landscape metaphor provides another frame of reference for considering what occurred at Warner PS. I arrived at the school armed with lesson plans to assist teachers to include gender perspectives in their teaching and learning. As the lessons were not connected to the teaching and learning

programs of the teachers, there was little opportunity for the teachers to consider how they might fit with their current teaching plans. My development of workshops (even though at the request of the school) meant that the teachers were constructed as learners to be taught by the gender equity 'expert' rather than as knowers who could teach one another. By not providing the teachers with an opportunity to discuss the workshops with one another, I had failed to develop a safe, educative place for teacher learning. The teachers neither had an opportunity to learn "from one another in conversation" nor to learn "the limits of their own expression on the out-of-classroom place on the professional knowledge landscape" (Clandinin & Connelly, 1995, p161). The consequences of this lack of opportunity for teachers to discuss their understandings about gender meant that there was little chance for teachers to consider their assumptions about gender in light of differing ideas, and that some were silenced by the views expressed (see Chapter 5 for a detailed description of this silencing of certain teachers).

I had not provided an entry point for debate and discussion about gender issues. At this stage in my work, I saw myself as delivering the 'sacred story' of the gender equity strategy to the teachers in the school. To debate the appropriateness of the materials would have been "to question someone's authority" (Clandinin & Connelly, 1995, p.11). Such thinking was not part of my construction of myself as a consultant at the time I worked with the teachers at Warner. My approach was that the teachers should apply the information that I had provided them to their teaching without any real discussion as to how it might fit with their personal practical knowledge about teaching.

Layer 3: Moving forward through self-study

The problem for me at Warner was that the focus of my preparation and my work on the day was upon my self and my performance as a consultant. I had planned the learning experiences for the teachers very carefully and thoroughly, however, this total focus upon myself meant that I made no allowance for responding to learning opportunities that might have arisen in practice (Berry, 2004, p.1324). I approached my work at Warner as an actor might approach an onstage performance – I felt that I needed to keep the action moving

along, thereby leaving no room for teacher discussion or reflection about the experiences that I had planned.

As I prepared to work with the teachers at Brownley Heights during 2003, my experience at Warner led me to think about ways in which I might more successfully engage teachers in thinking about and discussing issues such as their students' understandings about gender construction. The request from Warner's Gender Equity Committee that I develop sample lessons had been problematic in that the expectation was that I would inform the teachers about gender as an educational issue and provide them with lessons that they could use to work in this area with their students. However, my structuring of the day was also problematic. I wanted to challenge teachers to think about gender as a social construction and how such knowledge might impact on their teaching and learning practice, but I provided no scope in the day for the teachers to engage critically with the ideas that I presented. There was a tension between the ideal that I was working towards and the approach that I chose to attain this ideal (Berry, 2004, p.1320).

I needed to develop ways of working with teachers, within the constraints of the contexts in which I worked, that would provide more opportunities for them to engage with new ideas about gender and consider the implications of these for their teaching. I still had a prescriptive approach to professional learning for teachers. I needed to be prepared to analyse the factors that defined the situations that confronted me at the schools in which I worked so that I could begin to think how I might make changes from 'things-as-they-are' to 'things-as-they-*might*-be' or 'things-as-they-*ought*-to-be' (Richert, 1997, p.80, emphasis in original), in terms of my practice as a consultant. If I wanted to create conversations that promoted learning about gender issues in schools whilst challenging the status quo, then I needed to ask myself constantly the following questions suggested by Richert (1997) - why is this important, why is this so, why am I doing this (p.82), alongside a further question of how might I best go about doing this with this group of teachers? My experiences at Warner provided the basis for my

reframing of practice, indicated in the description of the third phase of my work at both Eden Hills and Brownley Heights Public Schools discussed in Chapter 6.

Conclusion

The use of a layered approach to interpretation has assisted me to indicate the ways in which my interactions with literature from a variety of sources supported my developing understandings about my consultancy. Returning again and again to the literature over time as I sought new insights into what I was experiencing as a consultant assisted me to broaden my perspective about my work. The field texts used in this chapter and my interpretations of them have enabled me to see both how limited and limiting my initial construction of myself as a consultant was. Exploring these field texts has also provided me with insights into the ways in which consultancy in schools is often bounded by teachers' and systemic views of consultancy. Whilst I acknowledge that there is a limited amount that any consultant can do when invited to work with teachers for a one-off short period of time, such a situation will be compounded by the consultant's approach to his or her work, their positioning of themselves and their construction of the teachers with whom they are working.

When I began working as a gender equity consultant I wanted to work with teachers in ways that were meaningful for them and their students. However, my early actions as a consultant were not aligned with my beliefs about my role. My initial understandings of my role and the assumptions that I brought to working with teachers needed to change if I was to successfully make connections with teachers' understandings about gender as an educational issue. I needed to investigate my understandings about my role in order to improve my practice.

My initial understanding about my role was based upon a belief that the most important part of my work was the deliverance of the sacred story of the gender equity strategy into schools. This approach meant that I failed to take into account teachers' personal practical

knowledge of gender issues. Whilst I stated that I did not consider myself to be an 'expert', my approach to my work meant that I was constructing the teachers as learners that I should teach, rather than as knowers capable of learning from each other (Clandinin & Connelly, 1995). I struggled to come to terms with my beliefs about my role as a consultant and my actions in that role. These were in sharp contrast to one another.

My project assisted me to understand that, initially, **I** was the focus for my planning of professional development sessions with teachers - my concern was that I impart my knowledge about gender in school education to teachers. As my consultancy continued, and I spent time investigating my work with teachers, I came to see the need for me to focus more closely on the concerns, perspectives and struggles of classroom teachers (Kuzmic, 2002, p.233). My self-study provided me with the scope to reimagine ways that I might work with teachers, despite the constraints of the contexts within which I often worked (Wilcox, 1998, p.71).

How teachers and others viewed my role as a consultant impacted on the work I undertook in schools. Views of my role varied across school sites and within the same school at various times. The teachers with whom I worked saw my role as including the provision of 'tips' for working with students, the development of units of work for teachers to use, assisting in the development of programs, and as a resource person. How I structured my work as a consultant in schools was often determined by the expectations for my role held by those in schools and the DET. In order to work effectively with teachers I needed to take the various expectations of my role into account, as I developed understandings about how I might work effectively with teachers in ways that were not premised upon the expert consultant/passive teacher story of professional learning.

The experiences outlined in this chapter provided a beginning for my emerging understanding about my role as a consultant to teachers. My understandings developed further as I continued my work with the three schools involved in the study. This process was not a linear one. Rather it was an iterative process as I responded to the needs of the

teachers with whom I worked at a local level. By returning often to my field texts and the literature that I was reading, my understandings about my consultancy evolved. These changes are discussed further in the following two chapters in which I explore teacher and parent participation in learning about gender equity and the ways in which I changed my practice over the period of the study in response to my experiences of working with schools and feedback from teachers.

Chapter 5 “We all have our stereotypes”: Participation in learning about gender equity

Introduction

In the previous chapter I presented my understandings about my role in the early period of my work as a gender equity consultant. I contrasted these with expectations for my consultancy held by the teachers with whom I worked, a colleague in the Gender Equity Unit and systemic views of consultancy from within the NSW Department of Education and Training (DET). I explored these perspectives about my consultancy to indicate the tension that often existed for me around my role as a consultant as I worked with teachers.

In this chapter I consider teacher and parent participation in learning about gender, within the three school sites of the research. I investigate:

- who is *allowed* to participate;
- who is *invited* to participate;
- and who is *expected* to participate in discussions about gender in schools.

I present three incidents, one from each school, and explore each of these through a variety of readings. I have selected these incidents for discussion as they represent ‘critical incidents’ (Kelchtermans & Hamilton, 2004, p.804) in my learning about my practice. These incidents created challenges that contributed to my learning about consultancy.

I begin each section with an orientation to each incident that provides the reader with information from field texts. This is followed by my interpretation of my field texts, represented in layers as I indicate the ways in which my understandings of these critical incidents changed over time, influenced by my reflections, and the research literature I was reading. In each case, Layer 1 indicates my initial interpretations based on a selection of literature reviewed in Chapter 2. Layer 2 offers a reading of the field texts using Clandinin and Connelly’s (1995) professional knowledge landscape metaphor, discussed in detail in

Chapter 3. Layer 3 explores the way in which each incident contributed to my learning about my practice when read from the perspective of the wider self-study literature.

5.1 Talking about gender: who is *allowed* to participate?

This section explores field texts from my study which reveal the way in which the 'gender relations' (Connell, 2002) operating in one particular school operated to exclude certain teachers from discussions about gender. Connell uses the term 'gender relations' to describe the ways in which people within an organisation are connected and divided with respect to social relationships. These relations may be interactions between men and women, as well as among men and among women, where hierarchies of masculinity and femininity may be in evidence.

Orientation

The incident described below occurred at a staff development day (SDD) at Warner Public School (see Chapter 3 for information on the context of my work at Warner PS). I decided to begin the day with a sentence stem completion activity developed by Allard, Cooper, Hildebrand and Wealands (1996) which aimed to explore teachers' understandings about masculinity and femininity and provided discussion points for teachers based on these understandings. The journal entry below reveals my perspective on the introductory activity immediately following the staff development day at Warner.

> The Allard activity went well. All teachers were engaged in completing the sentences. There was a fair bit of discussion amongst them as they wrote and the shared discussion went quite well with several teachers contributing their ideas. (Journal entry – July 2002)

However, the focus group interview with the teacher participants from Warner PS exploring the usefulness of the SDD sessions for their teaching practice, provided me with

different perspectives on the initial session. Two teachers commented on the introductory activity.

> Brian - I found that morning session where we had the definitions – it was too difficult to write an answer and then when it went to a public session.
> Some of the answers that people gave I went oh that's interesting a woman giving her version of a definition of masculinity. I found that quite difficult. Maintaining a sense of what is femininity and masculinity. I found that really interesting as it tends to be a bit overlooked. I thought that was really good actually asking what it is within the context of the day. I looked at it as how people hold themselves and move. That discussion around masculinity and femininity was what I remembered most about the morning session.
>
> Michael - I remember that there was some challenging stuff happening then with people who began to argue that this is how it is – people with a particular view. I found that quite confronting. You tend to be pushed back by that and it tends to be accepted. If you let that roll over everyone – do we all accept that? No I don't accept it. We all have our stereotypes.
>
> Brian - And to actually challenge that you're actually putting yourself right out there. I'm not prepared to put myself on a limb when I don't really know how to articulate what I want to say when someone else has been so descriptive and so specific about what they see as masculinity. (Brian, Focus Group Interview - September 16)

Layer 1: Initial interpretations

Both Brian and Michael found the initial session of the day challenging and confronting. Brian states that he found it difficult to write his definition of masculinity and femininity, but that he thought it was a useful part of the day. The issue for both Brian and Michael was an extremely hegemonic statement about heterosexual masculinity made by one particular male member of staff. They found it confronting but did not feel comfortable to challenge what was said.

Michael, the Deputy Principal at the school, states that he does not accept the view of masculinity that was expressed, but on the day he did not challenge it. He is in a position of authority within the school, yet he did not feel comfortable to challenge the view presented. Michael's reluctance to challenge that opinion indicates the power of the hegemonic version of masculinity put forward by one male teacher.

Brian and Michael's feedback about the session caused me considerable concern when I listened to the recording of the interview. I had included this activity to open up discussion about gender but, rather than feeling free to comment, they had both felt confronted by the definitive statement about masculinity made by one of their male colleagues and this had served to silence them completely at the time. The effect was the very opposite to what I had intended. I had been so focused on my own work on the SDD – keen to keep the whole program for the day moving – that I do not even recall the comment that was made. I had simply accepted what was said and moved along to the next part of the session, without realising its effect on at least two of the other participants.

The perspective on the session presented by Brian and Michael revealed to me the significance of Blackmore's (1998) arguments, that work on gender issues is an emotional experience connected to power relationships within the school context. I had not been aware of the ways in which the gender relations operating within the school might impact on the proceedings of the day to include some teachers, whilst simultaneously excluding and intimidating others. One male teacher's successful claim to authority, in terms of gender definitions, marked the hegemonic masculinity operating (Connell, 1995) within the staff's gender relations. The version of masculinity he expressed meant that others did not feel comfortable to express alternative opinions, resulting in marginalisation of those with differing viewpoints from that expressed. Rather than supporting the teachers to explore their assumptions about gender through discussion about a range of masculinities and femininities, I had allowed one teacher's viewpoint to dominate and end the discussion.

Layer 2: Professional knowledge landscape metaphor

The incident at Warner reveals that the out-of-classroom space of the staffroom at the school is not a safe place for teachers to discuss the personal practical knowledge about gender that they bring to their practice. Holding ideas about gender that differed from the heterosexist view of masculinity expressed by one teacher meant that some teachers were forced into marginalised positions on the professional knowledge landscape. The silenced teachers were placed in a position of moral dilemma where they did not feel safe to express their beliefs about gender, despite the fact that they disagreed with some of the statements made about masculinity and femininity.

The aim of the initial activity had been to engage teachers in conversations about their views of gender. The silencing of some teachers meant that this did not occur, therefore the opportunity for "reflective awakenings" (Clandinin & Connelly, 1995, p. 13), where new understandings about gender may have developed, was lost.

I acknowledge that as a consultant visiting a school over a short period of time I could not realistically hope to take sole responsibility for the creation of safe places on the professional knowledge landscape for teachers to discuss gender issues. However, the incident at Warner made me realise the importance of providing safe spaces within the for teachers to discuss sensitive issues during my professional development sessions. This was essential if I wanted teachers to engage in conversations that hold some possibility of changes to thinking about gender. My concern, after this incident at Warner, was how to create the type of environment that would encourage teachers to discuss their assumptions and beliefs about gender issues so that all felt some measure of safety contributing, and hegemonic perspectives about gender did not operate to dominate and/or silence.

Layer 3: Moving forward through self-study

The perspectives provided by Michael and Brian revealed to me the importance of conceptualising self-study as the study-of-self-in-relation-to-others (Kuzmic, 2002). As an outsider in the school, I had seen the initial session as relatively successful with a number

of teachers contributing to the discussion. It wasn't until Michael and Brian told me their stories of the session that I realised how some voices on the staff were privileged and others marginalised and that I had inadvertently allowed this marginalisation to take place.

In my work at Warner, I had not taken into account the importance of group relationships. I did not know the individual teachers, or the ways in which they interacted. This meant that I was unable to establish the trust necessary for individuals to know that their ideas could be discussed in challenging ways, whereby the challenge was professional rather than personal (Loughran, 1997). It seems that both Brian and Michael did not feel that they could challenge the stated views about masculinity without the challenge becoming personal.

I realised that my practice was a "living contradiction" (Whitehead, 2000) in that my aim of opening up the conversation about gender was in direct contradiction to what actually occurred. The feedback on the activity provided by Brian and Michael caused me to "step back from my practice and examine it in a detached manner" (Loughran, 2004b, p.20) and to reframe the situation from both these teachers' perspectives. Brian and Michael had assisted me to see issues to which I had been blind.

In summary, two factors were significant in preventing some members of staff at Warner participating in a discussion about understandings of gender. The first of these was the hierarchy of masculinity operating within the gender relations of the school, as expressed by one particular male teacher. The inclusion of all staff members at Warner in the SDD initially signalled that all were allowed to participate in conversations about gender. However, the message received by Brian and Michael was that only those holding certain views about masculinity were allowed to participate safely in discussions about gender.

The second factor relates to my handling of the session whereby my focus was more on my program for the day, than on ensuring the planned discussion around masculinities and femininities provided a forum for all members of staff to feel comfortable to participate.

This highlights for me the problematic nature of the use of one-off SDDs to provide teacher professional development focusing on a given issue. However, given that this was the format for much of my work as a consultant, I needed to ensure I made the best possible use of the time that I had with teachers. At Warner I did not use the time effectively to prepare the context of my work with the teachers in a way that allowed them to properly explore their own understandings about gender. Nor did I recognise their different starting points and understandings of the construction of gender (Allard, Cooper, Hildebrand & Wealands, 1995). Rather than being a quick introductory activity, the discussion needed to be a more solid foundation of the day – allowing teachers to reflect individually and collectively on their understandings, values and teaching practices with regard to gender.

5.2 Talking about gender: who is *invited* to participate?

Just as the presence of all staff members at a SDD might appear to indicate that all are allowed to participate equally in conversations about gender, so too might invitations extended to parents indicate equal participation for all within the school community. This section explores invitations to participate in gender reform within one particular school.

Gender reform initiatives are most successful in schools where the aims of the program are clearly understood by all within the school community (Large, 1993). Barriers to gender reform include lack of understanding about gender issues, views of the reform process as threatening and non-involvement of individuals in planning (Large, 1993). This section explores the impact of flawed invitations to participate in discussions about gender.

Orientation

As discussed in Chapter 3, part of my work at Eden Hills PS was to address parents at an information meeting about gender issues which may impact on the participation and performance of some boys at school. Some twenty-five parents, all mothers, attended.

At the meeting, discussion was lively and there were many questions asked, with parents sharing their ideas about the issues raised. They also raised other issues that were of concern to them, such as the things that their sons felt comfortable bringing to school for news sessions (stereotypically boys' toys) and the expectations for girls in school sport (given that some of their daughters were beginning to opt out of physical activity at Years 5 and 6 levels). Whilst no formal evaluation of the evening was undertaken, Claire, the assistant principal, provided the following feedback.

> The parent meeting went really well. They thought the meeting was very informative. Interestingly, they raised as many issues for girls as they did for boys even though the initial survey showed much more concern for boys in the school than girls. I thought the discussion on the night was excellent. (Claire – Interview November 2002)

The initial plan for my work with the school included a presentation at a SDD, the parent meeting and time to work with teachers in classrooms in gender equity areas of the teachers' choice. Despite the positive outcome of the meeting, there were unforeseen consequences for my future work with teachers at the school, as Claire indicates below.

> After the meeting, approaches were made, by a group of parents, to staff at a P&C[3] meeting about the gender bias in some of the older readers that were being sent home as home readers. Unfortunately this was met with strong opposition by staff members who did not take kindly to parents suggesting the home reader system needed overhauling due to gender bias. Teachers were really angry. As a consequence I decided to change my plans for the project. It was the end of term and the staff seemed really tired and, after the conflict over what happened with the parents, I thought that the original day [to follow the

[3] Parents and Citizens (P&C) groups are part of every public school in NSW. These groups are organised and run by parents, and undertake a variety of tasks across schools, including fund-raising, running of school canteens, uniform stores, school bands, before- and after-school care centres within schools. Meetings are usually conducted after school hours, once a month and may be attended by interested parents, the school principal and other school executive and/or teachers.

> first SDD] as planned would not be received well. (Claire – Interview November 2002)

As part of the new plan, Claire asked me to work on a critical literacy approach to gender issues with an executive teacher from each stage. Whilst the work I then undertook at the school was productive for those teachers involved, it was vastly different to what had been originally planned and did not include all teachers in the school as had been the original intent.

Interestingly, although there was resistance to the parents' suggestion, the purchase of reading materials that challenged gender stereotypes was part of the school's focus for the year as indicated in its Annual Report and management plan. When I asked Claire about how the focus had been developed, she mentioned that various teachers were responsible for different areas of the management plan, and that she had developed the section on the school's gender equity focus in consultation with the principal. Given the reaction of the teachers to the parents' concern about the home readers, I wondered whether the teachers were aware that the purchase of gender inclusive reading resources was part of the management plan for the year. I also wondered what the reaction by teachers would have been if the suggestion to overhaul the home readers had come from Claire rather than the parents.

Following this incident at Eden Hills, I arranged a meeting with Ian, my colleague in the Gender Equity Unit, to discuss what had happened and the consequences of the incident on the outcome for my planned work with the school. Ian was preparing for a trip to several schools in regional NSW. His itinerary included working with teachers and addressing parents. I wanted to discuss my experiences with Ian, hoping that such discussion could inform my understanding of what had taken place at Eden Hills, and also to inform the work for which he was preparing. However, the meeting did not go as planned. The manager of the unit, on hearing about our meeting, decided to join us. Consequently, I did not feel comfortable to openly discuss my experiences at Eden Hills. Rather than exploring

the incident openly, the meeting became a generic discussion on working with parents and teachers.

Layer 1: Initial interpretations

My initial reaction to this incident at Eden Hills was one of incredulous disbelief. I could not understand why the teachers would be so incensed by a request from parents to replace books that included outmoded ideas about gender. However, reflection on the incident led me to see it not as an issue about books but as an issue of power, as teachers sought to assert their authority in the school in relation to parents. I was mindful of Blackmore's (1998) argument that when working in the area of gender reform "we need to ask whose vision is followed, whose interests are achieved and who is affected by the change and how" (p.478). It seems that the gender equity initiative at Eden Hills was imposed on the teachers, rather than developed in wide consultation with the staff. Teachers did not seem to have been extended an invitation to participate in conversations about gender that would show a valuing of their input into decisions about the professional learning plan for the project. Claire had developed the focus for the project and planned the professional learning that would occur over the year of the initiative, without consulting widely with the teachers.

Whilst the school's home reader program had not been mentioned during the parent meeting at Eden Hills, I acknowledge that the discussion around gender stereotyping in the media and popular culture that I led was probably the catalyst for the parents' approach to the P&C meeting about the readers. The staff reaction to the parents' concerns, and the subsequent altering of the gender equity professional development plan for the school, indicated that whilst parents had been extended an invitation to participate in conversations about gender issues, this was on a fairly superficial level. Parents did not seem to be included in meaningful ways that valued their contributions, in conversations about gender equity issues. They could participate in information evenings about gender issues but requests for action emanating from such meetings did not seem to be part of the process of change at Eden Hills.

The plan for gender reform at Eden Hills PS did not include opportunities for school executive, teachers, parents and consultant to develop shared understandings about the aims of the initiative. There was no consideration, within the school, of the relationship between parents and teachers, or among teachers, one of Fullan and Hargreaves' (1992) factors for successful professional development. Nor were the teachers part of the planning process for the project as a whole. Had the school community at Eden Hill PS had the opportunity to participate together in discussions about gender as an educational issue, relational knowing, whereby all became aware of their work in relation to others (Gallego, Hollingsworth & Whitenack, 2001), may have resulted in an initiative being developed that involved all stakeholders in the school community.

Layer 2: Professional knowledge landscape metaphor

Using the professional knowledge landscape metaphor adds another dimension to the incident at Eden Hills. Parents raising the issue of the sexist nature of the home readers can be seen as a "new and competing moral force" (Clandinin & Connelly, 1995, p. 33) on the professional knowledge landscape - one that sought to challenge the decisions of the teachers. Had the question of the sexist nature of the home readers been raised in another manner, the teachers may have agreed that the books needed replacing. The raising of the concern about the readers at a public forum meant that the issue was introduced into the professional knowledge landscape by parents in a way that opened the practices of teachers to multiple interpretations and criticisms. The demand by parents for replacement of the sexist texts could be regarded as additional "imposed prescriptions" (Clandinin & Connelly, 1996, p. 25) on the out-of-classroom space of the professional knowledge landscape.

This incident at Eden Hills was a lost opportunity for teachers to engage in conversations with each other and parents about the gender stereotypes within the home readers, and perhaps other gender issues of relevance to the students at the school. The incident revealed to me the importance of being aware of the fact that there may be unintended consequences

of the work that I undertake in schools – consequences that could limit initiatives as was the case at Eden Hills.

The lack of consultation with staff about the project becomes another case of an imposed prescription on the professional knowledge landscape of the school. The professional learning of the project became something that happened to teachers, rather than happening "by and among teachers" (Clandinin & Connelly, 1995, p.129). By viewing this incident using the professional knowledge landscape metaphor I was able to understand the demand by the parents, the teachers' reactions and the imposed professional learning agenda from a different stance to that which I originally took.

My attempt to discuss my experiences at Eden Hills in a meeting with my work colleague, Ian, may also be understood in terms of Clandinin and Connelly's (1995) professional knowledge landscape metaphor. To better understand my experiences at Eden Hills I needed a safe space within my work context to discuss my secret stories of consultancy. By arranging to discuss the incident at Eden Hills with Ian, I was hoping to draw on our relationship to assist me to understand the dilemma in terms of how the teachers, parents and I were positioned within the professional landscape of the school. The manager's uninvited attendance at the meeting meant that I did not feel comfortable to honestly share my story of consultancy practice at Eden Hills. Her presence meant that I resorted to telling a "cover" story to maintain an image of competence in my manager's eyes, rather than exploring what had actually occurred at the school – the result being that I felt placed in "competing moral positions" (Clandinin & Connelly, 1995, p.32).

Layer 3: Moving forward through self-study

My exploration of my work at Eden Hills assisted me to "examine and unmask the moral and political agendas in the work context and their impact on one's self, one's thinking and actions" (Kelchtermans & Hamilton, 2004, p. 803). What occurred at Eden Hills highlighted for me the idea that professional learning within a given school context will be defined by the "intentions and constraints in local, specific and immediate situations"

(Wilcox, p. 71) and also that it was my presence in the school that resulted in the political agenda being played out as described above.

Invitations to participate in discussions about gender had been extended to teachers and parents at Eden Hills however, there were limitations placed upon these invitations. For parents, the limit of the invitation to participate was attendance at a meeting to discuss gender issues at the school. It was not expected that parents would follow such a meeting with suggestions about changing anything in the school.

Similarly, teachers were extended an invitation to participate but this was in terms of going along with a plan for their professional learning developed by some members of the school executive. Teachers were not seen as decision makers in the planning process for their professional learning in the area of gender issues at Eden Hills.

A useful way of understanding the incidents at Eden Hills is via Hargreaves' (2001) concept of "emotional geographies", which refer to the emotional closeness and distance that can threaten understandings among members of school communities. Hargreaves argues that teachers can experience negative emotion in their interactions with parents when their expertise, for which they feel uniquely qualified, is called into question (p.1069). These emotional geographies are linked to particular contexts and they reflect the complex tension between teacher agency and school structure. I needed to work with schools to develop environments where teachers and parents were able to engage positively with each other's purposes for their children's education.

As a result of the incident at Eden Hills I wanted to ensure that the remainder of my work at the school was undertaken in a manner that put the needs of the teachers with whom I worked in the foreground. How I went about this and the outcomes are described in Chapter 6.

The failed meeting with my critical friend, Ian, to discuss my experiences at Eden Hill left me with considerable frustration. I am mindful of Griffiths and Poursanidou's (2005) point that whilst institutional factors may be helpful to some extent in supporting collegial collaboration, "it is tempting to locate difficulties in the institution" (p.155) rather than focusing on uncomfortable questions about self that may be at the heart of problems with collaboration. However, on the one hand I argue that the imposed presence of my manager at the meeting to discuss problems of practice was a hindrance to my collaboration with Ian. On the other hand, I acknowledge that, rather than seeking other opportunities to discuss practice within the Gender Equity Unit, I tended to use the problems within the context of the unit as one excuse for not continuing the critical friendship relationship with Ian.

5.3 Talking about gender: who is *expected* to participate?

Many gender reform studies have shown the importance of the participation of school principals in, and their support for, the change process (eg Davis, 1996; Large, 1993). Kenway, Willis, Blackmore and Rennie (1997) argue that there is a need for collective responsibility for gender reform in schools, revealing the stress felt by many teachers undertaking gender reform where such responsibility is not part of the school culture. In this section I discuss the way in which my study supported these findings.

Orientation

The gender relations operating at Brownley Heights Public School were revealed in the third phase of my work at the school (see Chapter 3 for details of my work at Brownley Heights). I was invited to the school in 2003 to work with the staff to explore ways in which they could incorporate gender perspectives across all curriculum areas.

This professional development was undertaken on a SDD and was attended by female teaching staff only. The principal, one of two male staff members, dropped in half way

through the day and asked how things were going. The other male staff member, an assistant principal, did not attend at all.

Several teachers remarked during the day on the fact that neither male on staff was present on the day. Interviews with staff following the SDD revealed that one teacher in particular considered this to be problematic for the gender equity work in the school.

> If we're supposed to be serious about looking at gender issues in the school it would be good for all staff to be involved - not just the women. I would really like to know why [the two male members of staff] thought they didn't need to take part at all. (Sandra – interview July 2003)

Layer 1: Initial interpretations

Sandra regarded the absence of the males on staff as an indication that they did not consider gender equity an area of responsibility for them. She regards the expectation in the school as being that the female teachers needed to be involved but that the males at the school had more important work to do. At Brownley Heights, it seems that "the configuration of practice within the system of gender relations" (Connell, 1995 p.84) meant that some members of staff did not feel that they needed to participate in conversations about gender.

Given that the gender politics operating within a school will ultimately impact on the success or failure of an educational reform effort (Hubbard & Datnow, 2000), this absence of the male members of staff at Brownley Heights, both of whom are on the executive of the school, has implications for what occurs at the school in terms of gender reform. Sandra indicated that she considered the absence of both males on staff as an indication that gender reform in the school is not perceived as an important issue. Literature on this aspect of gender reform supports Sandra's view and suggests the absence of the two male school executives during the SDD may be a barrier to gender reform at Brownley Heights PS (see Davis, 1996; Large, 1993).

The journal entry below reveals my concerns about the situation at Brownley Heights

> It was obvious that teachers at Brownley Heights were annoyed by [ ] and [ ] not attending the professional development day on gender. The issue for me in future is how to work with principals and executive to develop their understandings about the importance of all members of staff being involved, especially where there are only a few males on staff. (Journal entry – 22 September 2003)

Who is expected to participate in conversations about gender within schools will impact on what occurs within a given school and on the success of any gender reform. The involvement and support of all staff members is necessary to ensure the collective responsibility within a school required to sustain structural and cultural change in the area of gender equity in schools (Kenway, Willis, Blackmore & Rennie, 1997). Productive leadership within schools is described by Lingard, Hayes, Mills and Christie (2003) as focusing on teacher professional learning, where school leaders at all levels share a sense of responsibility and efficacy in the development of learning communities within schools. Lingard et al. argue that school leaders, who are focused on improved outcomes for their students, facilitate and participate in conversations within their schools that develop contexts where teachers can improve their learning. Where school leaders fail to build a collective sense of responsibility for reform within schools, sustained gender reform is unlikely to occur (Kenway et al., 1997).

Support of leaders for change in schools is a critical issue for the success of professional learning in all areas of reform in schools, not just gender equity. It is a factor that will impact on the work of all consultants and, therefore, consideration needs to be given to ways of ensuring collective responsibility for reform when working with schools.

Layer 2: Professional knowledge landscape metaphor

Using the professional knowledge landscape metaphor, the relationships among the teachers at Brownley Heights may be seen as one where the female teachers were regarded

as responsible for the gender equity work in the school, with the males abrogating their responsibility as indicated by their absence on the SDD. This positioning of females as responsible for gender reform and males as not, meant that there was significant moral tension around gender issues on the professional knowledge landscape of the school.

The possibility for open discussion with **all** teachers at the school about gender as an educational issue did not eventuate due to the absence of the two males, and perhaps was not seen by them as relevant to their work in the school. Whilst Linda and Joanne, the two other assistant principals at Brownley Heights aimed to support the growth of understandings about gender amongst the teachers, (see Chapter 4), the absence of both male staff members meant that they were not part of this process. The non-participation of the only males on staff at Brownley Heights also has implications for the gender messages that students in the school receive about unequal relationships between males and females.

Layer 3 Moving forward through self-study

My interview with Sandra about the SDD revealed to me the depth of feeling at Brownley Heights about the non-participation of the male members of staff. The majority of my work at the school had been undertaken through contact with Linda and Joanne. I had assumed that the leadership of these two women provided the impetus for the staff support for the gender equity initiatives within the school. The reaction of teachers on the SDD and in follow-up interviews revealed that this was not the case. This raised the issue for me of including all school leaders to some extent in the planning for, and enactment of, professional learning within schools.

Sandra's anger also revealed to me the importance of group relationships in the learning process. The ways in which the individuals in the school related to one another, in terms of participation and non-participation, impacted on Sandra's attitude (and possibly that of other teachers at the school) towards the gender equity initiative. I needed to include ways of working with school leaders that would indicate to them the importance of their support for and participation in the professional learning that was planned for teachers. Such

support would provide a measure of collective responsibility for gender reform in schools. To do this I needed to develop an "educational relationship" with school leaders to support them to see themselves as learners along with the teachers in their schools (Wilcox, 1998, p.74). I also needed to consider ways in which I could address issues of resistance to gender reform. The absence of both males at Brownley Heights may be read as resistance to the gender reform initiative within the school. The question for me was how might I, in my role as a teacher consultant, challenge and interrogate the key assumptions that were barriers to change within schools (Trumbull, 2004)?

In conclusion, the question of who is expected to participate in discussions about gender in schools leads to a consideration of the notion of collective responsibility for gender reform. Whilst I agree with Kenway et al. (1997) that not each and every teacher should participate to the same extent or in the same way, I do believe that it is essential that teachers are supported to undertake gender reform. Where teachers see the non-participation of some teachers as problematic and indicative of the way discussions about gender are perceived as less than serious, this issue needs to be addressed.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have explored three critical incidents in my learning to be a gender equity consultant. Teacher participation in the planned professional learning experiences was impacted upon by a range of factors that operated at various levels across the schools in the study. Each of these had a significant effect on the gender equity professional development work I undertook within the three school sites of the study, and upon my understandings about consultancy. An examination and subsequent development of understandings of the various power structures operating within the schools assisted a reframing of my practice as a gender equity consultant and informed my future work in these and other schools.

At the start of my work with the three schools, I was oblivious to the ways in which participation was determined by power structures. I was also unaware of the impact of my

activities on the ways in which those power relations operated within the various school contexts. It is important to acknowledge that my entry into the schools resulted in these power relations being enacted in ways that impacted on individual teachers as well as planned programs.

The interpretation and representation of my field texts outlined above provided me with the opportunity to reflect upon my practice as a consultant and think about ways I might take into account the various power relations operating in schools. First, I needed to recognise that such issues will be present in all school contexts. Second, I had to rethink ways in which I could work with teachers to limit practices that result in silencing or marginalisation of individuals. Third, I needed to consider working with teachers and parents together so that the school community was working towards shared understandings about gender issues of relevance to their students. Finally, I needed to develop ways of working with school communities that reinforced the expectation that all members of a school staff have responsibility to participate in professional learning opportunities about gender as an educational issue.

Representation of my interpretation of my field texts in layers provided me with multiple frames through which to view my practice as a consultant. A return to the literature that provided the framework for the development of my study supported me in initially interpreting my findings. Using the metaphor of the professional knowledge landscape provided a further perspective on my experiences as a consultant and the ways in which I came to understand my practice in new ways.

By undertaking a self-study into my practice as a consultant I was able to explore my work with schools from a variety of perspectives. The field texts I constructed at each of the schools meant that the teachers with whom I worked provided me with their insights into the professional learning experiences of which they were a part. My personal reflections on my work, in light of the body of literature with which I interacted, provided me with new ways of framing my work as a consultant.

My work with the schools discussed in this chapter gave me many questions to consider. How might I work towards ensuring that all teachers felt comfortable to share their ideas about gender issues without being marginalised? How could I support schools so that the rhetoric of parents and teachers working together might become reality? How could I, as an outsider working with schools, ensure teacher participation in planning gender initiatives within a given school? How could I encourage all within a school community to take responsibility for professional learning in the area of gender? These questions dominated my thinking about my work as a consultant.

The following chapter continues the story of my professional development experiences within the three school sites. Chapter 6 explores the ways in which I sought to improve my practice as a consultant as a result of my experiences outlined in this and the previous chapter.

Chapter 6 “I thought all the gender issues would be with the older children”: New stories of gender equity consultancy

Introduction

This chapter continues the story of my learning to be a gender equity consultant. In Chapter 4 I explored my initial beliefs and assumptions about my work as a consultant as well as those of the teachers with whom I worked, my critical friend and the expectations for my work as a consultant implicit within the context of my work in the NSW Department of Education and Training (DET) Gender Equity Unit. I examined the ways in which my field texts assisted me to learn about my construction of myself as a gender equity consultant. I also considered feedback from the teachers with whom I worked, and included some of the relevant literature to make sense of the resulting field texts and inform my reflections about my practice. In Chapter 5 I investigated three incidents of participation in learning about gender equity that occurred at schools in my study, and indicated the insights these critical incidents gave in further developing my understandings about my practice.

In this chapter I continue the story of my work as a gender equity consultant at Eden Hills and Brownley Heights Public Schools, exploring changes that I made to my practice in the light of field texts constructed with the teachers with whom I worked, and my reflections on these texts. My work in each school is considered separately, however, the reality of my work and reflection on it was not the linear process indicated by my writing. What happened at one school informed my reflection about my work and also subsequent changes to my practice in another school. Rather than being linear, my reframing of practice was more circuitous as I returned often to my field texts and to the literature that guided my thinking about my practice, a process that assisted me to extend the meaning I was deriving from my field texts.

This chapter explores the final phase of my work at Eden Hills and the second and third phases of my work at Brownley Heights Public Schools to indicate the changes that I made

to my practice following my experiences at Warner and earlier work at both Eden Hills and Brownley Heights, discussed in Chapters 4 and 5. My reframing of my practice was based on the understandings I developed as I reflected on my experiences as discussed in the preceding chapters. In section 6.1 I return to Brownley Heights Public School to investigate the development of the social skills program at the school. Section 6.2 provides an exploration of the work that I undertook with a group of teachers at Eden Hills Public School, in the area of critical literacy. In section 6.3 I conclude with an investigation of the final phase of my work at Brownley Heights, exploring the inclusion of teaching about gender issues across the key learning areas (KLAs) with the majority of the teaching staff at the school.

Again I use three layers of interpretation. The first explores my experiences using Loughran's (1997) principles of pedagogy of teacher education. The second provides an analysis of experience using Clandinin and Connelly's (1995) metaphor of the professional knowledge landscape and the third layer builds on my understandings using self-study of teacher education practices literature.

6.1 Social skills program at Brownley Heights Public School

Orientation

As described in Chapter 3, the staff at Brownley Heights felt the need to focus on a whole school social skills program that incorporated gender issues. Two of the school's assistant principals, Linda and Joanne, invited me to work with them and a third teacher to assist them to include a gender perspective in the K-6 social skills program they were developing. The program included specific strategies and lessons exploring peer relations and social interactions. The program was to be implemented across the school during Term 1 of 2003.

The social skills program at Brownley Heights was developed during two planning days occurring at different times across a term in 2002. Before we met together for the first day, Linda, Joanne and I discussed the focus of the sessions extensively and provided information back and forth via emails. On each day that we worked together, all four

participants in the planning days brought a wide variety of resources to the sessions including books, kits and information about various internet sites. Much of the time that we worked together was spent discussing resources and how aspects of them might fit into the social skills program that we were developing.

My journal entry below reveals my thoughts about working with Joanne and Linda after the second day of planning:

> Lots covered with the Brownley Heights writing team today. It's great working with a group of people willing to share their knowledge as we did today. I'm learning as much as they are – both Linda and Joanne have done lots of work in the area of anti-bullying. The best thing is having the time to discuss things we think should be included and why to include them. This has meant that the program is incorporating ideas about gender for students in areas that Joanne, Linda and the teachers see as problem areas within the school. The Year 2 students will look at ideas about work for men and women. The Year 4 students are going to look at issues in the playground – who plays where and who uses which spaces. The Year 6 students will be exploring their ideas about being a boy or a girl and the media's influence on ideas about masculinity and femininity. (Journal entry – August 2002)

Whilst the context for my work at Brownley Heights for this period was very different to much of my work with schools, my time working with this small group of teachers revealed to me possibilities for considering what my consultancy work with schools could be. The time that we spent together was a significant factor in allowing us to share thoughts and clarify our ideas.

Interviews with Joanne and Linda, following the planning sessions for the social skills program, indicate their views on my role as a consultant during the time that I worked with them. The fact that I worked with the staff over an extended period of time was seen by

both Joanne and Linda as important as this factor allowed for the building of positive relationships based on mutual respect to be built, as indicated in the comments below.

> We were quite fortunate because you had been working with us already so there was that link. And I think getting to know the school and the people you're working with which you've been doing. You were very accepting of our ideas and you didn't – just your attitude towards us. You were very accepting of us like not being a know all or judgmental in any way. It was just.... I found you very easy to work with. (Linda – November, 2002)

> That was the other thing that's been good about working with you for some time - like when you are working with committees you get people that are into that – that are into gender equity whereas there are the other staff that wouldn't be as far along just in their thinking which is something that we are trying to address. We've had time to think about how we can support the staff to implement the lessons. (Joanne – November 2002)

Both Linda and Joanne indicated that they felt the clear articulation of the purpose of our work was an important component as it enabled us to come together knowing what we were aiming to achieve as a group. By discussing the purpose of our work, we were able to arrive at a clear and shared understanding of the direction of our joint undertaking.

> You asked me what we wanted from the days – what were our expectations for the time and that made me think about what we would be doing. You were well and truly prepared. That made a difference too. (Linda, November 2002)

> You were well and truly prepared. You didn't want to come in and just sit there you wanted to come in with specific ... you wanted to know what the purpose of the day was. So that guided it from your side so that helped in terms of that because you had expectations as well which is probably a good thing otherwise you all come together and work from there but the fact that you had expectations probably made it move on a bit further and quicker. (Joanne, November 2002)

Rather than seeing my role as being one of providing ready-made units of work, Linda and Joanne saw my role as one of providing resources and knowledge about gender issues to assist them in their development of the social skills program. Their understandings about me as a consultant revealed to me that they regarded the 'expertise' that I brought to the process of working with them as something that they found easy to access due to our relationship with each other.

> I was hoping that you could be involved in planning the units and bringing your expertise and knowledge of gender equity issues so that they were being addressed properly throughout. So as you were – very hands-on and as a reference person as well. Also as a person who brought in different resources and knew about different web sites and other things that we could access. So I guess using your expertise and your knowledge about different resources at the grass roots level. (Linda, November, 2002)

> I think having knowledge from other schools was important so it wasn't just us with our ideas from our school but also having someone else come in who was objective and who had ideas from other schools as well. We tend to use the consultants to help us move further along in whatever we are doing. (Joanne, November 2002)

When we were developing various lessons, I discussed with the teachers how ideas about gender as a social construction fitted into the activity and what the purposes of such inclusions were. Linda indicates that she found the opportunity to consider theoretical understandings about gender as an educational issue alongside the development of the units of work for the social skills program valuable for her.

> That's where working on something practical that the teachers can have –they can see the value in it straight away. So instead of having here's the theory and then there's the practice, you've almost got to do what we did – we've done the practice and the theory – you brought in. It made more sense with a comment

> here and a comment there and this book says this and this author says that. Like it – you are getting it as you are doing the practical and I think teachers – well here teachers respond better to that. (Linda – November 2002)

Layer 1: Principles of pedagogy

The opportunity to work with Brownley Heights over an extended period of time meant that I was better able to apply Loughran's (1997) principles of pedagogy in teacher education to my work at the school. In this layer, I focus on the principles of relationships and purpose.

Relationships were built with teachers at the school as I undertook work across a period of several years. In the phase of my work at Brownley Heights under discussion here, Joanne, Linda and I developed a relationship of mutual respect where the ideas of all were considered as we worked together to develop the social skills program. Our sharing of ideas also meant that there was a shared responsibility for the learning process.

The nature of the planning days for the social skills program meant that I was working with three teachers from the school in a manner that allowed us time to listen to one another and for me to develop awareness of the context for the program. Whilst both Linda and Joanne valued the experience with gender issues that I was able to bring to the program, I had the opportunity to develop an understanding of the unique needs of the school as well as to learn about the various anti-bullying and student welfare programs that were already operating in the school. These programs had not previously included a gender equity perspective, but because of the time that we had to work together on the program, we were able to discuss the need for the inclusion of student learning about gender issues in the social skills program. We developed a level of trust in each other that allowed for the consideration of the purpose of including a gender perspective. I was able to include discussion about gender as socially constructed in the conversations that we were having, as well as providing professional reading that supported the rationale of such inclusion in the program we were developing. The element of time that was present in this phase of my

work meant that we could be responsive to what we were learning about the program from one another and apply this to our work.

Linda mentions that she valued the opportunity to reconsider her own understandings in light of current gender theory and Joanne valued hearing about what other schools are doing to include gender perspectives in teaching and learning programs. Both were engaged in "reconsidering their existing knowledge in light of the experiences being created with them" (Loughran, 1997, p.61). They expected that the work we did together would engage them and challenge them – to "help us move further along" (Joanne).

Both Joanne and Linda refer to my discussions with them regarding the purpose of the work that we would be undertaking together. They indicate that they saw the clear articulation of the purpose of our work together as beneficial for the process in that we were able to quickly establish a common reference point as a basis from which we could begin developing the social skills program.

Layer 2: Professional knowledge landscape

The time spent working with Joanne and Linda was significant in several ways when viewed through the professional knowledge landscape lens (Clandinin & Connelly, 1995). The development of the social skills program over several days provided us with the opportunity to discuss the gender issues relevant to the program. This meant that Joanne and Linda could personalise the materials to suit the needs of the students and teachers at the school. Because we had time to discuss the relevance of the theory of gender construction to the lessons that we were developing, we were able to break down the sacred theory-practice story as we developed "new relational stories of theory and practice" (Clandinin & Connelly, 1995, p. 163).

By sharing our ideas and experiences, we were able to learn from each other. We had the opportunity to discuss our ideas in an informal setting where the personal practical knowledge of each person was recognised and used to inform the program we were

developing. Linda and Joanne told me about the student welfare programs they had previously implemented at the school. I made suggestions to them about how they might include a gender perspective into the program so that students were learning about gender identity and factors that impact on their understandings about masculinities and femininities. We learned from one another in conversations that allowed each of us to reflect upon our own understandings and how we might develop new ways of thinking about various gender issues from our discussions with each other.

The experiences of Joanne and Linda in the student welfare work within the school were acknowledged and validated. At the same time, the possibility for social change as a result of the new social skills program we developed together was also acknowledged and validated. Rather than the sacred theory-practice story being imposed on the professional knowledge landscape at Brownley Heights, we worked together in a way that was educational for all. We discussed the relevance of knowledge about gender as a social construction for the students at Brownley Heights and how such knowledge could add value and depth to the social skills program.

Layer 3: Moving forward through self-study

My work with Joanne and Linda revealed to me new possibilities for considering my work as a consultant. The time that we worked together allowed us to develop what Beck et al. (2004) refer to as a "personal-constructivist-collaborative" (p.1261) approach to our work. We had time to develop shared understandings about the gender equity policy and what it meant for teaching practice through the social skills program at Brownley Heights.

Between the two planning days, Joanne and Linda took the opportunity to trial some of the lessons that we had developed with their classes. These experiences then became the basis for discussions when we next met to continue working on the school's social skills program. This meant that the program was developed from several perspectives including the ideas that we initially all brought to the process, the experiences of Joanne and Linda in trialling several of the lessons and our joint reflections on the usefulness of the lessons in

achieving the purposes of the program. It also meant that we could discuss the support that Joanne and Linda would need to provide to the teachers to implement the program, given the range of understandings about gender that teachers at the school brought to their practice.

The professional learning environment for this stage of my work at Brownley Heights was very different to the environments in which I usually worked as a consultant. Rather than speaking to large groups of teachers for a short period of time, I worked with three teachers from the school over two days, as well as communicating with Joanne and Linda via emails and faxes. The time set aside to work on the social skills program meant that there was time to develop a collaborative environment that was inclusive of all involved. My work at Brownley Heights was also highly interactive which meant that all involved were able to contribute their insights and experiences. These became the basis for our discussions about what we thought needed to be included in the social skills program that we were developing. Therefore, the communal environment that developed at Brownley Heights supported our collaborative work and broadened opportunities for social experience and learning from each other (Beck et al., 2004, p.1263).

My experiences at Brownley Heights led me to consider how I might take account of the practice-based knowledge of teachers in other professional learning settings. I wanted to develop more dynamic, interactive ways of working with teachers so that my consultancy practice could move from a process of talking *at* teachers to one of talking *with* teachers in more collaborative ways.

My view of myself as the consultant expert in control of what occurred in the name of professional development changed as a result of two factors in my work with the teachers from Brownley Heights. First, the context of my work provided an extended period of time working with a small group of teachers, which allowed for a more collaborative approach. Second, this change in work environment provided me with an opportunity to see myself as a consultant in many different ways as discussed above. Over the period that we worked

together I did not have control over what occurred. We each contributed our experiences, perspectives and understandings of the school context to the process of developing the social skills program. My focus moved from one that was mainly upon **my** self, **my** knowledge and **my** beliefs about what teachers needed in the area of gender in education, to one that was more inclusive of the teachers with whom I worked. My self-study supported me to perceive of my work as the "self-in-relation-to-others" (Kuzmic, 2002, p.233), so that the teachers with whom I worked became the focal point for my planning, rather than my beliefs and assumptions driving the agenda for my work.

6.2 Critical literacy at Eden Hills Public School

In this section I examine the work that I undertook with four teachers at Eden Hills Public School in the third phase of my work at the school in 2002. I explore field texts that indicate changes to my enactment of my consultancy – that is, a reframing of my understandings about my work as a gender equity consultant.

Orientation

As outlined in Chapter 5, the original plan for my work at Eden Hills altered over the course of the year in which I worked with teachers at the school. After the problem that arose at the school I was asked to work with a group of four teachers, each a team leader of a stage[4], who had decided that they wanted to explore gender issues through a critical literacy approach to teaching English.

In my preparation for this day at Eden Hills I focused on the needs of the participating teachers. Rather than focusing on my performance as a consultant and the knowledge that I wanted to impart (as had been the case when I was working at Warner Public School), the teachers with whom I was working were central to my thoughts as I planned for the day. Prior to my work at the school, I spoke several times with Claire, the assistant principal at

[4] In NSW primary schools, grades are divided into stages. These are Early Stage 1 – Kindergarten; Stage 1 – Years 1 and 2; Stage 2 -Years 3 and 4; Stage 3 – Years 5 and 6

Eden Hills to determine the direction for the day. She indicated that the teachers had had little professional learning in the area of critical literacy, which is why they wanted to combine this area with learning about gender issues. The teachers were also keen to spend some time on the day writing units of work for their respective teaching stages.

I arrived at Eden Hills with a fairly loose plan for the day. I outlined this plan to the teachers and they agreed that it covered all the areas that they wanted to focus on during the course of the day. I began the session by introducing a short paper on critical literacy that I had developed, focusing on Freebody and Luke's (1990) model of literacy, to use as a basis for discussion with the teachers. I then highlighted the areas of the current English syllabus that focus on a critical literacy approach to teaching and learning, indicating the relevance of work in this area for all students from Kindergarten to Year 6. Finally, I showed teachers the resources I had brought for the day and we discussed the relevance of everyday texts to the work the teachers had planned for their students during the term.

The informality of the day meant that the teachers were able to decide the direction that they wanted to take. Each of the teachers was keen to share their experiences with critical literacy approaches to teaching English and all were enthusiastic participants in the discussion as they talked about strategies they had tried and what they were interested in pursuing with their students in the forthcoming term. The teachers decided, in the course of the day, that they would rather spend time talking with each other about what they were doing than work individually on developing units of work as had been planned initially. As the teachers looked through the available resources they continued their discussion as to how various units or ideas might be adapted to the work that they were planning with their grades for the final term of the year.

The teachers took the opportunity to discuss extensively the issues that were the focus of the day. They questioned each other and me and told of their experiences using critical literacy approaches to English. The teachers valued the opportunity the day had provided for them to spend time working with colleagues and to look at resources.

> It was good to talk with the other teachers about how critical literacy was relevant and the ways they'd used it. It helped me to think about what I do with my class and ways that I could change things. I haven't done much of this with my class. I think now I understand more what it's about, you know. That's why it was good to talk with the others. I enjoyed the low-key atmosphere of the day which gave us time to talk things over with each other. (Amanda, November 2002, Interview)

> It was really good to look at all the resources. As a teacher you don't know everything that's around to use. It was good to hear what the others are doing and to talk about ways we could work with our stage groups on this. (David, November 2002, Interview)

> It was great because we all had an opportunity to talk things over. We could discuss things from our own perspectives and listen to how others saw things. We learnt a lot. I think it was really valuable. It helped us to understand the place of gender issues and how they could be looked at with the kids through critical literacy. It was great to be able to ask questions and talk about things with colleagues and you. (Claire, November 2002, Interview)

The professional development needs of this group of teachers were catered for through the provision of time to explore the issues under consideration, the opportunity to discuss points of interest with colleagues and a wide range of resources. The teachers set the agenda for the day by deciding the way in which they would explore teaching about gender issues.

The participating teachers openly discussed what they were and were not doing in their literacy lessons. For example, Claire mentioned that whilst she felt that she was teaching her students about code breaking and working as text participants, she believed that she needed to focus on Freebody and Luke's (1990) roles of text user and text analyst far more to assist her students to understand the purposes of different texts and that texts,

rather than being neutral, represent particular points of view and silence others. She was keen to explore various texts that would support her to focus on these reader roles with her students.

David indicated that he felt the need to focus more on visual texts and to explore gender issues within his literacy work with his students.

> I've done a bit of critical literacy work with my class but I haven't really looked at gender. I've looked at written texts but I haven't done much on visual texts. I think work in this area will be good for my class. Looking at TV and the newspaper... They watch heaps of TV so it will be good to do some work on critiquing the shows they're watching and ads and things.
>
> This term I'm looking at Australian Identity with my class. I want to look at the idea of heroism. There's all that business about sporting heroes and I want to look at that with the kids. The idea that there are heroes in all walks of life – not just sport. We have heroes in our school – kids that act kindly towards others and do great things. That's what I want to look at.
>
> So I want to start with media images of heroes and take it from there so that the kids have a more balanced view of heroism – not just what's portrayed in the media – especially the boys. They talk about sport and footy all the time. What happened at a game, you know, who won; who's great; what's on TV. They watch a lot of TV and I don't think that they realise that what they see is, you know, really one-sided. So I think that will be a good place to start exploring gender issues with them. (David – November 2002, Interview)

Amanda indicates by her comments below that she saw new ways of using resources already in the school following the professional learning day.

> It gave us ideas about using things we already have – different ways of using things. Like books I've read to my class – new ways of using those books. Not

> just reading the story but looking at the pictures and talking about what they are about; you know, what's the point of something in the book? Why is his hat blue and hers pink? That sort of thing. I plan on using toy catalogues in my Christmas unit to show the kids the purpose of those sorts of things. That should be interesting with Year 1.

Layer 1: Principles of pedagogy

The day working with the teachers at Eden Hills Public School can be investigated using Loughran's (1997) principles of pedagogy to analyse the teachers' responses to the professional learning experience. The day had a clear purpose - to explore gender issues through a critical literacy approach to teaching and learning, and comments by David, Amanda and Claire reveal that this purpose was achieved. The interaction between the teachers meant that they were able to discuss and clarify their understandings with each other and develop their ideas about teaching their students about gender issues. The teachers all commented on the way that their relationship on the day with each other and me proved fruitful for their developing understandings about including gender perspectives in their teaching. The nature of the day meant that I was aware of and able to respond to the needs of the teachers. The teachers' responses above also indicate that they trusted that the learning environment was "a safe place for them to raise and pursue issues, concerns and the development of understanding" (Loughran, 1997, p.60) about gender issues in teaching.

David indicates that he is applying the understandings he developed about a critical literacy approach to working with gender issues to his classroom context. He identified as problematic the gender stereotypical ideas about heroism portrayed by the media and aimed to explore this issue with his students. He was able "to reconsider his existing knowledge in light of the experiences" (Loughran, 1997, p. 61) provided on the day.

The discussion focusing on the resources and the ways that they might be used by the teachers provided me with an opportunity to explain how and why they might use various teaching strategies as they worked to include gender perspectives in their teaching. They

were also able to relate the teaching ideas provided in the resources to the theoretical framework provided for literacy teaching by the work of Freebody and Luke (1990).

For my work with this small group of teachers at Eden Hills, whilst I had an outline in mind for the day, I did not follow this plan rigidly. Rather than determining the absolute direction of the day, I gave the teachers the opportunity to take control of the way in which the day unfolded. Following from Loughran (1997), I trusted that they would be able to grasp the ideas under consideration and make connections with the concepts in ways that were meaningful for their various teaching contexts.

Layer 2: Professional knowledge landscape

The teachers' personal practical knowledge (Clandinin & Connelly, 1995) about gender issues in their teaching and learning was recognised and valued. By sharing their stories of experience and discussing their understandings of the relevance of a critical literacy approach to teaching about gender issues, the teachers were able to connect to "communal ways of knowing" (Craig, 1995, p.141). The experience at Eden Hills PS can be seen as going some way to developing a knowledge community within the out-of-classroom space of the school (Clandinin and Connelly, 1995). The teachers were able to make connections with each other as they told their stories of classroom practice. The fact that they chose to continue their conversations across the day indicates the educative value that they gave to this process.

The teachers indicated that the stories of professional practice that the other teachers told assisted them to think about their own practice, indicating the reflective nature of storytelling for them. Their comments above also indicate the relational aspect of their professional learning on the day. Their reflection on their practice, their relationships with each other and their storytelling about their classroom practice were interrelated (Clandinin & Connelly, 1995, p.156). As the teachers talked about their practice, they drew on their experiences within the professional landscape of the school and on how they were positioned as teachers able to support each others' learning within this

landscape. The informality of the day meant that the teachers felt comfortable to discuss their own understandings and to share their secret stories of classroom practice that would possibly not have been shared had the day not taken place. The teachers learnt from one another in the conversations that took place. They had time to consider their own understandings about gender and critical literacy as they reflected on what they, and others, were doing in their classrooms.

The conversations on the day indicated that the teachers felt safe to discuss their stories of classroom practice. They openly discussed gaps that they perceived in their teaching practices, seeking advice from each other and me about improving their literacy teaching. David, Amanda and Claire were able to link their learning on the day to what they were doing in their classroom so that connections were made between the discussions about critical literacy, understandings about gender and their personal practical knowledge of their classroom practice and students.

In this phase of my work at Eden Hills, a different story of professional development at the school to that outlined in Chapters 4 and 5 emerged. The day provided the teachers with the space to reflect on the gender issues that were of concern to them, in a setting where they shared ideas about solutions with their teaching colleagues and me. Such a story valued the personal, practical knowledge that each teacher brought to the professional development experience and allowed them to tell their 'secret' stories of classroom teaching.

Layer 3: Moving forward through self-study

My work with this group of teachers at Eden Hills assisted me to reframe my ideas about my self as consultant. Like Senese (2002), I realised that I needed to "relinquish control in order to gain influence" (p.51). Relinquishing control assisted me to gain understanding (Senese, 2005, p. 53-54) about how best to support teacher learning about gender equity. By providing a loose outline for the day whereby the teachers at Eden Hills could take their learning in the direction that best suited their needs, I was better able to recognise and respond to the needs of the individuals within the group as these arose during our

discussions throughout the day. Rather than imposing predetermined frames, I was beginning to understand "the learning situation from the point of view of the learner" (Berry, 2004, p.1324), thereby responding to teachable moments as they arose in my time with the teachers. The extensive discussion on the day meant that the teachers were able to clarify their thoughts through explanation and questioning each other and me.

The structure of the day enabled me to use strategies that extended the transformational possibilities of my professional development work with participating teachers (Schulte, 2004). The discussion on the day, and the examination of a variety of teaching resources provided me with the opportunity to problematise ideas about gender presented in a variety of written and visual texts. This provided the teachers with the opportunity to explore typically unexamined ideas about being male and female that their students would encounter as they interacted with these texts.

My work at Eden Hills described in this section highlights changes to my view of my role as consultant. My experiences over the period of my consultancy and my reflections on these had assisted me to reframe my practice from a situation where I assumed total control of the proceedings, to one where I was better able to respond to the needs of the teachers with whom I worked as these arose in my work in schools. I realised that I could not control the learning of the teachers with whom I worked; I could only influence it (Senese, 2004, p. 51). The question for me at this point was would I be able to carry this new construction of myself as a consultant from a small group situation to one working with a large group of teachers? The next section explores ways in which my reframing of my practice was enacted with a group of 18 teachers at Brownley Heights Public School.

6.3 Exploring gender issues across the Key Learning Areas at Brownley Heights Public School

In this section I present field texts constructed during the final phase of my work at Brownley Heights Public School. I explore the ways in which my reflection on my practice

discussed in Chapters 4 and 5, assisted me to make changes to my work at Brownley Heights.

Overview

Following the development of the social skills program at Brownley Heights outlined in Chapter 4, Linda asked me to work with the teaching staff at the school on ways of including gender perspectives in their teaching and learning programs at a SDD in July, 2003. She asked that I explore teachers' understandings about gender as an educational issue with them as part of the day; therefore I planned to use the sentence stem sheet that I had previously used at Warner (see Chapter 5). I wanted to avoid the problem of silencing of individuals that had arisen at Warner and to ensure time for extensive discussion. Therefore, I decided to change the focus of the discussion questions following the sentence stems to place an emphasis on consideration of the purposes of including a gender perspective in their teaching. I also organised the teachers into small groups for the discussion so that all had an opportunity to contribute, in a small group of peers. I explained that the purpose of the activity was to explore their understandings about gender, and how these might influence their teaching.

I wanted to ensure a greater chance of making connections between teacher ideas about gender and the teaching and learning programs for the following terms than had been the case at Warner. With this in mind, I planned to link resources I introduced to existing teaching and learning programs within the school. To this end, I asked Linda to provide me with the schools' scope and sequence charts for teaching units in Human Society and Its Environment (HSIE), Science and Technology and Personal Development, Health and Physical Education (PDHPE). I then gathered together resources that would support teachers to include gender perspectives in the variety of units that were planned for each grade to teach for the remainder of the year. I prepared a list which linked the resources to the units of work in HSIE and Science as well as some general ideas for exploring gender issues through English for each grade.

I began the SDD by outlining the purpose of each session, clearly articulating that the day would involve exploring teacher understandings about gender as an educational issue, as well as opportunities for teachers to consider strategies for teaching and learning about gender issues and to explore resources to support their gender work in the classroom.

The first session of the day went well. One noticeable difference to the situation at Warner was that all staff contributed to the discussion within the small groups, contributing back and forth for some twenty minutes.

I then asked teachers to contribute their ideas about areas in which they might include a gender perspective in their teaching. The teachers arrived at an extensive list of possibilities that included most KLAs as well as a variety of student welfare areas where gender issues could be considered when working with students.

Mindful of the comments about Kindergarten children made by Jane at Warner, I decided to include some stories from the work of Vivian Paley (1984) to highlight the significance of gender as an educational issue for all students from Kindergarten to Year 6. I hoped that by using stories from Paley's experiences with her Kindergarten children, which revealed the prevalence of gender issues in the classroom environment, that the teachers, at all levels, would make connections with their own teaching and learning situations. By using stories, I aimed to assist individuals to enter into the experience vicariously and thereby draw personal meaning from the stories through their own understandings (Ely, Vinz, Anzul & Downing, 1997).

Finally, each stage group was provided with a box of gender resources that were relevant to the HSIE, Science and Technology, PDHPE and English units of work planned for that stage for the following school terms. Teachers were given time to look through the resources and discuss with their colleagues those they considered useful and ways in which they might use them in their teaching over the remaining two terms of the year. During this session the teachers discussed the resources and teaching ideas with each other as well as

questioning me about issues that concerned them. They often sought clarification of the purpose of various resources and how they might be useful for the work planned for the following term. The wide range of resources available meant that the teachers were able to pursue a direction that suited their needs in terms of their teaching programs.

Noelle, a Kindergarten teacher at Brownley Heights describes the changes to her thinking about her classroom practice that took place as a result of her participation in the professional development experiences.

> I thought all the gender issues would really be with the older children and not really with Kindergarten but the stories you told made me think about things that happen in my room. When we are having news, for example, the boys and girls tend to tell quite different types of news. The boys tell news that involves action - you know, where they're central to the story. Things like winning a game of soccer or footy on the weekend. The girls give more information about other people with details about things they saw. They went on a picnic with Aunty Sue – she has a new baby – that sort of thing. I am looking at this to see if there are ways that I can expand the types of news they tell.
>
> Another thing that I have been thinking about since the staff development day is the way that lots of my boys are very negative towards the girls - the whole "girls germs" thing. I've never really done anything about this apart from telling them not to be silly. I think we get so busy and caught up with things that we don't really notice some of the things that are going on in our rooms – things like what the children say to each other. Now I ask them why they think girls have germs and what do they think about their mums and their sisters. I want them to think about what they are saying – little things like that. And they might only be little but I think that if we can make children think about what they are saying in Kindergarten, they might be more respectful towards each other later on. (Noelle – September 2003, Interview)

Clearly, Noelle's experiences impacted on her understandings about the significance of gender issues for her Kindergarten students, as well as her understandings about the role of pedagogy in addressing such issues with her students. Previously unexamined understandings about masculinity and femininity have come to the forefront of Noelle's thinking about her role in the playing out of gendered stories by students in her classroom.

Leanne, a Year 2 teacher, also found the day useful in terms of thinking about her own beliefs about masculinity and femininity and the impact of these on her work with the students in her class.

> The discussion session made me think closely about masculinity and femininity and about what I do in my classroom. I think that you really have to suspend your judgement about gender issues when working with your students. I mean, things have changed since when I was growing up so unless you suspend your judgement about things that come up you may not necessarily be listening to what the kids are saying. You know, imposing your ideas and values on the kids. (Leanne – September 2003, Interview)

Below, Leanne discusses the changes that she made to her teaching practice as a result of her thinking about the meaning of the experiences that she had planned.

> When we looked at the travel brochures it was interesting. According to the brochures we used, the only thing that women do on holidays is sit in a spa or eat. There are no pictures of women fishing or swimming or doing anything active – just sitting in spas or eating. I hadn't really noticed this before. I'm sure men sit in spas as well but they don't show that.
>
> I used that in the HSIE unit I'm doing with the class and the kids were really quick to pick up on the gender messages in brochures once I had drawn their attention to it. They enjoyed designing their own brochures which had a more equitable approach to what they showed men and women doing on holidays.

> I guess now I am a little more aware of the gender messages that are absolutely everywhere. I hadn't really thought before to look closely at the resources that we use but obviously this is something that I need to be aware of. (Leanne – September 2003, Interview)

The SDD had a clear impact on the teaching of both Noelle and Leanne. Through their participation in the professional learning on the day, both teachers came to understand that the learning experiences of their students were often highly gender stereotypical and that, previously these had been unchallenged in their classrooms. Their reflections on their professional learning supported them to see the possibility of applying gender perspectives to the work they were undertaking with their students to assist their students to examine gender issues.

Layer 1: Principles of pedagogy

Through the SDD activities Noelle was engaged and challenged to explore her own understandings about gender issues by bringing her own meanings to Paley's stories of children's gendered classroom experiences. She used the stories to actively reflect on, and then to view as problematic, the student relationships within her classroom and the practices around students telling news. The SDD experiences had supported Noelle in broadening her understanding of the relevance of gender issues in her teaching context. Through her engagement with the experiences on the day, Noelle was challenged to reframe various situations she experienced within her own classroom and to use this reframing to make changes to her teaching practice.

Leanne indicates here that she had actively engaged with the SDD experiences in a way that resulted in her reconsidering how she might explore ideas about gender with her students. Her comment above reveals that the professional learning experiences on the day enabled her to make personal connections with the ideas about gender that were discussed and with the real world context in which she is currently teaching. This is highlighted in her discussion about the inclusion of a gender perspective in her teaching and learning program

following the SDD. Participation in the SDD and subsequent reflection on what the experiences might mean for her teaching meant that Leanne found some personal significance in the professional development activities for her teaching practice.

Both Noelle and Leanne made changes to their teaching practice as a result of their SDD experiences. The issues raised by these two teachers indicated to me the importance of Loughran's (1997) argument that a teacher educator needs to trust that the work they undertake with teachers is a starting point for engaging them in learning rather than a predetermined direction of inquiry. Noelle and Leanne engaged with the issues under consideration during the SDD in very different ways and with differing outcomes for their practice as teachers. They were both challenged to consider their practice in light of the experiences on the day, which they then used to make decisions about what this might mean for them as teachers and for their students. Noelle and Leanne were able "to question their involvement in the learning process" (Loughran, 1997, p.61) and to make changes to their practice based upon new understandings and insights.

Layer 2: Professional knowledge landscape

Noelle and Leanne shared their secret stories of classroom practice in the out-of-classroom space of the professional knowledge landscape. They both found ways to personalise their SDD experiences to fit their personalities, teaching styles, classrooms and students and felt comfortable and safe sharing their stories of classroom practice in their discussions with me.

By providing opportunities throughout the day for teachers to discuss the implications of issues under consideration for their teaching practice and the resources I had brought to the school for the day, I had provided them with an "entry point for debate and discussion of the funnelled materials" (Clandinin & Connelly, 1995, p.11) that are normally imposed on the professional knowledge landscape. I no longer assumed that teachers should merely accept materials that were presented to them without any consideration of what such materials might mean for their teaching. Through the discussion on the day I had attempted

to make connections for teachers with the gender equity policy, and introduce them to ways that they could include a gender perspective in their teaching and learning across all KLAs. Interviews with Noelle and Leanne indicate that the SDD had provided them with opportunities to engage in conversations with other teachers and me about their pedagogical knowledge, resulting in them developing new ways of thinking about gender that they could take with them into their classrooms and that they found relevant to their teaching contexts and their students learning needs.

I structured the day in such a way as to assist the teachers to use the ideas and resources to reflect on what they were currently doing in their classrooms. The stories of practice told by Noelle and Leanne above indicate that they were awakened to new ways of thinking about gender perspectives in their teaching, and that this resulted in transformations in their pedagogy (Clandinin & Connelley, 1995).

Layer 3: Moving forward through self-study

My work with Brownley Heights Public School over several years meant that I became familiar with the context for the gender initiative within the school, and I was also able to develop relationships with teachers at the school. This provided me with the opportunity to understand the constraints of the context of the school, including the fact that the final phase of my work at Brownley Heights was in the form of a SDD working with eighteen teachers in a workshop situation. However, because I had worked with the school on the development of the social skills program (discussed in section 6.1 of this chapter), I was aware of the teachers' desire to include gender perspectives in curriculum areas to support the understandings developed in the social skills program. This meant that I was able to structure the SDD to be effective for the teachers' continuing professional learning about gender as an educational issue (Wilcox, 1998).

The cyclic spiral of self-study described by Tidwell and Fitzgerald (2004) offers a way of understanding how my experiences as a teacher consultant assisted me to reframe my initial understandings as I prepared for my final phase of work with the teachers at Brownley

Heights. My reflections on early experiences as a consultant outlined in previous chapters, changed what I knew about working with adult learners, challenging my beliefs and values about consultancy and ultimately affecting the way in which I enacted my consultancy. This process challenged me to construct professional learning experiences for the teachers at Brownley Heights which would enable them to make connections between their current ideas about gender and new perspectives that were the focus of the SDD. I provided the teachers with the opportunity to discuss their understandings about gender issues with colleagues and me, and to investigate the pedagogical support offered by a range of resources that linked to their scope and sequences of teaching and learning across a range of KLAs. This resulted in them being challenged to expand their current thinking about the value of including gender perspectives in their teaching. The resources provided assisted the teachers to include gender perspectives in their teaching.

Conclusion

The experiences outlined above have been critical to my understanding about myself as a teacher educator and also to my thinking about my practice as a consultant. The tensions and dilemmas that arose as a result of my self-study provided me with much to reflect on. These dilemmas included how to align my understandings about my role as a consultant with the expectations of the teachers with whom I work; how to develop my consultancy as something more than merely informing teachers about gender issues; how to respond effectively to the needs of teachers in the various school contexts within which I work, given limited time frames; and how to support teaching and learning about gender issues, given the wide range of teacher understandings and beliefs in this area, in ways that were relevant to the teachers concerned.

My self-study provided me with opportunities to explore my practice from a variety of perspectives and to learn about the possibilities for my work, despite the limits of my work contexts. Connelly and Clandinin (1994) put this notion well:

> The horizons of our knowing shift and change as we awaken to new ways of "seeing" our world, to different ways of seeing ourselves in relation to each other and to the world. We begin to retell our stories with new insights, in new ways. (p. 154)

Through exploring my work with teachers I was assisted to reconstruct myself as a consultant, and therefore, construct my work with teachers differently to the ways in which I worked in the early part of my consultancy. I moved from a position of thinking I needed to control the professional learning process to one where I was more responsive to the needs of the teachers with whom I worked. Over the period of my study, my main focus moved from myself to the teachers as they became the centre of my planning. My self-study assisted me to give up the "familiar and privileged story" (Clandinin, 1995, p.30) of consultancy that I was initially living for the uncertainty of a new one, in which the needs of the teachers I was supporting became the central focus.

In this chapter I have explored field texts that relate to the professional development work that I undertook in two schools that participated in the study. I have indicated the ways in which the field texts collected at each school informed my reflection upon my practice as well as subsequent changes that I made to that practice, based upon a reframing of my understanding about my work as a consultant.

The following chapter draws the elements of my study together to indicate the value of my self-study for my professional development as a gender equity consultant. I highlight the significance of self-study of teacher education practices for all consultants seeking to learn more about and improve the work they undertake in schools with teachers. I also discuss my experiences in relation to the tensions inherent in working for a large educational bureaucracy like the DET.

PART III

SELF-STUDY AND TEACHER CONSULTANCY

OVERVIEW

Part III consists of one chapter in which I consider what the study contributes to knowledge about teacher consultancy. I discuss my study in relation to three main areas – the process of learning to be a gender equity consultant, the strength of self-study for professional learning about teacher consultancy and the implications of my study for teacher consultancy in general. These areas include a focus on the implications of my study for other teacher consultants working within departments of education.

In Chapter 7 I return to the five predominant characteristics of self-study articulated by LaBoskey (2004) and assess the study against these points, making a claim for my research as adding to knowledge in the area of self-study of teacher education practices. I am explicit about my professional learning about teacher consultancy, indicating the ways in which I improved my practice and developed my professional identity through my study.

I also focus on the value of self-study of teacher education practices as a methodology for professional learning about teacher consultancy, indicating the ways in which I was able to make changes to my practice that may support the work of other teacher consultants.

Chapter 7 Self-study as professional learning for teacher consultancy

> The unique and uncertain situation comes to be understood through the attempt to change it, and changed through the attempt to understand it.[5]

Introduction

This study explores professional learning about consultancy through a process of self-study of teacher education practices undertaken over a period of several years. The value of this study lies in the opportunities it provides teacher consultants to consider how they might explore their practice as they seek ways to improve their work with teachers.

The previous three chapters detail the field texts constructed with participants which serve as a basis for my investigation of my practice as a gender equity consultant. In this final chapter, I discuss my study in terms of three main areas: the process of learning to be a gender equity consultant, the strength of self-study for professional learning about consultancy and the implications of my research for other teacher consultants.

In the first section of this chapter I discuss my professional learning about my consultancy through three assertions that I make as a result of my self-study. These are:

- 'Learning to be' is a process of construction and reconstruction.
- Multiple interpretations add depth to knowledge about teaching teachers.
- Constraints of context can be overcome through a reconstruction of ways of being in particular settings.

The second section of this chapter provides a discussion of the ways in which the methodology of self-study supported my professional learning and assisted me to reframe my understanding about my practice and make changes to my consultancy work in schools.

[5] Schön, D. (1996) *The reflective practitioner: How professionals think in action,* Aldershot: Arena, p.132.

I discuss the value of self-study as professional learning for teacher consultants through the assertion that by knowing the self, one comes to see others more clearly.

In the third section I outline the implications of my self-study for other teacher consultants. I discuss the ways in which my research might be used to inform understandings about teacher consultancy in general, especially for those with an interest in the improvement of consultancy practices with teachers in schools. My discussion in this third section focuses on the following three assertions:

- Context matters.
- Relationships hold the key to teacher professional learning.
- Time is an essential element.

Throughout this chapter, I assess my research against the five predominant characteristics of self-study research methodology proposed by LaBoskey (2004a) as the theoretical underpinnings of self-study:

1. It is initiated by and focused on self.
2. The research is improvement aimed.
3. It is interactive at one or more stages of the process
4. It uses multiple, mainly qualitative methods of data gathering, analysis and representation
5. It advances the field through the construction, testing, sharing and re-testing of exemplars of teaching practice (p.820-821).

The applicability of these five features of self-study to my research is discussed in detail in Chapter 3 of this thesis. My aim in reintroducing these elements of self-study in this chapter is to make a claim for my research as adding to knowledge in the area of self-study of teacher education practices.

7.1 Becoming a gender equity consultant

In this section I discuss the process of becoming a gender equity consultant that I underwent through engaging in self-study of my practice with teachers in three particular schools. My discussion is organised around three assertions that I make in regard to my learning about my practice:

- 'Becoming' is a process of construction and reconstruction.
- Multiple interpretations add depth to knowledge about teaching teachers.
- Constraints of context can be overcome through a reconstruction of ways of being in particular settings.

'Becoming' is a process of construction and reconstruction

Through my self-study, I have come to view the process of becoming a gender equity consultant as a process of constructing and reconstructing understandings about various aspects of consultancy. These aspects include my understandings about my role as a teacher consultant, the positioning of teachers as learners, my view of professional development and the role of policy in teacher professional development.

The first area of understanding I discuss is my construction and reconstruction of myself as a teacher consultant. Learning to be a gender equity consultant after having been a classroom teacher for twenty-two years required me to develop new understandings about my work, my self and expectations for my role. The process has been a complex one and, in a manner similar to that described by Guilfoyle (1995) as she took on the new role of teacher educator within a university, involved learning many roles, forming a variety of relationships and understanding numerous contexts from a variety of perspectives.

I entered my position as a gender equity consultant with twenty-two years of experience as a primary school classroom teacher. In that period I had taught all grades from Kindergarten to Year 6 in five different school settings, and held promotion teaching positions in my last two schools. I knew how to teach - how to program according to

curriculum guidelines, how to undertake student assessment and use this information to inform my planning for teaching, how to cater for my students' individual learning needs, and how to use a wide variety of teaching strategies across the range of six Key Learning Areas. However, this knowledge did not prepare me to be a teacher of teachers in my role as a gender equity consultant.

When I began my consultancy position, there was no professional learning provided for me in my new role by my employer, the New South Wales Department of Education and Training (DET). My appointment seemed to be premised on the understanding that my years of teaching primary school children were preparation enough for working with teachers. Whilst constraints within the various school contexts in which I worked (discussed later in this section), acted to a certain extent to limit my work as a consultant, my initial construction of myself as a consultant was also a factor impacting on my early work with teachers.

As indicated in Chapter 4, the way in which I approached my work with teachers early in my consultancy was often at odds with my personal views about working with teachers, whereby I wanted to make connections with teachers' personal practical knowledge about teaching and gender issues. I was a living contradiction (Whitehead, 2000), in that the goals of my work were undermined by my choice of actions to achieve them (Berry, 2004). The mismatch between my beliefs and my actions posed a dilemma for me in that I felt a tension between exposing my vulnerability as a beginning teacher educator and maintaining teachers' (and the DET's) confidence in me as someone able to lead learning in the area of gender equity in schools. The dissonance created by this dilemma was at the heart of my desire to undertake my research project as a self-study. I aimed to develop a deep understanding of my practice in order to make improvements to my consultancy.
My self-study enabled me to learn about my practice in ways that assisted me to understand the impact of my work on teachers' knowledge about gender as an educational issue. My investigation of my experiences of practice, alongside those of the teachers with whom I was working, exposed to me my taken-for-granted assumptions about consultancy. These

included the need to appear to be an expert in the area of gender in school education; that I knew best what teachers needed in terms of professional learning and that, as a consultant, I should control the scope of the various professional learning contexts in which I worked. For example, as outlined in Chapter 4, at Warner Public School I planned a workshop at the request of the school's gender equity committee, during which teacchers explored lessons focusing on the concept of gender construction in several curriculum areas. However, I did not provide teachers with the opportunity to discuss the lessons and what they might mean in terms of individual teachers' understandings about using similar lessons with their students. In approaching my work in this manner, I allowed myself to be constructed as "expert" by teachers. At the same time, teachers were constructed as passive recipients of my knowledge and the "sacred story" (Clandinin & Connelly, 1995) of the gender equity strategy.

My understanding about my role saw a change in my construction of myself as a consultant, from one of being totally in control of teacher professional learning experiences to one of being more open to responding to learning opportunities as they arose in practice (Berry, 2004, p.1324). This is not to say that I no longer planned my work with schools. I continued to plan my work, but I no longer allowed my planning to completely dominate teachers' professional learning experiences. I attempted to take more account of teachers' needs, as they arose in discussion, in my work in schools. This change in my approach to my work is exemplified in my work on the social skills program at Brownley Heights (see Chapter 6) and in my later work at both Eden Hills and Brownley Heights (see Chapter 6).

The cyclical spiral of self-study outlined by Tidwell and Fitzgerald (2004, p. 86) is useful to describe how my changing construction of myself as consultant resulted in the reframing of my practice that came about as a result of my self-study. When I began my work as a consultant, my focus was almost completely on the cognitive element of my practice. I tended to focus on the knowledge about gender issues and pedagogy that I wanted to pass on to teachers. It was not until I began to study my consultancy work that I understood the gap between my rhetoric and my practice as I stood back from what I was doing in schools

and reflected on my work with teachers. It was feedback from teachers and my subsequent reflection on my practice in light of this information, and the body of literature with which I was interacting, that changed my understanding about my work as a consultant. Such reflection resulted in changes to what I understood about my practice, challenging my beliefs about how to enact my work with teachers – so beginning a cyclical spiral where what I learnt changed what I knew, challenged my assumptions and affected my plans for working with teachers.

Whilst I had always stated that I saw myself as a learner, the approach that I took to learning about my role as a gender equity consultant in the first few months of my consultancy was flawed. Initially I thought (and this was supported by DET practice) that, by watching other consultants work, I could learn a few strategies for working with teachers. However, the few models that I was able to observe were premised on a transmissive view of learning that supported lecturing as a way of working with teachers. It was through my self-study that I came to assume a more complex stance as learner towards my work as a consultant – understanding the importance of reflecting on my practice, seeking support from relevant literature, reframing practice based on the perspectives of others, seeking to understand my self as consultant and the contexts in which I worked, and seeking ways of working with teachers based on collaboration.

The conducting of my research as a self-study enabled me to pay attention to the positions in which I placed myself and was placed by the teachers with whom I worked (Kirk, 2005). The methodology enabled me to question the assumptions about my self as consultant that I brought to my practice, as well as the expectations placed on me by teachers. This questioning provided the basis for my reflections on my practice as I sought answers to what I was doing and why.

The second aspect of my understanding that underwent reconstruction as a result of my self-study was my view of the teachers with whom I worked. Discussions with participating teachers revealed to me that I was initially disconnected from them - for example, my

misreading of the professional development experience of two teachers at Warner Public School explored in Chapter 5. My focus was on *my* performance as a consultant, the knowledge that *I* wanted to impart and the program that *I* believed that I needed to cover on any specific occasion. I tended to hold a deficit view of the teachers with whom I worked, seeing them as resistant to my agenda. I saw myself as teaching 'others', wanting to have the answers, to lead them and to give them direction (Abt-Perkins, Dale and Hauschildt, 1998). I tended to view teachers as an homogenous group, requiring generic instruction about gender issues in education. This was in stark contrast to my belief about my role as a consultant which was to make connections with teachers' classroom practice and their professional knowledge, through my work in the area of gender in education. Through my self-study, teachers' observations about their professional learning experiences with me provided me with insights about my practice which I used as a basis for reflection as I sought to make better connections with teachers and their practice. For example, feedback from some teachers at Warner Public School indicating that they did not see the relevance of exploring gender issues with their Kindergarten students, led me to include stories by teachers such as Vivian Paley on gender issues in the early childhood area, in my work with teachers at Brownley Heights (see Chapter 6). These stories assisted teachers to make connections between the gender equity strategy and their own classroom experiences as was the case with Noelle discussed in Chapter 6.

By using my participating teachers' stories of experience to guide my reflections on my practice, I was able to better understand my work as a consultant in relation to their lived realities, experiences and perspectives (Kuzmic, 2002, p.233). This reframing of my practice saw the focus of my practice move from my self to my self-in-relation-to-others (p.233) so that my concern was more about the teachers with whom I worked than about my performance as a consultant. I realised that the learning that occurred in the schools was not about me but about what teachers took away from their professional learning experiences and into their classrooms. I could not control teacher learning; I could only influence it (Senese, 2002, p.51), by working alongside teachers as they followed their own

paths of learning, as was the case in my work at Eden Hills Public School discussed in Chapter 6.

The third area of reconstruction for me was a reframing of the way that I enacted professional learning experiences with teachers. I began my work as a consultant with a belief in the importance of focusing on the concept of gender as a social construction. In my early work as a consultant, I tended to lecture teachers about this theoretical aspect of the gender equity strategy. Whilst I continue to believe in the importance of developing this understanding with teachers, my actions to achieve this changed over the period of my self-study. My work came to include much more discussion with teachers about the ways in which individuals construct their knowledge about gender, and why certain teaching strategies assisted their students to develop knowledge of the ways in which ideas about gender are constructed. Rather than merely presenting teachers with an outline of gender theory, I included such information in discussions with teachers about their practice, and integrated it with the purpose of using various teaching and learning strategies and resources so that there was a closer connection between the theory that underpinned the gender equity strategy and teachers' practice. This approach to my work developed from my experiences working on the social skills program at Brownley Heights outlined in Chapter 4, resulting in a new approach to my practice in the final phases of my work at both Eden Hills and Brownley Heights explored in Chapter 6.

Finally, I reconstructed my understanding of the DET Gender Equity Strategy from a 'sacred story' (Clandinin & Connelly, 1995), that teachers should accept unquestioningly, to a document that could support teachers to explore their classroom practice and student welfare issues within their school contexts. Conversations with and between participating teachers meant that they were able to discuss and process the strategy and inquire (Hargreaves, 1996) about the possibilities offered by an understanding of the strategy, to support their identified purposes in investigating gender issues and the needs of their students. They were able to do so in ways that took into account their personal practical knowledge about teaching and gender issues.

The process of construction and reconstruction has been a slow and continuous one through which I have developed understandings of the complexity of my role as a consultant and struggled with what these new understandings meant for my practice. Reconstruction has also been a process that has created much discomfort for me as I have been forced to confront the professional self that I present to the world as well as the personal self through which I experience my everyday life. This focus on the self and the ways I have constructed and reconstructed my understandings to improve my practice pays heed to LaBoskey's (2004a) first and second elements of self-study methodology that state that self-study focuses on the teacher educator and that it is improvement-aimed. However, through undertaking my research I have come to understand self-study as more than a methodology for conducting research – it is a way of being in the world that has become part of my professional practice and identity (Bodone, Guðjónsdóttir & Dalmau, 2004, p.776).

My growing knowledge about my consultancy has been the result of interaction between my perspectives about my role and detailed feedback from the teachers with whom I have worked. Both these sources of field texts provided me with the basis for critical reflection about my practice as a consultant that was also informed by my interaction with a body of professional literature. The usefulness of multiple interpretations for professional learning that arose from this process of reflection is discussed below.

Multiple interpretations add depth to knowledge about teaching teachers

I now turn to a discussion of the ways in which multiple layers of interpretation added meaning to my understandings about my experiences as a consultant. The multiple interpretations of field texts presented in this thesis highlight the dynamic process of self-study as interpretations are reviewed and reformulated over time. Experiences that initially meant one thing to me changed meaning or had their meaning extended (Guilfoyle, 1995, p.13) as I reflected upon my experiences, interacted with a wide body of literature and tried new strategies in my consultancy work with teachers.

In order to better understand and improve my practice I needed some way to reveal and challenge my assumptions, to reveal inconsistencies in my thinking and to expand my potential interpretations (LaBoskey, 2004a, p.849). This was not something that I could undertake alone. I initially sought the support of my work colleague, Ian, to act as a critical friend to assist me to reframe my thinking about my experiences from a different perspective to my own. However, issues such as the fact that I was undertaking doctoral study and Ian was not, lack of time within our working week to participate in critical conversations about our practice, and differing approaches to our own professional learning, meant that the critical friendship did not develop as I had hoped (discussed in detail in Chapter 3). In seeking an alternative critical friendship, I turned to literature in the areas of gender in school education, self-study and the professional knowledge landscape work of Clandinin and Connelly to assist me to make sense of my experiences as a consultant, to inform my interpretations of my field texts and to support my reframing of my practice. Interaction with these bodies of literature assisted me to develop multiple ways of interpreting my field texts.

The strength of multiple interpretations may be understood in terms of Schön's (1996, p.41) notion of framing of problematic situations. The frames through which I view a given situation arise as a result of my previous experience and knowledge, my personal values, strategies that have worked for me in the past and my priorities. By becoming aware of the frames through which I view my experience, I am better able to become aware of "the possibility of alternative ways of framing the reality" (Schön, 1996, p.310) of my practice. By engaging with a wide body of literature throughout my self-study I was able to broaden "the range and variety of the repertoire" (Schön, 1996, p.140) that informed my practice as a consultant, thereby expanding my interpretations of my experiences. The use of multiple layers of interpretation enabled me to view my field texts with new frames as I critically reflected upon my practice. Furthermore, this process of ongoing framing of the problematic situations in my practice assisted me to determine the features of my work with teachers to which I would attend and the directions that I would take to bring about change, resulting in reframings of practice. Rather than merely providing me with a variety of

frames through which to interpret my data, the use of layers of interpretation provided me with a way of amalgamating new insights gained, providing me with a deeper understanding of my experiences.

The use of layers highlights the social construction of interpretation, underscoring the dynamic process of meaning-making as individuals seek meaning for their experiences from the experiences of others. Whilst I acknowledge that the interpretations presented in this thesis are mine, they are based upon my interactions with the viewpoints of others and serve to indicate the diverse ways in which experience may be interpreted and constructed (Ely, Vinz, Anzul & Downing, 1997, p.80). A layered approach to interpretation assisted me to understand that there are multiple ways of viewing a given experience that, rather than providing a definitive solution to a problem of practice, serve to provoke, challenge and illuminate a given issue in self-study (Bullough & Pinnegar, 2001, p.20). My discussion of who was invited to participate in talking about gender issues at Eden Hills Public School in Chapter 5 exemplifies the multiple interpretations that could be applied to the incident at the school which I initially interpreted as a situation in which the professional learning agenda was imposed on the teachers. By using Clandinin and Connelly's (1995) professional knowledge landscape metaphor to view the experience, the added dimension of parental expectations was included in my interpretation. My final layer of interpretation indicated to me the importance of understanding the contexts within which I worked.

My layers of interpretation present the reader with a structure that depicts the journey towards understanding that I have undertaken as I explored my practice as a consultant. The layers indicate the different perspectives that supported my reframing of my practice as a consultant and how I came to new, more complex understandings over time, through interaction with the literature. The layers of interpretation also indicate the ways in which my experiences in one context of my study supported my learning in other contexts, providing insights into the interactive nature of my self-study, the third characteristic of self-study argued for by LaBoskey (2004a).

Constraints of context can be overcome through a reconstruction of ways of being in particular settings

In Chapter 4, I outline many of the constraints upon my practice as a consultant that were present in the various school contexts of the study. These include constraints of time, limited views of professional development held by teachers and others in schools, and limited expectations of my role as consultant held by teachers. Wilcox (1998) argues for the need for teacher educators to respond to the limits of context by developing their practice so that it is effective within a given context. She calls on the self-study researcher to transcend the boundaries of practice and reimagine the possibilities (p. 71). Below I outline the ways in which I attempted to extend the limits of what was possible for me in my work with teachers. This discussion provides evidence for LaBoskey's (2004a) fifth element of self-study - the need to construct, test, share and retest exemplars of teaching practice – a process that has taken place over time and therefore, comprises a 'body of work' (Laboskey, 2004b, p.1178) supporting my knowledge claims.

As a teacher consultant, one of the major constraints upon my practice was the issue of time, with schools often requesting that I work with large groups of teachers in short one-off information sessions. By assuming a transmission approach to my work in such contexts I was allowing the situation to define my practice. My work at Warner on the social skills program (Chapter 4) and at Eden Hills exploring gender issues through a critical literacy approach (Chapter 6), revealed to me the possibilities offered when working with small groups of teachers over an extended period of time. I needed to explore the positive elements of my practice in such contexts to assist me to change my practice in more limiting timeframes.

Through my work with the project schools, I came to understand the importance of acknowledging teachers' personal practical knowledge and using this as a basis for professional learning rather than focusing on the knowledge that I believed that teachers needed to acquire. I attempted to change my way of being in school contexts from one of lecturing teachers to one of working in more collaborative ways that took teachers'

classroom practice and knowledge as starting points. I focused on breaking down the 'sacred theory-practice story' (Clandinin & Connelly, 1995) by engaging in conversations with teachers that encouraged them to share stories of practice and reflect upon these in light of new ideas about gender as an educational issue. An important part of the professional learning at both Brownley Heights and Eden Hills was the inclusion of time within the professional development sessions for teachers to share their stories of practice with each other and with me. By including time for conversations with teachers which supported their reflection upon their practice and their thinking about the relevance of teaching about gender issues, I was able to use teachers' personal practical knowledge as a basis for their professional development.

The expectation of some schools that I, the gender equity 'expert', would provide them with neatly packaged solutions to problems that they had identified was a further constraint upon my work. The understanding of professional learning held by some teachers in the schools in which I worked constructed teachers as passive recipients of expert knowledge. Again, I initially allowed the pre-defined roles (Tidwell, 2002, p.41) of 'consultant' as expert and authority to define my practice. I played the role of expert, taking total control of the professional learning experience, arriving at schools with lessons plans and units of work, as requested, for teachers to implement. It was not until I sought feedback from teachers that I realised the limitations of this approach to teacher professional development, in terms of recognising and responding to the needs of individual teachers. By participating in conversations with teachers around various teaching strategies and listening to their stories of practice, I was more able to understand their professional learning needs in relation to gender as an educational issue. This placed me in a position where I was better able to negotiate a pathway between teachers' current thinking and new knowledge about gender issues.

By constructing me as the expert who could provide all the solutions to the problems identified within the school, teachers were simultaneously constructing themselves as incapable of learning anything without outside expertise. The professional learning

conversations that I had with teachers, particularly at Eden Hills (see Chapter 6), revealed the extent to which teachers supported each others' learning through sharing stories of practice and considering their own understandings as they reflected on the practice of colleagues. My experiences assisted me to work with teachers as 'knowers' capable of negotiating meaning with the support of knowledge communities on their professional knowledge landscapes (Craig, 1995, p.139). The feedback from the teachers at Eden Hills on their understandings of the process, discussed in Chapter 6, indicates that they also saw themselves as learning from each other.

7.2 Self-study for my professional learning about teacher consultancy

I chose self-study as the methodology to guide my research because I wanted to study my professional practice setting (Pinnegar, 1998, p.33) to better understand my experiences as a teacher consultant. I also wanted to apply what I was learning to my practice with teachers, to improve that practice. My self-study revealed to me the strength of this methodology as professional learning for teacher consultants. In this section I discuss this strength through the assertion that through knowing the self, one comes to see others more clearly.

Through knowing the self, one comes to see others more clearly

When I began thinking about my research in 2001, my initial decision as a beginning researcher was to focus on the teachers with whom I worked. I wanted to know how their ideas about teaching gender issues changed as a result of their professional learning experiences with me. I assumed that by developing a Staff Development Day (SDD) that began with an explanation of gender as socially constructed and moved on to include a few example lessons of what teaching about gender construction might look like in various Key Learning Areas (KLAs), that I could change teachers' understandings about the importance of teaching about gender issues. Through talking with the teachers at Warner Public School (see Chapter 4), I began to understand the professional learning experience from their perspective. I realised that, in order to learn about my practice, I needed to focus on my self

and the multiple facets of self that formed my identity throughout the research process - beginning consultant/teacher educator, learner and beginning researcher.

In my early work as a consultant, part of my practice when working with teachers in schools was to ask them to complete a one page evaluation form at the conclusion of a professional development session. Such practice is commonplace amongst DET consultants. These evaluations included generic questions concerning whether the outcomes for the session were achieved, and whether teachers felt that they had improved understandings in various areas. Evaluations I received were typically positive, probably owing more to teacher politeness that any in-depth evaluation of the professional learning that had taken place. Positive evaluations using such methods, whilst good for my self-esteem, did little to contribute to my professional learning about my practice. Therefore, my decision to undertake a self-study of my practice as a gender equity consultant was made with the understanding that I needed to study my self in practice in order to improve the work I was doing with teachers.

By gathering in-depth feedback from the teachers with whom I worked I hoped to inform my understandings about my practice as a consultant. I believed that this, much more than a one page, quickly written evaluation sheet, would give me valuable information about how teachers were experiencing the professional learning sessions that I developed. By exploring my construction of my self as consultant, discussed in Chapter 4, I was able to understand the ways in which my beliefs about my practice resulted in my "othering" (Abt-Perkins, Dale & Hauschildt, 1998, p.92) of the teachers with whom I worked. My investigation of my perspectives and experiences of my role as a consultant, alongside those of the participating teachers, assisted me to understand the role of exploring the self in self-study as being less about my multiple selves in the research process, and more about investigating these selves in the space between self and practice (Bullough & Pinnegar, 2001). In other words, through my self-study I came to see that I could study my self as newly appointed consultant, as beginning researcher and as learner but this was meaningless unless connected to the teachers with whom I worked so that my

understandings about these various aspects of my self were connected to my work with teachers.

My self-study provided me with a space in which to be a learner, as I explored my consultancy work with teachers. Such space was not available to me in my DET workplace – the Gender Equity Unit. As discussed in Chapter 4, my self-study enabled me to reflect on the vulnerable moments of my practice, the dilemmas that I experienced as I began to listen to the voices of the teachers with whom I worked and the tensions that I felt in the expectations for my role held by teachers and the DET. A safe space to learn about being a gender equity consultant was vital to me as it provided the space for me to question my beliefs and assumptions about my work, my publicly perceived position of expertise (Abt-Perkins, Dale & Hauschildt, 1998, p.89) and my interpretation of the gender equity strategy and what it meant for teacher professional learning.

Therefore, it was through studying my self in relation to the teachers with whom I worked that I came to look more closely at teachers' understandings and to view my practice from their perspective. This meant that changes that I made to my work with teachers were based upon their needs and a deeper understanding of the various professional knowledge landscapes of the schools in which I worked.

Whilst my self-study provided insights into my practice that are framed within the field of gender equity in schools, these insights are useful to teacher consultants working with teachers in other areas. This will be the case for consultants wishing to learn about ways of improving their practice informed by deep knowledge of, and understanding about, their consultancy practice. In calling on other teacher consultants to undertake the challenge of self-study, I offer my research as an example of one way of exploring professional practice in the area of consultancy. In doing so, I encourage others to enter into dialogue that focuses on improving their work as teacher consultants employed by education systems to support teacher professional learning. By sharing my research with other teacher

consultants and inviting their critique, I aim to include LaBoskey's fifth element of self-study in exemplifying my project as self-study.

7.3 The implications of my self-study for other teacher consultants

In this section I discuss the implications of my research for teacher consultants working with teachers in areas other than gender equity. I structure this discussion around three assertions derived from my self-study:

- Context matters.
- Relationships hold the key to professional learning.
- Time is an essential element.

The discussion below, centring on these three assertions, will indicate that they are linked to each other and need to be understood in relation to one another.

Context matters

Self-study researchers note the importance of context in their descriptions of their professional practice so that readers can understand dilemmas of practice with which self-study researchers are faced as well as the changes made to practice to address these dilemmas (LaBoskey, 2005; Nicol, 1997;Tidwell & Fitzgerald, 2004). Such description assists the reader to understand the context-specific, individualised and interpersonal nature of self-study (LaBoskey, 2005, p.139). In order for readers to understand the specific nature of the tensions I found in my practice that led me to undertake my research as a self-study, I have provided details of the contexts in which I worked as a consultant in this research project (see Chapters 3, 4, 5 and 6). By providing a description in this thesis of the contexts for my experiences as a consultant, I exemplify the ways in which I came to terms with the specific issues, concerns and questions of my practice. I also draw attention to some of the possible similarities between the contexts within which I worked and those of other teacher consultants interested in better understanding their practice. The importance of such detail is well-documented in the self-study literature and, therefore, warrants no further discussion here.

However, I believe that further discussion that context matters from the perspective of the work that DET consultants undertake in schools, is necessary. My experience as a classroom teacher and as a DET consultant indicates that much consultancy work takes a generic approach to working with teachers in schools. As a classroom teacher I have sat through many 'walks through' the latest policy or curriculum documents led by DET consultants. I have also seen consultant colleagues change the school name on a PowerPoint presentation before heading off to present something developed for one school to the staff of a different school.

My self-study points to a number of factors as influencing this state of affairs for teacher consultants. The first of these is time, or lack thereof, that consultants have at their disposal for their own professional learning. In my period as a consultant, a typical week involved a staff development session at a school, presentation at an educational conference, writing a response to a new DET document, representing the Gender Equity Unit on Basic Skills Test panels and working on a project with the TAFE[6] team focusing on girls and IT. There was no expectation that time would be put aside for my own professional learning. One consultant with whom I worked recently had every day of her diary for a ten week school term booked for either working with individual schools or with school groups at large conferences. Personal professional learning about practice is not a priority in such a situation.

The lack of long periods of face-to-face time provided for consultants to work with teachers in individual schools is also problematic. If consultants' work involves travelling from school to school, delivering generic one-off presentations to teachers, there is no time for them to develop meaningful relationships with the teachers with whom they work to inform their professional development work. Nor is there time for consultants to develop understandings about the professional knowledge landscapes of the schools within which

[6] TAFE – Technical and Further Education (post-school) – staff in the Gender Equity Unit from 2001 to 2003 included Senior Education Officers for schools and for the TAFE system.

they work so that they are able to develop knowledge communities where teachers are constructed as co-learners rather than seen as deficit in their knowledge.

The second factor that I see as contributing to consultants' poor understanding of the contexts in which they work is the low number of consultants employed by the DET to support teacher learning in schools. During the period of my gender equity consultancy, there were two consultants employed to work with primary and secondary schools across all government schools in New South Wales. Such a situation may lead one to consider that our positions existed for political expediency rather than any real desire to support teacher learning about gender equity. The situation is a little better for curriculum consultants in that there are currently consultants employed to work with schools in each region[7]. However, these consultants are still extremely stretched in terms of the time that they can realistically work with teachers in individual schools on specific matters of concern.

The third factor that I regard as contributing to consultants' lack of concern for context is the lack of professional learning perceived as important for their positions. The situation for DET consultants in regard to their personal professional learning about their practice is currently the same as it was when I began my consultancy in 2001. There is none provided by the DET. Teachers are still seconded from schools, or appointed from other non-school-based positions into consultancy roles, provided with a computer and a desk and expected to support teacher learning in schools with no professional learning as to how they might go about doing this. This gives rise to a situation where there is no expectation that the individual consultant consider the need for them to act as learners in their roles. Their expertise as consultants is taken as given.

Information such as that gathered at Warner, Eden Hills and Brownley Heights Public Schools (see Chapter 5) revealed to me the importance of developing understandings about the various school contexts that could support reframings of my practice. By gaining

[7] In NSW, government schools are currently situated in one of ten regions across the state

insights into issues such as the gender relations operating within various school contexts and the relationships between parent, teachers and school executive I was able to develop a deeper understanding of the impact of my practice on teachers. I was also able to consider the effect of various strategies I employed on the understandings about teaching gender issues of some of the individual teachers with whom I worked.

The assertion that context matters may seem to be in contradiction to my assertion in section 7.1 that constraints of context can be overcome through a reconstruction of ways of being in particular settings. However, I argue here that unless teacher consultants develop an understanding of the contexts within which they are working, they will have no knowledge of the constraints that need to be overcome in order for them to work effectively with teachers.

Relationships hold the key to professional learning

Under this assertion, I consider relationships in two ways. Firstly, the way in which relationships within schools impact on teachers' professional learning and, secondly, the way in which relationships with teachers and colleagues impact on consultants' personal professional learning.

I acknowledge that there is limited time to develop relationships with individual teachers when working as a teacher consultant, but my research indicates that it is possible to develop understandings about the group relationships within a school context that impact on teacher professional learning. In Chapter 5 I examine the ways in which the relationships between teachers at Warner and Brownley Heights Public Schools impacted on the professional learning of teachers at those two schools. Chapter 5 also offers an investigation of the way in which relationships between parents, teachers and school executive impacted on the professional learning that took place at Eden Hills. This exploration of the group relationships operating within the three schools of the study provided me with insights that assisted me to be aware of the nature of the three very different contexts within which I was working and to develop an understanding of the needs

of teachers within those contexts. For example, my experience at Warner revealed to me the power of one teacher's expressed ideas about gender issues in silencing others, resulting in my coming to understand the importance of creating safe spaces in my work with teachers for individuals to discuss their ideas.

My work with the teachers at Brownley Heights on the social skills program and at Eden Hills in the final phase of my work there indicates the importance of developing professional learning contexts which enable teachers to learn from one another. The relationship, in each case, between the group of teachers and me was one of mutual respect and acknowledgement of the value of the personal professional knowledge that all participants brought to the professional learning contexts of the study.

Early in my study I experienced considerable tension in being labelled "expert" given that I was new to my position and was learning what being a consultant meant. My self-study assisted me to understand that I was not able to change the manner in which the "educational conduit" (Clandinin & Connelly, 1995) shapes the way in which educators interact within the professional knowledge landscapes (Craig, 2006) of professional development in schools. However, I was able to determine the way in which relationships with teachers unfolded within the professional learning contexts that I worked, so that teacher needs and understandings formed the basis of my work in schools rather than the sacred story of theory-driven practice.

My relationship with the teachers in the study was the basis of my learning about my practice that informed the changes that I made to my work as a consultant. My understanding about my consultancy was socially constructed through my interactions with the participating teachers who provided me with feedback about my work with them. By participating in dialogue with teachers about their professional learning experiences with me, I was able to gain insights which assisted me to reframe my thinking about consultancy and make changes to my practice that meant my work was more responsive to the needs of teachers (discussed in Chapter 6). The dialogue with teachers also indicates both the

interactive and qualitative nature of my work – elements three and four of LaBoskey's (2004a) characteristics of self-study.

By considering the importance of relationships in their work, consultants aiming to improve their practice with experienced teachers will learn much about the ways in which group dynamics operating in school contexts can impact on the professional learning of teachers. Similarly, a consideration of the socially constructed nature of learning will enable consultants to understand, and thereby improve, their practice from the perspective of the teachers with whom they work.

Relationships with colleagues also need to be taken into consideration when exploring the appropriateness of self-study for professional learning about teacher consultancy. In undertaking my self-study I actively sought the collaboration of a colleague in the Gender Equity Unit to act as a critical friend. In Chapters 3, 4 and 5 I discuss the tensions that existed in the relationship. These included a lack of discussion of the expectations for the relationship, my involvement alone in the research process, no time for discussion built into our work schedules and differences in levels of experience, resulting in power and status issues that impacted negatively on the relationship. Whilst I acknowledge that supportive institutional factors are not essential for the success of collaboration in self-studies, where professional learning and improvement of practice are not part of the culture of a workplace, collaboration will be more difficult to achieve. The question is how does one go about developing a culture of workplace collaboration?

There are several factors which need to be in place to support the collaboration of critical friends. First a culture of professional learning needs to exist where colleagues are encouraged to share ideas about and critique their work as they seek to improve practice. Second there needs to be time set aside for such discussions where colleagues are supported to participate in conversations aimed at improving their practice. Third, individuals need to have a purpose for participating in a critical friend relationship. Fourth, the participants need to have a shared understanding of the relationship and its purpose. Finally, colleagues

need to be prepared for a certain amount of openness and honesty if a trusting relationship is to develop (Griffiths & Poursanidou, 2005; Schuck & Russell, 2005). The development of contexts conducive to practitioner professional learning will only occur where such learning is deemed a necessary part of professional practice. Where such contexts do not exist it is essential that practitioners agitate for the space to undertake professional learning that will result in improved practice.

Time is an essential element

The element of time relates to the two assertions above – that context matters and that relationships are important – as neither can be accounted for by consultants without the time to do so. That time is a crucial factor for professional learning, both of teachers and consultants, has been alluded to in other sections of this chapter. Therefore, my discussion here will be brief, focusing on the provision of time within the professional knowledge landscapes in which teacher consultants work.

Where teacher consultants have limited time to spend with teachers in schools, their ability to support teacher professional learning through teachers sharing their stories of professional practice will be severely limited. The collegial discussions of the teachers at Brownley Heights and Eden Hills discussed in Chapters 4 and 6 indicate the importance of the time to undertake such dialogue for developing knowledge communities in schools where teachers, supported by consultants, learn from, and support the learning of, each other. Such time also allows the consultant to make connections between theory and practice in ways that are meaningful for teachers.

Teacher consultants also need time to undertake professional learning about their practice in ways that support them to improve the work that they do with teachers. By undertaking my self-study into my practice as a consultant, I had time to consider my work with teachers in light of feedback from teachers. I was supported in my learning by my interactions with a wide body of professional literature. This process took time and was not factored into my working week. Nor was there an expectation that I would spend any of my

time in the Gender Equity Unit exploring my professional practice to develop ways of improving my work with teachers.

Today many DET consultants are supporting teachers in action learning projects where teachers are encouraged to ask questions about ways in which they might improve their classroom practice. The same cannot be said about consultants' practice. There seems to be no expectation on the part of the DET that consultants need time to undertake the same process as teachers to learn about their practice. For teacher consultants it seems to be a case of business, or busyness, as usual.

Teacher consultants need time to work with teachers in schools in ways that develop and sustain teacher capacity to improve their teaching and learning. Teacher consultants also need time to learn about their practice in ways that assist them to improve their practice in the area of professional learning with teachers. Processes such as critical reflection and collaboration with colleagues develop understandings over a period of time. Self-study provides a methodology for teacher consultants to use such time wisely in the pursuit of understanding their practice and ensuring that their work is based on a sound knowledge of how to best support teacher professional learning.

Conclusion

It was the problematic nature of consultancy that influenced my decision to research my practice as a consultant working in schools with teachers. Issues such as the lack of provision of professional learning for DET consultants, the construction of consultants as experts and the dissonance between DET rhetoric around teacher professional learning and what actually occurs in schools given limited funding, limited time and other contextual constraints were the impetus for me to undertake my study.

My study set out to answer the following three questions:

- How do I experience and understand my practice as a gender equity consultant to school teachers?

- How can I improve my practice as a consultant?
- How does self-study contribute to professional learning about consultancy?

In seeking to answer these three questions, using self-study of teacher education practices as the methodology to do so, I have travelled along a path that has provided me with insights into my experiences as a consultant to teachers. These insights have assisted me to reframe my practice and make improvements to my work with teachers. I have come to understand learning to be as a process of continuous construction and reconstruction as I developed new understandings about my self in relation to the teachers with whom I worked. I also developed new understandings about teachers and their professional learning.

My self-study provides the reader with evidence of how I came to understand my professional self and the transformations that I made to my ways of being a consultant. As I struggled to improve my practice, the priorities and concerns that shaped my work with teachers changed as I sought ways of aligning my beliefs about teacher professional learning with my practice in schools. This has been a confronting and difficult process as my study exposed the gap between my stated beliefs and my enactment of practice.

My research contributes to knowledge about self-study by indicating the opportunities for learning about consultancy practice provided by this methodology. By focusing on the intersection between knowledge of the self and the teachers with whom they work, teacher consultants will be able to develop understandings about their practice which will inform and support improvements to their work as a consultant. This is in contrast to much of the previous research on consultancy which focuses almost entirely on changes to teachers' practice whilst ignoring the professional learning of consultants.

My aim in researching my practice was to move beyond a "tips for teachers" approach to consultancy so that I could support teachers to consider the pedagogical and social justice imperatives for including knowledge about gender issues in their teaching and learning

programs. The steps I have taken as I sought to improve my practice as a result of undertaking my self-study are small and just a beginning towards achieving my aim. However, the transformations to my understanding of my professional self and to my way of being a teacher educator are much larger.

In closing, I sincerely thank Barry for his outrage at the professional learning session described in Chapter 1 that now seems so long ago. He opened my eyes to the need for me to explore my practice to develop understandings about my work supporting teachers. The incident with Barry made me question my approach to my work in a way that revealed the gap between the rhetoric and the reality of my work as a teacher consultant. Barry's reaction to my presentation set me on a path of self-study that will be ongoing throughout my teaching career as I continually seek to improve the work that I undertake in educational settings.

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APPENDIX 1

Transcription – Warner PS Gender Equity Committee Focus Group Interview

T (Others) – that's right.

T(m) – It was a perspective so we could see it through literature, through HSIE, through PDHPE. It worked because it was multifaceted which is what perspectives are like in a school.

R – In terms of programming and planning do you think the workshops have given you ideas for your own classroom practice?

T (sport)– I haven't done it because I haven't programmed for it this term. I think if something came up in the classroom that I could then focus toward that you know if I found the boys cutting the girls out of a particular sport or tending to read one type of text with a gender bias then I think that then it's more relevant and I would actually target that.

I mean you're always doing gender-based issues anyway. You do them without thinking. You know, when a problem arises you tend to deal with it then and there. If it is a major problem then you go to these structured activitesd. If you find that it is a real issue within a class or a grade or a school you would have more of a tendency to really program specifically for it.

T (K) I don't think Kindergarten children even know what a girl and a boy is sometimes. They're so self centred.

T (K) We looked at the books that we focused on that day and it's interesting a lot of the kids have already read them.

R – Did you find that you could talk about different things that they may not have focused on before?

T – I think they just look at it as an interesting story and when you try and bring up issues they just say that was great – what's the next thing?

T (m) – With my Year 6 I find it's a case now of looking at the literature we study from different perspectives – who does what and where gender issues fit in so and a lot of our discussion is challenging the kids' gender-based assumptions and they're very happy to take new ideas on board.

For example who’s in what position and how things are done. They’re constantly asking “where does this fit in?” They don’t see that there should.

APPENDIX 2

History of Gender Equity reforms and programs in Australia

In 1975 the Commonwealth Schools Commission's report *Girls, Schools and Society* argued that schooling worked to disadvantage girls through a variety of circumstances. These included stereotyping and omission of women in the curriculum, the role models presented by teachers, advice on subject and career choices offered to girls, peer relations and the availability of poorer facilities for girls (Yates, 1993). New South Wales responded to the Schools Commission report with the release of a policy statement and guidelines on non-sexist education - *Towards Non-sexist Education Policy and Guidelines for Schools, Pre-school to Year 12* (NSW Department of Education, 1980). The policy focused on the ways in which sex discrimination limited the educational opportunities and experiences of boys and girls as well as their career and life choices (Lemair, 1994) and expressed commitment to equity and equal opportunity through the development of non-sexist programs (Gilbert, 1996).

In 1987 the Commonwealth Schools Commission released *The National Policy for the Education of Girls,* in response to research that indicated that girls' educational needs were not being met through equal opportunity approaches (Gilbert, 1996). The national policy had four objectives:

- raising awareness of the educational needs of girls
- equal access to participation in appropriate curriculum
- supportive school environment
- equitable resource allocation.

The national policy coupled with three NSW Department of Education reviews in relation to the education of girls resulted in the development of a new policy, the *Girls' Education Strategy* (NSW Department of Education, 1989). Three action plans formed the basis of this new policy, namely encouraging girls into technology, expanding girls' career options and supporting girls as learners. Whilst NSW followed the national direction by developing a policy that paid attention to the needs of girls, it is interesting to note that the national

policy had a somewhat wider basis for action including a focus on girls from various social backgrounds, the reduction of sexual harassment, affirmation of female experiences and equality of educational outcomes (Taylor, Rizvi, Lingard &Henry, 1997).

The National Policy for the Education of Girls in Australian Schools was reviewed in 1991 and it was recommended that the policy continue but that it be reframed as a national action plan. The result was the *National Action Plan for the Education of Girls 1993-1997* (Curriculum Corporation, 1993) which had the following priorities:

- examining the construction of gender
- broadening work education
- improving teaching practice
- addressing the needs of girls at risk
- eliminating sex-based harassment
- changing school organisation practices
- improving the educational outcomes of girls who benefit least from schooling
- reforming the curriculum.

With the inclusion of a focus on the construction of gender, the national action plan made a clear case for the need to focus on the attitudes of men, boys and the media towards girls and women in order to improve the educational outcomes of girls (Gilbert, 1996).

Following the release of the national action plan, three further factors contributed to the direction of gender equity policy in NSW. Firstly, an evaluation of the *Girls' Education Strategy* in 1994 revealed that girls' educational experiences had improved in the areas of academic outcomes, school retention and participation and subject choices. However, the evaluation also indicated that the strategy had not impacted significantly on teaching and learning (Beckett, 2001). It was acknowledged that there had been limited training and development opportunities provided for teachers to implement the policy.

Secondly, a NSW Ministerial Advisory Committee into boys' education was held in 1994. The subsequent discussion paper recommended the development of a gender equity strategy which acknowledged the educational needs of boys whilst continuing to build upon the educational gains made by girls.

Finally, a national document, *Gender Equity: A Framework for Australian Schools* (MCEETYA, 1996) was released, providing strategic directions to states and territories to develop their gender equity strategies. The result in NSW was the policy *Girls and Boys at School: Gender Equity Strategy 1996-2001* (DSE, 1996)[8], which aims to:

- address gender as an educational issue across the continuum Pre-school to Year 12 benefit from schooling
- affect the decisions girls and boys make about their present and post-school lives.

Both the national framework and the NSW strategy reveal a change in focus from girls' education to gender equity, situated within a framework of gender as socially constructed. This is clear in the language used within both documents. The national framework has a strong focus on understanding the process of gender construction:

> *The fundamental shifts which have occurred this century about what it means to be female and male show quite clearly that femininity and masculinity are not necessarily inherent categories which pre-exist in each individual. Rather, they are historically and socially constructed and connected categories which are inscribed in social institutions, processes and practices, including those of the school….Research demonstrates that what emerges as maleness or femaleness changes in fundamental ways over time, across cultures and in different socio-economic circumstances. Any approach taken by schools to work for equitable educational experiences and outcomes for girls and boys*

[8] At the time of writing this policy had been extended awaiting a rewriting of the national framework.

> *needs to be built on an informed understanding about how girls and boys come to understand and position themselves as female and male….* (p.24)

The background section of the NSW strategy outlines the definition of gender that underpins this document:

> *Gender can be defined as the social arrangements made to deal with sex differences. A complex range of historical and social factors influence the ways in which girls and women, boys and men experience and express their femininity and masculinity. Current beliefs about feminine and masculine behaviours shape differences in educational and social outcomes for girls and boys. These differences contribute to continuing unequal power relationships between women and men in our society. Societal beliefs about gender , interacting with factors such as ethnicity, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, socio-economic status, sexuality and disability, can be linked to patterns of girls' and boys' participation in education and their post-school outcomes.* (DSE, 1996)

Gilbert (1996) argues that the changes in language across several decades of gender policy in Australia noted above are framed within three periods of focus for girls' education:

- *an initial struggle to achieve equity and access to orders of power and privilege;*
- *a concerted effort to value women's knowledge and experiences, and to integrate them into the curriculum;*
- *a recognition of the construction of "gender", and a commitment to challenge and critique gendered social practices and stereotypes.* (p.11)

This emphasis on language and the changes in focus of the various gender policies is relevant to my study as I sought to make connections with teachers to understandings about gender issues that underpin the current gender equity policy in NSW.

APPENDIX 3