

"A FEMINIST CRITIQUE OF GENDER INCLUSIVE CURRICULUM POLICY IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS FROM 1975 TO 1995"

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Paper Number JOH98301

Australian Association for Research in Education

1998 Annual Conference

Adelaide University

FRONTISPIECE

"There have been significant changes in some classrooms, not much in others".

"It took game people ... It was like riding Daniella into the lion's den ... it was courageous stuff".

"Primary teachers respond very positively to inclusive curriculum ... policy, they don't associate it with feminism ... it's just a part of their framework of equal opportunity".

"It was not quite to the degree we wanted it to be, but it was in the Frameworks documents ... girls were underpinning ... those things ... absolutely".

"We really started ... coming up with a final product".

"I think it's shocking that we're losing ... some of the incredible work that's gone on ... who knows what is happening with Hypatia's Place? ... we've done some ... internationally ground breaking stuff ... that is recognised".

"It was really just starting to happen in primaries. We had such an impact ... made a big difference ... That's not going to happen now. It won't".

"I think some teachers will just keep going ... I don't think they will stop, but those new ones, those really basic ones won't get far ... It's absolutely tragic".

"Perhaps not all is lost".

"We've fought too hard to watch it go under now ... it is a major worry".

ABSTRACT

In this paper I assess the transformative potential of gender inclusive policy for primary practice. I investigate how it is conceptualised and enacted through a case study of interviewed practitioners.

I argue that gender inclusive policy has the transformative potential to motivate school based changes in classroom practice. However in this case the potential was largely unrealised except for those teachers who were already developing gender inclusive practices.

For this transformative potential to be more substantively realised, I claim that policy needs to be conceptualised more comprehensively in relation to primary teaching. In addition, the gender inclusive curriculum needs to be conceptualised in less conservative ways.

However the range of conceptions of gender inclusiveness held by the profession have to be acknowledged. Persisting gender exclusive practices and a gap between policy and practice have to be considered. Most importantly, significant teacher resistance must be taken into account if the transformative potential of gender inclusive policies is to be realised.

INTRODUCTION

This paper is premised on the belief that the gender inclusive curriculum is accorded major policy status by feminists (Foster 1995:21-22; and Henry and Taylor 1993:170). For instance Yates (1993:83-87) notes that all Australian states promulgate the concept of a gender inclusive curriculum in policy terms, while Gilbert and Taylor (1991:3) observe "the 'gender inclusive curriculum' ... has become influential ... in ... official policy documents".

However I also argue (Foster 1984: 124-125 and Clark 1990: passim) that the relevant feminist literature seems insufficiently concerned with feminist theorisation of the implementation phase of policy - even in the field of gender and schooling. In my view failing to come to terms with policy as enacted in schools negates its transformative potential.

Foster (1995:18-19) claims that studies of equal opportunity reception are rare seeing this as a crucial subject for investigation, while Kenway (1990:42-43) describes this as an awesome gap referring to existing policy reviews as "an uneven mixture of description, celebration, advocacy, analysis and criticism". In my opinion Kenway and Modra (1989:3-6) rightly lament that there is "a noticeable absence in the literature... of what it means to be a feminist teacher" and Kenway (1990:41) correctly complains that there is little scholarly sense of how policies on gender are taken up in practice- "very little research has been conducted with regard... to the specific ways in which various staff... respond".

More recently Kenway (1995:59) calls on feminists to analyse how policies are received "when real people in real situations undertake the work of feminist reform in education. How do different individuals and groups respond to such attempts and why do they respond in the ways they do? Which programs for reform gain support and why? Which do not and why? What strategies of resistance do those who oppose such reform adopt?" She (1997:323) asks "what do gender reforming teachers do with government policies for gender reform? What happens when both come into contact with the everyday life of schools? Why do some policies work and others not, on what terms and in what circumstances?"

I respond to these calls by reviewing the gender inclusive curriculum policy and situate this paper in the emerging (Tutcheil 1990; Weiner 1993: 79-100 and Arnot 1993:187) feminist work on policy and gender. In order to sustain the transformative potential of policy I believe it is vital that feminists assess policy assumptions, document policy gains, account for policy

reception and disseminate this information to inform feminist theorisation and future policy development. Therefore, I assert that research in education does count. Educational research can influence educational policy and practice thereby advancing feminist understandings.

Government policy can act as a mechanism for change at the school level. In this way I share (Arnesen 1997:6) a strong belief in the significance of praxis. In my view primary schools can be sites for feminist policy reforms and feminist theorisation. This is in spite of significant concerns about the problematic nature of feminist projects in the mainstream context of policy and schooling.

As implied this paper is framed by a feminist perspective of, although I also recognise that feminist perspectives on theory are multiple in nature- not all of which I share. At the same time I propose that some broad feminist precepts can be delineated.

My fundamental assertion is that feminist theory should also be constituted as a form of feminist politics. For example I argue that gender can function as a key lens for analysis. I also contend that feminist theory should aim to produce emancipatory knowledge and account for resistance to a feminist perspective. Furthermore, this is in spite of the feminist poststructural criticism of the modern feminist project. I respond to such critique by positioning myself as a feminist engaged with the postmodern era.

This feminist perspective of theory prompts two methodological contentions. I contend firstly that the research process is subjective in nature and secondly that the traditional barriers between the researcher and the research subject need to be dismantled (Halasa 1998:3). The specific way that I translate this feminist perspective of methodology is through an interpretation of standpoint methodology.

These methodological understandings are further filtered by me through the idea of lesser falsification (Nixon and Comber 1995). This means that I do not pretend to achieve a non-patriarchal research methodology. Indeed I claim that such a methodology is not yet available.

Within a framework of standpoint methodology I use a feminist perspective of the case study method, defining case studies (Reinharz 1992:164-165) as a method of examining social phenomena via analysis of a specific case. In this case study I am not interested in primary teachers who express disinterest or opposition to gender reform, even though I am convinced that such a case study is worthy of feminist attention.

At the same time this is with the assumption that my case is typical of primary practitioners involved in the conceptualisation and enactment of gender inclusive policies at this time in the state of Victoria. I do have definite theoretical and political interests in offering some generalisations. I also (McLeod and Yates 1997:32) find myself admitting the limits of my evidence whilst simultaneously proposing its significance. This is a point I have dealt with at length through the technique of a data log which reflects on such methodological dilemmas. I acknowledge the limitations of a small group of interviewees as a basis from which to theorise. However I intend my case study material to be seen as indicative and illustrative, rather than conclusive. Yet I claim that this case study is comprised of key figures in this field who are in a good position to validate interview material.

As implied this case study is constructed by the use of interviews. Interviews were semi-structured through the use of open-ended questions (see Appendix One). Interviews were audiotaped and transcribed. Transcripts were verified by interviewees and I amended all transcripts exactly as requested.

This particular group of case study interviewees have significant input into this policy process. Indeed they are selected on this very basis. They all have personal experience of policy formulation at state and/or national level. They are all recognised as major players in this policy sphere. They express considerable commitment to its implementation. Furthermore these interviews are conducted at a time when interviewed practitioners are moving out of an era where their ideas on gender and education were valued to that of a feminist backlash.

Although the use of pseudonyms attempts to disguise the identity of interviewees throughout this paper, the technique of a composite biography is utilised as an additional mechanism to preserve anonymity. This method follows Connell (1990:2) who explains his use of the technique as - "given the rule of confidentiality under which this research was done, we did not feel entitled to print actual biographies, even with names, dates and places changed. Yet as we worked ... it seemed ... important ... to convey in the published report the sense of biography ... As a slightly uneasy compromise I have settled for constructing composite biographies. ... Every detail in them comes from the interviews, but they come ... from more than one. [They] are therefore not real people". In my view, Connell's compromise is appropriate for this study given the incendiary nature of the recorded data. I am aware of the broader political conditions under which this data is made public.

In terms of a composite biography then, what is the professional background of these interviewees? Demographic details show that all interview participants have taught or are still teaching in Victoria. All have been employed by the state government employing authority known as the DOE. Their experience is gained in government schools across the state. Their teaching experience is extensive with the average representing more than 15 years in the classroom. In terms of seniority, all have been involved in some additional administrative responsibilities. All have taken a school based leadership role in gender inclusive curriculum policy developments in Victoria over this time period. All have significant reputations for their recognised expertise in gender inclusive curriculum policy.

In particular most of those interviewed have now left classroom teaching to take up positions as equal opportunity or equal employment opportunity specialists for various education department offices at federal, state and regional levels. For some this has involved working in the state Equal Opportunity Resource Centre and for others at the former Hypatia's Place for the McClintock Collective, whilst others have consulted for TEAC, VCAB and PEP. Experiences include academic appointments at universities, TAFE institutes, teachers colleges and colleges of advanced education. All describe their work as supporting policy implementation through explaining policy initiatives and/or legitimising school based projects.

Another research precedent under these conditions is the use of amalgams (Cooper et al 1994 and Allard et al 1995). All final interviewees are represented here as an amalgam. The decision as to which interviewees could be linked together was done on the basis of identifiable patterns in their interview responses. In particular I considered their conceptions of the gender inclusive curriculum model as this proved the distinctive element in these patterns in practitioner response. As this led in each instance to the combining of 2 or 3 interviewees, this process results in five amalgams [identified as Anita, Caroline, Jemmima, Maria and Elizabeth] in the final report of this research.

PRACTITIONER REVIEW OF THE TRANSFORMATIVE

POTENTIAL OF GENDER INCLUSIVE CURRICULUM POLICIES

My interviewee Anita admits that there has been no formal review of gender inclusive curriculum policy enactment in Victoria. How could this happen, especially given the significance of this policy platform for educational research and practice? In whose interest is this?

In this paper I identify case study results by assessing the transformative potential of gender inclusive policy in the light of practitioner's perceptions of policy enactment. I ask how significant are they as policy developments? What effects do these policies have in Victorian primary schools? In this way I review the perceived gains and losses of the gender inclusive policy platform based on the standpoint of these practitioners in the policy process.

In broad terms interviewees say gender inclusive policy has transformative impact. My interviewee Maria makes the important point that in the current policy era when transformative gains are especially vulnerable, it is important not to lose sight of positive foundations in order to build on established success. Indeed this case study shows what is possible with policy. In other words a major finding of this research is that gender inclusive curriculum policy has transformative potential which can be realised.

Interviewees are prepared to state that in general this policy platform has been good for all children in Victorian primary schools. Jemmima typifies this view. She thinks that the inclusive curriculum benefits children from disadvantaged and ethnic backgrounds, as much as it benefits both sexes.

Maria is more confident of gender inclusive policies having broader transformative impact- "things have changed... the planning certainly changed... I think language did change... schools changed" {p.7}iii. But Jemmima's mixed response is perhaps the most indicative of this case study - "It was quite amazing... Principals... had to address equal opportunity issues... This may have been tokenistic in many cases... but... it had a significant effect" {p.7} and policy "can be effective if it is seen to be taken seriously" {p.6} and "I think there has been change but not as much as I would have expected or liked in some ways. There have been significant changes in some classrooms, not much in others" {p.8}.

Interviewees identify the transformative impact of these policies as especially evident early in this time period. Anita for example suggests that the lack of state policy in the early days highlights the value of policy for systemic impact.

In the minds of interviewees these policies stimulate more significant school based change than otherwise possible for teachers who are already engaged in transformative projects. They say that this is through the provision of a mandate. These interviewees emphasise how much such teachers appreciated the provision of professional development programs and the positive networking between schools which ensued.

This is an important finding of this case study. It shows some change is possible. It is evidence that gender inclusive policy has transformative potential which can be realised as transformative impact. It recognises the symbolic worth of government policy for gender reformers in the schools. According to these practitioners gender inclusive policy means external credibility and endorsement for these pioneers- vindication of their attempts to implement gender reform and credence to feminist teaching interventions such as classroom monitoring. For example Anita notes that "policy was critical, because... if nothing else there

was something on paper that committed teachers could say we're supposed to do this" {p.12}.

Furthermore they stipulate that a prescriptive interpretation of gender inclusive policy is critical to this transformative impact. Caroline observes principals of what she describes as exemplary schools presenting government gender inclusive policy as mandatory and couples this with significant transformation - "policy underpinned everything they did... they were on the next stage, so they had in place the policy... I had fairly forthright principals saying to me the policies are there, teachers should... toe the line or they don't make it here" {p.5}.

Elizabeth concurs - "it became apparent that all schools had to have an equal opportunity policy in place by the end of term one in 1993 ... it did more than the bit of paper. It made teachers think that they might be exclusive ... whenever a policy is ... going to be written they want everyone to be in on it so they've got ownership of it ... that might have been part of the government's plan, that they thought if they get the paperwork done. They've all got to be involved and it worked" {p.3} and "policy did legitimate our work ... it did legitimize it" {p.4}. Like many in this sample for Maria it is the absence of a current state policy mandate which helps her in retrospect see its transformative value.

At the same time, it is also true that interviewees qualify these comments. They say that the extent to which the transformative potential of these policies is realised varies substantively across the profession. Elizabeth summarises the key point that any transformative impact is far from widespread - "I think it was much more on an individual and ad hoc basis" {p.4}. The sense of gender inclusive curriculum policy being taken up by primary schools differentially across the state is a common point. Jemmima and Caroline exemplify this doubt. They argue that the transformative impact of these policies is not evident not across the state. They especially cite serious problems in country Victoria.

According to these practitioners then, there is limited impact on a system wide basis. Indeed, this case study does not offer widespread evidence of transformation. In the minds of these interviewees this policy has different effects on different groups. This represents a major finding of this study. According to these interviewees any gains are not universal. The nature of change in this case study is sporadic - certainly not incremental or systematic. Sadly, the balance of this research indicates that much of primary schooling in Victoria remains gender exclusive despite two decades of policy reform.

These interviewees certainly decide that transformative impact is not maintained to the same degree as early in this time period. They do not ever say that gender inclusive policies have transformative impact without making this substantive qualification. Thus they contrast early policy successes with later conservative policy shifts.

Maria and Caroline make an important point here. Firstly Maria argues that the transformative potential of gender inclusive policies had yet to be fully realised when the conservative policy shift came with the change in state government. In other words, Maria points to how short is the truly transformative policy era. As such she sees that the gender inclusive curriculum model has unrealised transformative potential in policy terms. Similarly Caroline concludes that while the curriculum was certainly not transformed there has been transformative progress since 1975. Caroline is sure that some primary teachers were moving beyond deconstructing gender exclusive practice to implementing gender inclusive policy. Caroline maintains that the gender inclusive curriculum model is still a potentially transformative policy solution.

In particular, interviewees speak of a gap between policy rhetoric and classroom practice facilitated by the recent policy shift in conceptualisation. Interviewees explicitly discuss the consequences of this recent conservative policy shift on the transformative potential of gender inclusive policies. They specifically argue that with the election of the Liberal party in Victoria gender inclusive curriculum policies are reduced to the level of rhetoric. Elizabeth for instance claims current rhetoric represents no more than resiling from a public declaration of hostility to the gender inclusive curriculum model - in other words it does not declare commitment to gender inclusiveness and it does not explicitly reject gender exclusiveness.

In a significant finding of this case study, practitioners specify that this shift exacerbates an existent gap between policy and practice. Although they describe this gap as aggravated by the recent conservative policy shift, they also say that a gap has been evident since 1975. Moreover it causes them to question the transformative impact of gender inclusive policies.

Jemmima exemplifies this by directly questioning the transformative potential of this policy on the basis of this gap - "the average teacher in the average school ... I even think we still need to be a bit more basic ... this is really new ... for still a lot of people ... A lot of them are at a very basic level. A couple of times we tried to do things more advanced like writing a gender inclusive curriculum unit ... and they found that really hard, really really hard, they were stuck, they couldn't do it {p.5-6} and "the rhetoric would be that gender is mainstreamed. The reality is that it is not" {p.3}.

In particular, practitioners observe that policy becomes a problem for primary teachers at the point of implementation. According to these practitioners it is at this slippery point of enactment when teacher lip service to policy rhetoric frequently gives way to this identifiable gap.

While a brief experience of gender inclusive policy mandate is lauded by these practitioners, their overwhelming emphasis is on the perception of sustained rhetorical commitments in policy rather than an active commitment to realising transformative potential via policy enactment. Furthermore, interviewees imply that the immediate concerns of primary teaching often govern classroom practice thereby overriding radical intentions. Thus even though teachers may well state policy principles, in reality a gap with practice emerges. These interviews show that perhaps at best gender inclusive policy manages to get the rhetoric of equal opportunity accepted in primary schools.

Nevertheless interviewees go beyond suggesting a superficial gap between policy and practice. After more than 20 years of gender inclusive curriculum policies they observe that gender exclusive practices are still evident in Victorian primary schools. Admittedly in some ways this challenges the notion that these policies have transformative impact.

Anita for instance acknowledges the persistence of a gender exclusive curriculum. She describes unreported sexual harassment of female pupils and female teachers by male pupils. She also notes the use of female pupils by male teachers as "civilisers" {p.4}. In addition she knows primary schools where girls seek refuge in the toilets - "it was disgusting" {p.5}. Anita even knows of primary teachers who believe girls provoke sexual harassment - "bitches ... girls ask for this" {p.7}.

Practitioners explicitly question policy efficacy on the basis of persisting gender exclusions. The main way that they consider this is in relation to significant teacher resistance to government gender inclusive policies. In fact they discuss this resistance in considerable detail throughout the course of these interviews. It causes them to question the transformative impact of these policies.

For example Jemmima is typical in her observation that resistance in the primary profession is widespread - "the vast majority of primary teachers, in my opinion, did not understand it, didn't want to know about it, or treated it as a bad joke" {p.3} and "a lot don't take any notice of policy and have no intention of" {p.6}. Jemmima admits that "I hated it ... They were misogynist ... a lot of conservatism ... I had been very happy in equal opportunity but when you couldn't do it, it made it seem all the more important ... it was just highly conservative" {p.1-2} and "they hated it ... I said look there's policy ... and they would just ignore it and said we treat everyone equally in this school ... They didn't even resist ... as much as ignore it ... It was ... we don't need policy on it, we don't need to do anything ... We treat everyone equally ... Some of the blokes were taking the mickey out of me, because they could see it ... They would come in and put up a poster on boys ... Not at all subtle" {p.2}.

Caroline also describes the extent of the hostility embedded in such resistance - "there were problems ... you constantly have those battles" {p.3} and "there was no automatic assumption that all of the things ... needed to be taken seriously" {p.5} . She remembers the angry response to her first in-service - "I had a half an hour ... they were ... very conservative ... there might have been four interested people out of a staff of 70 and ... you would get talked down ... you would get a group of staff who would just make it their business to put you down and ... rattle papers and ... talk very loudly about how they would much rather be going home and cooking tea for their husbands than listening to this bullshit ... I had some bloody awful ones" {p.3}.

Elizabeth also expresses disappointment - "they didn't really see that .. our school had a problem in the area. They knew we didn't have the paperwork, but they didn't think it was really a problem ... it was just a lack of awareness of the issues ... you know, 'I don't do anything sexist in my class' ... they weren't aware {p.3} and "some of them were defensive ... saying well I wouldn't do that" {p.4}.

CONCLUSIONS

In many ways teacher resistance to gender inclusive policies represents the dominant concern of these interviewees. Participants characterise the average primary teacher as resistant to gender inclusive policy principles. In the end, this means that the weight of their review of gender inclusive curriculum policy enactment is pessimistic.

Yet these transcripts also reinforce claims in the academic literature (Johnson 1990:17) which describe the transformative impact of gender inclusive policies such as Tsolidis' (1993:47) citation of the transformative impact of *Girls, Schools and Society* (1975) as creating a policy shift at the federal level from equal opportunity to an inclusive approach and Kenway's (1997:332) more recent suggestion that "despite new and hard times some things remain to celebrate".

Nevertheless, when these practitioners assessed policy enactment for transformative potential they all qualify their responses. They point to the ways that teachers are not homogeneous in their engagement with this policy sphere. They all say that the transformative impact varies across the profession. This is an important finding. It means that feminists cannot imagine that the whole profession is ever at the same point in transformation. This case implies that it is highly simplistic to do so.

At the very least this research suggests that change in this policy arena is characterised by various states of uncertainty or hopefulness. Interviewees certainly caution against policy materials suggesting that much can be achieved either easily or quickly. According to these findings a more accurate point to make is that while policy materials can and should be hopeful, change is difficult to achieve in practice in primary schools.

There is virtually no feminist policy debate on policy impact as varying across the primary teaching profession, although Yates (1987:350) hypothesises that transformative impact would most likely vary given "the diversity of contexts of different schools in the state". However this case study actually shows the mixed result in terms of transformative impact across the primary profession that Yates seems to be suggesting here.

I contend that by outlining how this policy fails to translate to broad curriculum reform, I can nevertheless point to transformative directions for subsequent theorisation and policy development. My thinking here is located with Kenway's (1995:77) contention that gender reforms will not realise their transformative potential until oppositional behaviour is understood.

On the basis of this case study I conclude that the transformative potential of this policy platform is severely limited by the recent conservative policy shift. This is not mere slippage between policy rhetoric and practice. Based on these interviews I believe that conservative elements are manipulating and distorting the policy agenda.

However I think that the most important finding of this paper is the extent of teacher resistance to this policy platform revealed by these interviews. My initial proposition that policy has transformative potential but that its implementation in the mainstream is problematic has been borne out.

I present considerable evidence of teacher resistance. I must admit that the degree of resistance surprises me and the fact that teachers are perceived by these practitioners as the main form of resistance surprises me too. However attention by me to primary teacher resistance in such detail does not imply that my other arguments about the transformative impact of policy for primary teachers already working in this field are unfounded. Rather, it reflects my overall conclusion that primary teachers are not homogenous in their engagement with gender inclusive reform.

My analysis reveals the urgent need for sophisticated feminist theorising of teacher resistance. There is a serious lack of engagement with teacher resistance in the feminist literature. This suggests that accounting for resistance in emancipatory ways is a crucial step in transformation. As noted "clearly, there is a lot of theoretically informed empirical work to be done" (Kenway 1995:77).

The degree of described hostility and the fact that it is not isolated is a clear indictment of two decades of attempted policy reform. Yet in the academic literature there are only a few discussions of teacher resistance; especially compared with the weight of the resistance described in these interviews and given their undoubted impact on the transformative potential of gender policy reforms. Kenway (1997:335) suggests that "anecdotal evidence showed that ideas for gender reform encountered some considerable resistance from many teachers. It also showed the good information, goodwill and good intentions were not enough". While I definitely agree with Kenway, this case study actually begins to establish evidence of teacher resistance beyond the anecdotal.

It is true that feminists in the academic literature (Kenway and Willis with Blackmore and Rennie 1997) are now beginning to consider the general matter of resistance to feminist policy agendas - although this does not substantively relate to the gender inclusive curriculum model. However such attention is typically preoccupied with pupil resistance (especially secondary girls) whereas my practitioners said pupil resistance is not really a problem in primary schools. In fact they barely mention pupil resistance at all throughout these interviews.

My way of thinking about resistance applies the watershed thinking of Anyon (1983:19-37) on the reception of gender reform. If this case study is in any way indicative it means that work in the vein of Anyon's incisive theorisation is still desperately needed today. Essentially, Anyon's arguments suggest that reception is not a matter of pure rejection or pure acceptance, but rather a complex and simultaneous mixture of both accommodation and resistance to the feminist message in government policies.

My reading of this case study verifies Anyon's propositions. In this instance primary teachers do not receive sexist or feminist messages in simplistic ways, but rather engage with and reconstruct both messages. Complete accommodation or complete resistance is not found in this investigation. Gender reform is not passively internalised by primary teachers. Instead it is actively negotiated. In fact my conclusion suggests that feminists must come to terms with how these policy agendas are experienced as oppressive. Indeed based on these interviews, the gender inclusive policy agenda generates resistance in the primary sector to the very feminist principles which it presumably seeks to uphold. Thus, feminist research must consider how primary teachers both resist and accommodate policy. Feminist efforts in primary schools is proven here to be a more difficult problem than the mere insertion of policies; even if this simplicity is implied in the policy literature.

In a positive light this case study also contributes to the knowledge base of teacher resistance. Firstly it illuminates the nature of teacher resistance and secondly it establishes some explanations for this resistance.

My intention in this paper is to highlight what is optimistic, hopeful and useful - in particular what can withstand contest in the mainstream. Any problems that are charted are done with the sole aim (Hurtado1996:xii) of enhancing the transformative potential of this particular gender reform. Thus my feminist critique is meant to enable rather than disable the transformative potential of gender inclusive curriculum policy.

Ultimately I answer my research question which asks how is the gender inclusive curriculum enacted in terms of whether it stimulated school based change, by answering that practitioner assessment does evidence some transformative potential. I can also state that in the specific sense of enabling teachers already working in the field of gender reform, policy enactment does demonstrate transformative impact through the provision of a mandate.

At the same time I need to foreground at the very least, a mixed response to this research question. This case study does not deliver a unilateral finding across the primary profession.

My conclusion is that these policies are read by the primary profession as disruptive when mainstreaming is attempted. The results of the case study suggest that gender inclusive curriculum policy is not perhaps as transformative as I first envisaged. Realising its transformative potential as impact has proven more difficult than I understood when I began this investigation. Nevertheless, I would still maintain that it is also this policy platform which wrought some transformative impact in the mainstream context of primary schooling - even if this is less than expected and certainly less than desired.

At the outset of this paper I recognised that there are no certainties as to how policy will be enacted. There are never going to be any guarantees that any aspect of transformative potential will be realised. This paper underscores the veracity of this optimistic but tentative concept of transformation in the form of policy in the mainstream as having guaranteed potential - but not guaranteed impact. This is not the same as denying that this potential never translates to impact. On the contrary, this paper points to the significant but latent transformative possibilities of this model.

I am certainly not suggesting that feminists abandon the policy process as a vehicle for transformative reform in the mainstream context on the basis of this research. Rather, I am suggesting that there exists an urgent need for improving the ways that feminists go about this work. In particular I do not suggest abandoning gender inclusive curriculum policy for Victorian primary schools based on these conclusions. What I have suggested however is that feminists significantly rethink the way that the gender inclusive curriculum policy process should be constructed.

CORRESPONDENCE

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

An earlier more extensive version of this paper may be found in Johnson, E., (1998) A Feminist Critique of Gender Inclusive Curriculum Policy in Victorian Primary Schools from 1975 to 1995, Ph.D unpublished thesis, Monash University.

I would like to acknowledge the enduring support of my supervisor Dr. Georgina Tsolidis.

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APPENDIX ONE

1. What are your general experiences of primary teaching in Victoria?
2. What is your understanding of the gender inclusive curriculum?
3. Why do you believe state gender inclusive curriculum policies are significant for Victorian primary schools from 1975 to 1995?
4. How do you believe Victorian primary teachers respond to state gender inclusive curriculum policies from 1975 to 1995?
5. Describe your experience of implementing gender inclusive curriculum policies in Victorian primary schools from 1975 to 1995.
6. How successful do you believe gender inclusive curriculum policies have been in Victorian primary schools from 1975 to 1995?
7. What do you believe influences gender inclusive curriculum policies in Victorian primary schools from 1975 to 1995?
8. How do your perceptions of gender inclusive curriculum policies in Victorian primary schools change in the time period 1975 to 1995?
9. Do you have any further comments?

ACRONYMS

DOE = Department of Education

DSE = Directorate of Schools Education

PEP = Participation and Equity Program

TAFE = Technical and Further Education

TEAC = Transition Education Advisory Committee

VCAB = Victorian Curriculum Advisory Board

i Interviews were conducted between November 1994 and February 1995

ii Potential interviewees were nominated by a network of feminist educators. I stopped this nomination and invitation process when I started to get repeat nominations and repetition of interview material. After the conduct of 17 interviews which elicited over 100,000 words of interview transcriptions the process was stopped.

iii All interview quotations come directly verbatim from interview transcripts. The symbols { } refer to the page number in the transcript of that particular interview.

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