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## The effect of equal employment opportunity policies on the promotion of women to the position of school principal in the Western Australian government school system (1985-1991)

Jacquie Hutchinson  
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THE EFFECT OF EQUAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY POLICIES ON THE  
PROMOTION OF WOMEN TO THE POSITION OF SCHOOL PRINCIPAL IN  
THE WESTERN AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT SCHOOL SYSTEM (1985-1991)

by

JACQUIE HUTCHINSON

B.Ed., Dip. Teach, M. Ed (Prelim.)

A Thesis submitted in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements  
for the Award of Master of Education at the Faculty of  
Education, Edith Cowan University.

Date of Submission: July 1992

## USE OF THESIS

The Use of Thesis statement is not included in this version of the thesis.

## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to analyse and explain the effect of the introduction of equal employment opportunity policy on the Ministry of Education with reference to the promotion of women teachers to the position of principal during the period 1985 to 1991.

This research represents a case study of the Western Australian government primary and secondary school system conducted through a review of relevant government and Ministry of Education policies, analysis of employment statistics and interviews with key policy actors. Four questions which directed the research sought a conceptual framework through which to analyse and explain events, policies and outcomes.


The study claims that while there existed an expectation amongst women teachers that equal employment opportunity would increase the number of women principals by removing both the direct and indirect barriers that prevented their promotion, there is no evidence that this was ever the intention of either the Ministry of Education or the Western Australian State Labor government.

The evidence from this study suggests that equal employment opportunity policies have continued the subordination of women in the State government school system by the subsuming of their interests by more powerful forces of an economic, administrative and political kind both internal and external to the State government school system. Whilst in the past the barriers to promotion for women were formal, direct and visible, the application of equal employment opportunity has created a cloak of invisibility to the forces that operate against the promotion of women within the State government school system.

The implications of this study are firstly that unless there is some external intervention the numbers of women principals will continue to decline. Secondly until women teachers achieve political power, the likelihood of changing the current culture of the Western Australian government school system to ensure that women are promoted to the position of principal, is remote.

DECLARATION

I certify that this thesis does not incorporate, without acknowledgement, any material previously submitted for a degree or diploma in any institution of higher education and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it does not contain any material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the text.



---

Jacqueline Sue Hutchinson

July 1992

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## PART ONE

## INTRODUCTION AND LITERATURE REVIEW

## CHAPTER ONE

1.1 OVERVIEW

The State school system in Western Australia, like those in other Australian states and many other Western countries, has been characterised by having very few women teachers at the level of school principal. Many of the formal regulations that have governed the employment of teachers in Western Australia have discriminated against women and prevented them from gaining promotion (Hutchinson, 1981; Porter, 1985).

Following the election of a State Labor government in 1983, a range of administrative reforms were introduced to the public sector that emphasised employment practices based on the principle of merit. The rationale for this reform, contained in a government white paper "Managing Change in the Public Sector" (Burke, 1986), was reminiscent of similar Labor Party policies throughout Australia (Yeatman, 1990).

The introduction of merit-based employment policies within the Western Australian public sector was complemented by the

enactment of the Equal Opportunity Act (WA) 1984. This legislation required all public sector departments to both remove barriers that directly discriminated against women and to develop policies that would assist women in gaining employment comparable to their male colleagues.

These policy and legislative changes created an expectation, particularly amongst women employed in the public sector, that all government departments, including the Ministry of Education, would be compelled to identify and address inherent organisational sex bias and ensure a more equitable redistribution of power between women and men.

In 1991, six years after the legislation took effect, the statistical data available from the Ministry of Education indicates little improvement in the promotion of women. There is every reason to believe, based on the experiences elsewhere in Australia, that the implementation of equal employment opportunity policies may contribute to a decline in the promotion of women teachers to the position of principal. (Chapman, 1985; Sampson, 1987; Randall, 1990; 1987a).

The purpose of this study is to understand why this problem exists and to provide an analysis of the forces which have shaped the Ministry of Education's equal employment opportunity policies.

## 1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

In response to the Equal Employment Act (WA) 1984, the Ministry of Education developed a number of major policies to improve the employment opportunities of women. This study will concentrate on three of these policies that directly relate to the promotion of women to the position of school principal:

- \* merit promotion; (1985-1991)
- \* Equal Employment Opportunity Management Plan (1988);
- \* Equal Opportunity Act exemption (1987-1992).

With the introduction of these policies, came an expectation that there would be a major increase in the number of women school principals. However, while in 1985 women held 3.8% of school principal positions, by 1991, women still only represented 10.1% of school principals (Schools and Staffing, 1985, 1991). This increase is hardly significant given the low base rate against which the percentage increase is calculated.

Given that women still constitute approximately 70% of the teaching force, that the discriminatory regulatory barriers disadvantaging women have been removed, that a pool exists of equal numbers of men and women eligible to apply for

promotion to principal, and that Commonwealth and State legislation now makes discrimination against women in employment unlawful, the minimal increase in the percentage of women at principal level, raises some critical questions about the power of the Government's equal employment opportunity policies and the nature of the Ministry of Education's commitment to those policies as a means of increasing the number of women principals.

The purpose of this study is to focus on the forces that influenced the development and shape of the Ministry of Education's equal employment opportunity policies and their implications for the increased promotion of women to the position of principal.

### 1.3 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The questions which gave direction to the analyses within this study were:

- (i) Was the Ministry of Education's response to the Equal Opportunity Act (1984) influenced by Government administrative policies contained in "Managing Change in the Public Sector" (1986)?

- (ii) Were the Ministry of Education's equal employment opportunity policies shaped by research on barriers to women's promotion that was available from overseas and other Australian states?
- (iii) What other forces may have shaped the Ministry's response to equal employment opportunity legislation?
- (iv) Have government policies in respect to equal employment opportunity changed the traditionally subordinate position of women within the government education system?

The purpose of forming the research questions was to focus on a number of major influences on the promotion of women to the position of school principal. This study concentrates on the relationship between the Ministry of Education's equal employment opportunity policies and the factors of:

- \* Western Australian government equal employment opportunity policies;
- \* barriers preventing the promotion of women;
- \* Ministry of Education commitment to increasing the number of women principals.

In order to consider these three influences, the researcher chose to adopt a naturalistic research methodology. This approach would allow for qualitative strategies to focus on the actions and perceptions of individuals and groups within the policy process. As well the study used quantitative techniques to provide a more comprehensive view of the problem. (Guba, 1977; Morgan and Smircich, 1980; Wilson, 1977). Data collection procedures involved interviews with policy actors, review of relevant policy documents and the analysis of employment statistics.

#### 1.4 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The employment policies and practices of the public sector have profound implications for the working conditions of the general Australian community. As well as representing the largest employer overall, at both Commonwealth and the State levels, governments are the largest industrial enterprises in the nation, offering a much wider range of professional, skilled and unskilled positions than are to be found in the private sector.

The effect of government equal employment opportunity policies on improving the employment status of women in the public sector directly influences the position of women in the private sector.

Ministry of Education personnel, government representatives and women teachers have indicated that this study will contribute significant understandings of these issues. Furthermore, in 1992, the Ministry of Education will be required to formally report to the Western Australian Equal Opportunity Commission on the effect of equal employment policies on the promotion of women to the position of school principal. Therefore, it is timely that there is some consideration of the effect of the Ministry of Education's policies on the promotion of women in the Western Australian government school system.

#### 1.5 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Equal employment opportunity policies and legislation are relatively recent reforms not only within Australia, but also internationally. In Australia, Commonwealth legislation has only been in effect for six years as has the State Equal Opportunity Act (WA) 1984.

Consequently, there is only a limited amount of literature that relates directly to equal employment opportunity policies in general and equal employment opportunity in education in particular. The short time frame has also meant that data regarding the outcomes of equal employment opportunity policies remain minimal. Consequently, conclusions from available data were arrived at with caution.

Given the recency of the events and the continued prominence of some of the key policy actors, there was reluctance on the part of some interviewees to disclose certain information, particularly personal opinions and knowledge of government policy. Further, some Ministry of Education employees who were interviewed expressed concern that, in spite of assured anonymity, their identities may be easily recognised.

To address this problem, the researcher gave a formal undertaking to each interviewee that their right to privacy, confidentiality and anonymity would be respected.

Agreements were made that any direct use of comments within the study was dependant on the interviewee's approval.

## 1.6 STRUCTURE OF THE DISSERTATION

There are three parts to this dissertation. Part I comprises five further chapters. Chapters Two to Six concentrate on the literature through which the conceptual framework for this research was developed. Chapter Two considers the acknowledged barriers to women teachers achieving promotion to the position of school principal within Australia and particularly in Western Australia. Chapter Three provides definitions for key concepts surrounding equal employment opportunity policies. Chapter Four examines the relationship that has emerged within the Australian political context during the past twenty years



between government policies on equal employment opportunity and public sector reform. Chapter Five describes through the use of historical and political perspectives, the effect of Australian government policies on the employment of women and the role played by women in influencing the development of equal employment opportunity policies. Chapter Six provides conclusions drawn from the review of the literature and suggests themes that have emerged as important in developing a conceptual framework for this research.

Part II comprises two chapters and concentrates on the research methodology adopted in this study. Chapter Seven highlights the rationale for the particular methodology used and Chapter Eight details its application to the collection and analysis of the research data.

Part III comprises Chapters Nine to Thirteen and provides discussion of the research findings within the framework developed from the review of the literature and the four questions that directed the analyses for this study.

Chapter Nine describes the relationship between the Western Australian State government's approach to equal employment opportunity and reform within the public sector. Chapter Ten concentrates on the relationship between State government policies and the equal employment opportunity policies of the Ministry of Education. Chapter Eleven considers the effect that merit promotion has had on

removing the barriers to the promotion of women to the position of school principal. Chapter Twelve investigates forces internal to the Western Australian government school sector that shaped the Ministry of Education's approach to equal employment opportunity policies.

Chapter Thirteen contains a summary of the study, draws conclusions about the questions which guided it and discusses the implications of these conclusions.

## CHAPTER TWO

BARRIERS TO THE PROMOTION OF WOMEN TEACHERS

The purpose of this chapter is to examine the promotion of women teachers in Western Australia and other Australian states and to identify from the research literature the barriers to women achieving the position of school principal.

2.1 AN AUSTRALIAN PROFILE

While teaching has provided one of the few skilled, semi-professional occupations open to women, the participation of women has been restricted to a narrow set of roles that largely reflect those that are to be found within the stereotyped nuclear family. In most areas of teaching women outnumber their male counterparts yet the vast majority of women teachers have historically been relegated to positions of lower status (Deem, 1976; Spender, 1983; Sobski, 1982; Porter, 1983; O'Donnell and Hall, 1988).

The lack of promotion for women teachers has been the focus of extensive research in both North America (Lightfoot, 1978; Wolpe, 1978; Schmuck, 1980; Acker, 1989) and Australia (Trotman, 1980; Porter, 1986; Chapman, 1986; Sampson, 1981; Sampson 1987, 1987a; Randell, 1990).

In 1983, two significant studies were undertaken by Chapman (1984) which profiled Australian school principals on the basis of personal and professional characteristics, and the procedures used in their appointment. The study revealed that only 23% of Australian school principals were women, many of these being women in Catholic primary schools. In the Government school sector, only 15% of primary school principals were women, while only 9% of secondary principals were women.

Other research findings indicate that the number of women in education management positions has been declining.

Bretherton (1987, p. 26) reports that in Victoria where women constitute approximately 70% of the teaching workforce, they held just over one-third of the most senior positions in 1973, but by 1983 this had fallen to less than 20%.

In Queensland, where 70% of teachers are women, they occupy only 8.5% of senior positions within the Ministry of Education (Ministry of Education, 1990). In Tasmania it became policy in 1987 that at least one leadership position in every school was held by a women, with women filling responsibility allowance positions to the level of 40% (Randell, 1990 p.7).

Very little literature specifically regarding the promotion of women teachers or women principals in Western Australia is available. Porter (1986) describes in general terms the position of women employed within the Western Australian education system, but there is almost no literature that focusses on the relationship between the education system's employment policies and the promotion of women to the position of principal.

Hutchinson (1981) and Loudon (1984) describe particular employment practices that have historically discriminated against women teachers achieving the position of principal. Both papers conclude that the Ministry of Education's (formerly the Education Department) employment policies and practices discriminated against women and resulted in women constituting a minority in all promotional positions, other than those defined by gender.

Until recently, the cornerstone of promotion in the Western Australian school system has been the application of the principle of seniority. Seniority refers to the total length of uninterrupted service as a permanent employee. Particularly significant was the length of service in promotional positions. Until 1985, the seniority principle had been the single major structural barrier to women teachers seeking promotion to the position of principal.

Hutchinson (1981) outlines some of the specific employment regulations that disadvantaged women. Prior to 1969, women were largely denied access to permanent status. If they married and were members of the permanent staff they were required by regulation to resign. If they wished to continue to teach their status reverted to that of temporary standing. The result of these policies was that women automatically lost their permanent service record, despite the fact that they may have continued to teach. Women's employment may have remained continuous, but not their permanent status.

This meant that women were generally unable to demonstrate comparable seniority with their male colleagues and therefore were unable to successfully compete for promotion to the non-sex linked positions including that of principal. Also many women were ineligible to even apply for promotion because of their temporary status. The majority of women in the sex-linked deputy principal positions were ineligible to hold these positions substantively because of their temporary status, and therefore because of the lack of women on permanent staff, these positions were held in an acting capacity. However, as Hutchinson (1981, p.52) points out, the removal of the 'resignation on marriage' regulation in 1969 did not result in increased numbers of women in principal positions. For while women no longer had to resign on marriage, those who

had been affected by this regulation were not permitted to count their past service. Consequently most men were able to cite significantly greater seniority than could women. Seniority remained until 1985, the single most significant factor in the promotion system and the number one barrier to women seeking and gaining promotion.

During the past ten years, much Australian research has focussed on the situation where although women are no longer prevented from applying for promotion and seniority has been replaced by merit as the most important factor affecting promotion, the level of women's representation at senior levels including principal is minimal and in some instances, declining. Two possible interpretations might be made. The first is that women are less able and/or capable of being principals. The second is that there still remains significant barriers that impede the progress of women. (Bryce, 1985; Nash and Sungailia, 1985; Sampson, 1983, 1987, 1987a).

Studies by Chapman (1984) and Sampson (1987, 1987a), examine in some detail, the perceptions of women as leaders and characteristics inherent within the educational bureaucracy that persistently discriminate against women. This research reinforces much of the earlier literature with certain barriers emerging consistently as limiting the promotion of women teachers to the position of school principal.

## 2.2 IDENTIFIED BARRIERS

### 2.2.1 Social Roles

Traditional socially designated sex roles predetermine that men are more likely to be considered to have the qualities necessary for leadership positions, while women are more suited to follow or take direction (Conoley, 1980; Nash and Sungailia, 1985). Randell (1990, p. 13) cites Stephanou-Haag who observes,

"Stereotyped assumptions about what makes a good strong manager are incompatible with what makes a good (soft warm) woman."

Research by Sampson (1987a) across all Australian states including Western Australia, indicates that the social role of women is still a very powerful contributor to women's placement within the teaching workforce, both in terms of the type of work that they undertake and the constraints placed upon them by commitments to their family designated roles.

### 2.2.2 Family Responsibilities

The family responsibilities of women often result in time-out from the workforce for child bearing and parenting. Despite the introduction of maternity leave, research indicates that



broken or interrupted service for family reasons is perceived as indicating a lack of professional commitment and therefore militates against the advancement of women (Harper, 1987; Allen, 1990; Randell, 1990). Also, because many professional activities are organised outside the usual working day, women are unable to attend because of family commitments.

While perhaps aspiring to leadership roles, women are unable to explore promotion because of increased responsibilities and duties, either real or perceived, that they associate with promotion. Men, however, are generally not encumbered by the same family or domestic ties and responsibilities, including child rearing and housework, as are women (Sampson, 1987, 1987a).

A significant factor in promotion within the Western Australian education system is that of geographic mobility. First and second level promotions in both the primary and secondary divisions are predominantly outside the metropolitan area. Because of their family roles women are less likely than their male colleagues to be able to nominate State-wide availability for promotion. This situation is further compounded by the secondary nature of a woman's career in relation to that of her male partner (Sampson, 1987, 1987a).

### 2.2.3 Women's Attitudes

Research also indicates that women are prone to undervalue their skills and experience when contemplating promotion to management positions. They identify their achievement as being the result of circumstances or other people's intervention (Chapman, 1986; Sampson, 1987). Further, many women are denied the opportunity to undertake administrative tasks, discrete from the daily teaching programme, and consequently perceive themselves and are perceived by others, as having little aptitude for management tasks (Sampson, 1987).

The Sampson (1987) study revealed women teachers to be less likely to plan their careers. At the pre-service training stage, women tend not to undertake academic programmes that focus on administration, choosing instead courses that are directly related to classroom teaching. In Western Australia, where a graduate degree (four year training) is a pre-requisite for promotion, the majority of women remain three year trained (Ministry of Education, 1987, Schools and Staffing, 1990).

### 2.2.4 Organisational Culture

The experience of women in the workforce is affected by the way in which organisations, both informally and formally,

are structured, which in turn, influences employment practices. Employment opportunity is very much linked to the design of individual jobs and career structures, the will of senior management to enhance employer security, and the relative representation of both sexes in senior management positions (Kanter, 1975, 1980, 1982). Consequently, these structural factors seriously impede the progress of women to senior positions.

"Masculinity is embedded in the procedure, assumptions, processes and formal rules of contemporary organisations, mainly because it has always been considered to be men's destiny to integrate themselves into this organisational reality" (Tancred-Sheriff, 1988, p.14).

#### 2.2.5 Lack of Mentoring

The absence of mentors in the working lives of women teachers contributes to a lack of confidence in their professional worth and suitability for promotion. Mentoring provides access to the informal structures and cultures of the organisation and provides the individual with an introduction to the internal power relations and identifies them as acceptable to the dominant group. (Kanter, 1977; Randell, 1990). Many women teachers acknowledge the strong

male networks that operate within education and the difficulties they face in finding a similar method of professional sponsorship (Sampson, 1987a; Acker, 1989).

#### 2.2.6 Selection Procedures

Particular promotion and selection policies and procedures are acknowledged as being major barriers to women teachers' promotion. Historically, promotion within Australian states was based on seniority with no reference to the assessment of performance against established selection criteria.

Because of discriminatory service regulations in particular, the majority of women were unable to apply or compete with their male colleagues. The introduction of merit based promotion, has brought with it a range of more indirectly discriminatory practices that militate against women. These include the selection of candidates without advertisement or interview, the failure of the organisation to maintain relevant employment histories and selection data, and the use of all male selection committees (Chapman, 1986; Poiner and Burke, 1988).

#### 2.2.7 Homosociability

The literature highlights the power of the homosociability factor in the selection process (Kanter, 1977). The dominant group within an organisation will actively seek to

recruit those candidates that most resemble the incumbents. Homogeneity is a central value of an organisation's culture which "...manifests itself most dramatically through the phenomenon of homosocial reproduction or cloning" (Thornton, 1982, p. 22). Chapman (1986) reports how selection committees were less likely to appoint women to management positions where they had either experienced an unsuccessful woman manager or had no experience of women administrators. Homosociability results in senior men providing sponsorship for other men by providing information, supplying references, recommending them for wider professional rewards and experiences and introducing them to significant others in the organisation (Randell, 1990).

#### 2.2.8 The Merit Principle

The adoption of merit-based promotion and selection has been on the basis that the concept is without bias. This view has been the focus of considerable criticism during the past ten years, as the application of merit systems have not resulted in a shift in the dominance of men at the senior levels of organisations. Far from being objective, merit is defined by the prevailing values and behaviours within an organisation (Kanter, 1977; Wilenski, 1984; Burton, 1987; 1988). Therefore, in educational organisations, merit for the purposes of promotion to management positions such as principal, is defined by the profile of the current

incumbents. Consequently the selection criteria is based on the values and behaviours of men, since they have traditionally constituted, and currently remain, the majority group in these positions.

### 2.3 SUMMARY

Education is an employment area that has traditionally employed significantly more women than men. However, despite their numbers, very few women have moved from a teaching role into positions of management and administration. Reasons for this phenomenon are essentially to do with the social relations that exist between women and men in other areas of both public and private life. The subordinate position of women employed in education relates very much to the status and roles undertaken by women within the family where the dominant position is held by men.

Given what is known about the barriers to women teachers gaining promotion, it could be expected that equal employment opportunity policies would address these factors directly. As yet only a limited amount of literature has examined why, at a time when most direct discriminatory barriers to women gaining promotion have been removed and equal employment opportunity policies and legislation have been in place at State and Federal levels for some time, women appear not to be achieving promotion in proportion to

their numbers within the general teaching workforce (Chapman, 1984; Sampson 1987:1987a). This study hopes to contribute to that literature.

To understand the nature and scope of Australian government equal employment opportunity policies in relation to improving the promotion of women, Chapter Three will define key concepts that underpin government policies and legislation. As a significant part of the research for this study focusses on the attitudes and opinions of policy actors collected through interviews, establishing understandings of the concepts associated with equal employment opportunity policies is critical in the analysis of this data.

## CHAPTER THREE

DEFINING KEY CONCEPTS

This chapter will concentrate on developing two major themes:

- \* the concept of equality as it relates to the framing of Australian government's equal employment opportunity legislation
- \* the scope and nature of these policies through the definition of key concepts: equality, discrimination, equal opportunity, equal employment opportunity, affirmative action; merit equity.

### 3.1 EQUALITY

Unlike many other countries Australia's constitution does not address the issues concerning individual rights and human freedoms. Nevertheless, over the past twenty years the Federal government has ratified a number of international conventions and adopted certain principles that relate directly to the employment of women. These include International Labour Organisation's Convention No 111 Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) and No 100 (Equal Remuneration) and the United Nation's Convention of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (Kramar, 1987; Randell, 1990).



Based on these international commitments, both Commonwealth and State governments have enacted a range of anti-discrimination and affirmative action legislation aimed at providing for women, equal employment opportunity and equal remuneration. In considering the power of these legal initiatives to both remove discriminatory barriers and improve the employment outcomes for women, it is important to understand the conceptual basis for legalising equality.

The foundations of equal opportunity policies including legislation are based on particular understandings of the relationships between individuals and groups within the context of the State. The concept of equality has been a major theme of writers for centuries. Two dominant themes that emerge from the writing are social inequality and natural difference.

In describing social inequality, Poiner and Wills (1991 p.1) cite the work of Beteille (1969) who attributed to it, both distributive and relational aspects. In the first instance those factors such as skills, education, wealth and power are socially distributed. Secondly, the relational aspect describes the way that these factors influence social relations.

Human inequality that results from natural difference creates much debate that focusses on what actually

constitutes real natural difference. There is a strong view that suggests many differences are in fact created by social inequality and social organisation, but are presented as a natural difference by those wishing to maintain the status quo. Dahrendorf (1968, p. 18) writing about class relationships argues that,

"...societies assert a preestablished harmony of things natural and social, and above all a congruence of natural differences between men and social differences between their positions."

This view can be applied beyond the examination of class to include ethnicity and sex and goes some way to explain the ongoing inequality experienced by women, migrants and Aborigines, despite the introduction of legal remedies.

The rationalising of social inequality as natural difference is a powerful and active barrier against the redistribution of power and action to redress inequality. By arguing that the existing social relations are in fact natural and a product of genetic factors, opposition to rearranging the social order is dramatically diminished. This functional view of social stratification argues that such a structure with its differentiation of rewards is necessary in order to maintain different work and engender motivation. (Thornton, 1990, p.12)

In Western liberal democratic societies that support capitalism the ideology of merit provides the mechanism to reinforce a value system that is inherently biased (Thornton, 1990). Consequently, there is inescapable tension between the values placed on equality and inequality which Betheille sees "...somewhat self-conscious virtuous attachment to equality..." conflicting with "...a striking preoccupation with sorting individuals out and ranking them according to their natural abilities, aptitudes and qualities." (Thornton, 1990, p.77).

The liberal philosophy of egalitarianism is the basis of the democratic State, yet,

"Capitalism is a socioeconomic system which by its very nature generates rather sharp inequalities....that have very negative results for the majority of humanity." (Stevenson, 1982, p.333).

Therefore in order to continue to grow and maintain itself, the liberal democratic State must be seen to be working towards equality for all people, while still somehow maintaining the social and economic inequality necessary for the maintenance of capitalism.

Rousseau asserted in 'Dissertation on Equality' that natural or physical inequality had no necessary link between moral or political inequality, which is created by human action (Encel and Campbell, 1991). The legitimation of social inequality is achieved through the establishment of a system of governance that is described by Trubeck (Thornton, 1990, p.14) as,

"...liberalism's solution to the perceived discrepancy between the ideal of equality and the reality of hierarchy of domination."

The legal system, therefore, is based on the tenet that all people will be treated equally, which helps to disguise the inequality. It is this contradiction that results in the schizophrenic nature of equal opportunity policies in Western countries including Australia

The promulgation of such policies acknowledges conflict theory by recognising the discrimination experienced by members of certain groups within the society, yet its actual effect cannot alter the social relations that support the accumulation of capital, the tenets of free enterprise and the believe in individual merit. Therefore, legal measures against discrimination on the grounds of race and sex must not interfere with the inequities that are inherent features of capitalist systems, even though the sexual division of

labour and racism, have been significant aspect of capitalism (Connell, et, al, 1982, p. 188).

### 3.2 DISCRIMINATION

Central to the concept of legal equality, is the concept of discrimination. Discrimination at all levels can be seen to be partly historical. However, the current need to legislate against inequality in the public domain, particularly the workfoce, highlights that the problem is both active and complex. To illustrate, Thornton (1990, p.3) cites the Harvard Law Review (1984),

"Discrimination is an 'essentially contested concept whose application to specific phenomena is always in dispute because its meaning is shaped by changing human desires and attitudes towards things...changing social forms. Moreover the word is both descriptive and evaluative. In its descriptive sense, it refers to a category of actions that - in principle - can be distinguished from other actions. In its evaluative sense it characterises actions in moral terms."

The descriptive use of discrimination has been overtaken in common usage by the evaluative definition which carries the

connotation of unfairness applied by one person to another on grounds that are irrelevant or improper (Thornton, 1990). In considering the particular characteristic that is the cause for the discrimination, there is produced for the victim of the discrimination a stigma that sets them apart from the major social group. The stigma may result in the exclusion of individuals and groups from full access to the range of social opportunities afforded the dominant social group and a distinction in the way that social rules and laws are applied to them.

The difficulty arises here that in defining discrimination, people are not necessarily going to share a common view of what is fair and what is discriminatory. For example, an employment policy that actively promotes men to managerial status rather than women, may be supported by people who believe that men are inherently equipped to lead, and that to vary that circumstance would be to undermine the normal social relations between men and women. For others, this policy could be seen as discriminatory against women because it denies them the opportunity to progress and be rewarded because of personal assumptions that in no way allow for them to be assessed against work-based criteria. As Kidder and Stewart (1975, p. 38) observe,

"What appears to be the mere application of a rule is in such cases actually the selection of a vision of society."

Davies (1982, pp. 15-16) differentiates between four levels of discrimination. At the first level, is direct discrimination, which is recognised by all parties as being intended to deny or exclude a person or group of people from a particular benefit. It would include, the refusal to employ women in supervisory positions on the basis of a sexist argument.

At the second level, the discrimination is also direct but unintended; the discriminators are not aware of the invalid assumptions that underpin their actions and result in unfair outcomes. Not employing a woman to a supervisory position because of a belief that men will find it difficult to work with her, is an example of this level of discrimination.

The third level of discrimination involves the use of practices which superficially appear to be neutral but in fact can be shown to discriminate against particular individuals or groups. For example during periods of economic recessions employers may introduce a policy of dismissing those employees who are part-time or casual. This can disadvantage women as a group, as they make up the bulk of the non-permanent and part-time workforce.

The fourth level of discrimination is described as systemic and is a composite of the other three. Systemic discrimination is most clearly demonstrated when profiles of

society or particular organizations show the clustering of particular groups such as women, in specific areas of disadvantage. Within the workforce this is illustrated by the predominance of women in the least powerful, least visible and least rewarded sections of occupation and industries (Kanter, 1977; Burton, 1987).

### 3.3 EQUAL OPPORTUNITY

By identifying itself with a formal definition of discrimination, the liberal State is legitimized. The tenet that each person is entitled to the same treatment under the law, emphasizes the liberal view that the State is politically neutral and deflects attention from the fact that groups such as women and cultural minorities are systematically discriminated against within the formal legal framework,

"Legal equality functions to mask and include class differences and social inequalities, contributing to a declassification of politics which militates against the class consciousness necessary to the creation of a substantively more equal society." (Balbus, 1977, pages unknown).

Legal equality ensures that all people have the same right to aspire to the same positions within the society.



However, there is no commitment to ensuring that any inequalities between people are acknowledged and addressed in order to assist them in achieving their goals. Such inequalities are described as relevant differences or neutral factors and can include things such as qualifications and experience. For example, in the area of employment, unsuccessful candidates may be deemed by the appointing authority to be deficient with respect to the formal criteria. The fact that the candidates might also be black, female and/or physically handicapped is not considered significant. Consequently, this formal framework can be used quite successfully to maintain the status quo, while still claiming objectivity and neutrality (Thornton, 1990, p.16).

This view of equal opportunity acknowledges the existence of social disadvantage and advocates that the system has a responsibility to assist people overcome the social inequality it has itself created and develop their individual natural potential, as identified by the system. However, the extent of redress is limited to ensuring that no individual will be excluded from the process of selection on the basis of legally designated differences such as race and sex. Social and historical factors that might explain why members of these social groups do not apply for access or are generally unsuccessful when they do are not acknowledged by the legal frameworks.

In searching for a more substantive equality, Goldman (1979, p. 174) claims that "individuals no more deserve their natural than their social disadvantage". This view, however, cannot be sustained within the liberal capitalist State, for rewards are dependent on meritorious input. Again the legitimation of the State becomes problematic, when on one hand it enacts anti-discrimination laws, based on the tenet that merit is founded on natural talent, while continuing to disproportionately reward only a narrowly defined social group.

#### 3.4 EQUAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY

In the area of employment, the removal of discrimination as pointed out by Moir (1984) and Wertheim (1985) relates specifically to access to income and status within the workforce. The concept of equal employment opportunity requires that in the practices of recruitment and selection, and the application of conditions, all individuals and social groups will be treated equally.

"Equal employment opportunity is a policy that all personnel activities will be conducted so as to ensure that, for each vacancy in an organization, people with equal probability of job success have equal probability of being hired for or promoted to the job. In other words, a person's ...sex.... should not reduce her or his chances of employment or promotion." (Ziller, 1980, p.13).

In acknowledgement that public sector employment practices in the past have been unfair to particular social groups including women, Australian Commonwealth and State governments have implemented equal employment opportunity legislation policies. These require public sector organizations to prepare an organized plan for the achievement of equal employment opportunities based on the profiling of the workforce to highlight any area of potential discrimination.

A detailed description of this aspect of equal employment opportunity is provided by Eisentein (1985, pp. 74-77) who distinguishes three components of an equal employment opportunity management plan: statistical information, review of personnel practices and the development of strategies for reform. Three concepts emerge as being central to the equal employment opportunity framework in Australia: affirmative action, merit and equity.

### 3.5 AFFIRMATIVE ACTION

Legal equality is essentially concerned with equality of opportunity and access while substantive equality as outlined by Balbus (1977) concentrates on factors external to the formal framework, that are critical to achieving equality of outcomes. Strategies to achieve substantive equality attempt to overcome past deprivation and lift the disadvantaged group to a level comparable to that of the dominant social group is defined as affirmative action. Within some Australian equal employment opportunity legislation there is provision for mandatory affirmative action which

"...is a planned, results-orientated, management programme designed to achieve equal employment opportunity." (Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet 1984).

In explaining the Australian definition, Eisentein (1985, p. 75) equates affirmative action with equal employment opportunity describing it as "...positive steps to eliminate positive discrimination". Radford (1985, p.69), however, describes affirmative action as,

...a systematic approach to the identification and elimination of the institutional barriers that women and minority group members encounter in employment. It is not an end in itself: it is rather the action taken to achieve equal employment opportunity."

The distinction between the two definitions emphasizes the act of good will on one hand, and the legal requirements on the other (Encel and Campbell, 1991, p.3).

Within Australian affirmative action legislation there is the notion of objectives for reform that include strategies, target groups and dates and an evaluation procedure. Unlike the situation in the United States, where numerical quotes are used as targets, there is no penalty within Australian legislation for the failure to meet the targets. Instead,

"Failure to meet a target is an indication that the strategies designed have not worked or that the assumptions made in devising the target were incorrect." (Eisentein, 1985, p.77).

Radford (1985, p.65) also argues that the United States situation of quotas is undesirable to achieve substantive equal employment opportunity. Targets in the Australian context, point to the,

"...expected outcome of the merit system in conjunction with measures taken to remove discrimination and ensure equality of opportunity."

whereas quotas indicate a fixed percentage which,

"...can result in employment on grounds other than merit and can in the long run, limit the opportunities for the groups they are designed to help." (Radford, 1985, p.65).

It is these definitions, as described by Eisentein (1985) and Radford (1985) which many authors (Burton, 1991; Poiner and Wills, 1991; Thornton, 1990), believe have limited the scope of Australian equal employment opportunity policies and legislation, as they do not allow for the tackling of the fourth level of discrimination, systemic.

None of the Australian policies or legislation have the power to force the redistribution of power within organizations, or expect that organizations will actively employ, train and promote women as a means of redressing past discrimination. However, in the United States the concept affirmative action reflects an understanding that "preferential practices for an elite group of white males,

not provably "best qualified", have long been accepted."  
(Hausman, 1977, p.3).

The underlying rationale of this perspective of affirmative action is that it will eventually be unnecessary when the perfect egalitarian state is established. As such an achievement is not in the interests of the liberal capitalist system, the reality of such an egalitarian state is unlikely. Therefore affirmative action programmes are limited by these political constraints, so that they essentially are designed to benefit those participants who are most likely to assimilate with the dominant Anglo-Saxon, physically able, male heterosexual group.

### 3.6 MERIT

An integral factor in equal opportunity policies is the concept of merit. While it is considered to be a concept that is without bias and therefore able to be used to arbitrate rewards, it is in fact another "... category of indeterminate reference" (Lawrence, 1983).

Infrequently defined, the concept of merit is used to describe "... a relationship between a person's qualities and those required for performance in particular positions" (Burton, 1988, p.1). While very few would argue that merit is not a logical and efficient criterion upon which a

decision about staff selection should be made, it is important to understand that merit as a concept is not objective of itself. Merit is defined according to the values and perceptions of those charged with the responsibility of evaluating types of work and related work performance. Burton (1988 p.1) argues that merit is an outcome of organizational processes, of access to opportunities that develop it and which provides for its demonstration.

The merit model is largely based on the view that once direct discriminatory barriers are removed, social institutions and organizations cease to carry any inherent biases and will select people based on their level of competence. While its proponents argue that the merit principle is equitable, they fail to acknowledge the complex nature of organizations. Gender, for example, is a critical factor in the type of work undertaken and the power relationships that exist within organizations. (Kanter, 1977; Burton, 1988).

In understanding the elusiveness and unreliability of the concept of merit to deliver equal outcomes, there is a growing body of evidence that shows that while members of the disadvantaged groups may in fact meet and even exceed criteria written down for selection, they are more likely to



be unsuccessful in their candidacy than are white Anglo-Saxon heterosexual men. Many of the decisions to exclude women and others from selection are based on stereotypical assumptions about their abilities and natural talent. Thornton (1990:22) argues even further that exclusion is maintained in order to preserve the "...male homogeneity of the workplace." It is these same views however that allow some members of the excluded groups to enter organizations to take up those positions that are perceived as low in status and of no threat to the dominant group.

### 3.7 EQUITY

The introduction of equal opportunity policies and legislation that will alter the status quo, and transfer power to disadvantaged groups ensuring their equality, is unlikely. However, there is the need for support for the existing social relations if the traditional order is to remain, and therefore some demonstration of a commitment to goals of substantive equality is required. This has given rise to the concept of equity which has begun to dominate much of the equality discourse in recent years, so much so that it is used synonymously, if not incorrectly, with equality (Gans, 1973; Hunter, 1981), Pateman (1981:35) describes equity as being about rules, not actual circumstances,

"...equity focuses on the criteria for distributing goods and services and on the fairness of rules governing liberaldemocratic institutions."

Again, while equity suggests fairness with rewards being distributed on the basis of perceived merit, the question of who judges what is meritorious is critical.

A number of writers have begun to raise concerns about the use of the term equity, to replace equality. Hunter (1981:71) argues that equality is much more than equity and that there is "no ... simple connection between equality and equity". Equity is about equal distribution. To achieve equality, some groups may have to receive more than others. This notion in fact appears to run counter to the view of equal opportunity and is used increasingly in contemporary anti-discrimination legislation and policy. However, as Pateman (1981, p. 36) observes,

"...so long as wider interpretations of justice and equity are excluded, appeals to equity are ultimately useful primarily to those concerned to defend a fundamentally unequal and unjust social structure."

### 3.8 SUMMARY

Equal opportunity policies and legislation in Australia are based on the tenet that all people should be treated equally in the public domain and before the law. Equal opportunity does not legislate for outcomes but rather for access. Legal equality ensures that all people have the same right to aspire to positions within the society.

Australian equal opportunity policies and legislation do not attempt to define the concept of equality. They concentrate on providing equal access within the public domain in respect to access to benefits such as education and employment. Fundamental to the concept of equal opportunity is that all people should be treated as being equal at starting and entry points and that specific factors such as race and sex are irrelevant and therefore should not be permitted to interfere with individuals' progress. The removal of formal barriers to entry will allow the natural talent of the individual to be recognised and evaluated against that of other candidates, with selection being based on merit (Goldman, 1979; Thornton, 1990).

Much of the literature (Kanter, 1977; Burton, 1988; Thornton, 1990) argues that merit as a concept is not without bias. Merit is defined according to the values and perceptions of those charged with the responsibility of evaluating types of work and related work performance.

Burton (1988) argues that merit is an outcome of organizational processes, of access to opportunities that develop it and provide for its demonstration. While its proponents argue that merit principle is equitable, they fail to acknowledge the complex nature of organizations. Sex, for example, is a critical factor in the type of work undertaken and the power relationships that exist within organizations (Kanter, 1977).

There is increasing evidence that while members of disadvantaged groups may in fact meet and even exceed criteria written down for selection, they are more likely to be unsuccessful in their candidacy than are white Anglo-Saxon heterosexual men. Many of the decisions to exclude women and others from selection are based on stereotypical assumptions about their abilities and natural talent (Burton, 1987, 1988; Thornton, 1990).

To date, Australian equal employment opportunity policies and legislation have not addressed the systemic bias of social organization in the workplace. Issues such as what constitutes merit, or the inability of some groups to overcome social disadvantage in order to compete on an equal basis are not addressed by the equality of opportunity argument (Game and Pringle, 1984; Burton, 1988; Thornton, 1989). Instead, it gives to those in control of production a wider and more flexible prospective workforce. Decisions

are still made on the basis of the existing social relations but with the increased freedom to respond to a wider range of factors such as labour shortages and demands for increased production.

While most Australian equal employment opportunity policies contain the facility for the development of strategies to overcome the past deprivation and lift the disadvantaged group to a level comparable to that of the dominant social group, none of these affirmative action aspects have the scope to force organizations to redistribute power or expect that organizations will actively employ, train and promote women, as a means of redressing past discrimination.

In Chapter Four, consideration will be given to the reasons why Australian governments have adopted the particular approach to equal employment opportunity as described in this chapter. In addition, Chapter Four will highlight the links between the introduction of equal employment opportunity policies and other government initiatives.

## CHAPTER FOUR

CHANGES IN PUBLIC SECTOR POLICY

The purpose of this chapter is two-fold. Firstly, the chapter will examine the political context that has produced government equal employment opportunity policies in Australia. Secondly the chapter will explore the nature of the relationship between equal employment opportunity and public sector administration policies. While this study focusses on the Western Australian experience, the literature reveals that there exists a broader context for understanding local events and situations which will assist in the collection and analysis of the research data.

4.1 AUSTRALIAN POLITICAL CONTEXT

During the past two decades, Australia like other Western capitalist economies has been struggling with a growing economic crisis, that has resulted in high unemployment, periods of record high inflation and a general disenchantment and lack of public confidence in the ability of governments to provide public services efficiently (O'Connor, 1973; Habermas, 1976; Bates, 1985).

As the economy declines, so too does the legitimacy of the State because public confidence is weakened. Habermas (1976) argues that the "legitimacy crisis" intensifies as the State attempts to control a basic contradiction of the capitalist system, by maintaining support for capitalist interests while simultaneously promising social reform. Raised public expectations which are impossible to meet, lead to a further diminishing of public confidence in the State. Therefore governments will search for strategies that are essentially designed to compensate for loss of credibility (Iannoccone, 1984).

The world economic crisis of the 1970s and 1980s with its attendant problems, has been managed in Australia for the past two decades predominantly by Labor governments at both Federal and State levels. Labor governments through the eighties have increasingly exhibited signs of crisis management, attempting to control contradictions inherent in their support for the continued expansion of capital production and the maintenance of their own legitimacy as governments of social reform (Bates, 1985; Robertson and Woock, 1991).

Traditionally, support from the electorate has been gained by the provision of a range of public services, including

health, education and civil rights. The funding of these services normally results in the diversion of resources away from the activities of capital within the private sector. The loss of resources underpinning has provided a focus for capital interests to demand reductions in public spending. In trying to retrieve this crisis of contradictions Labor governments have needed to develop an approach that would satisfy these opposing demands.

Central to the Labor solution was the presentation of a government able to control the economic crisis by simultaneously providing efficient public administration, supporting capital interests and implementing social reform policies. In essence, the Labor solution was based on the development strategy that introduced a programme of administrative reform in the public sector that was based on the principles of corporate managerialism (Considine, 1988; Robertson and Woock, 1991).

At least since the early 1980s, all government activity whether it has been directed at economic recovery or social reform has been shaped within the context of this overall strategy. Consequently, equal employment opportunity policies need to be viewed not only as they relate to the improvement of the working lives of women but also the support and legitimation they provide for the broader political agenda of governments.



## 4.2 ADMINISTRATIVE REFORM IN THE PUBLIC SECTOR

In order to be seen to consider all of the various interest groups, the Labor corporate strategy has been presented in the spirit of consensus. It was used initially to bring together the major players in the economy for the purpose of collectively identifying problems, arriving at solutions and securing their ongoing commitment to arrest Australia's economic decline. Corporatism is defined by Panitch (1981, p. 24) as,

"...a political structure within advanced capitalism which integrates advanced economic producer groups to assist with representation and cooperative mutual interaction at the leadership level and the mobilisation and social control at the mass level."

The cornerstone of the Federal Labor government's corporate strategy has been the Accord. The Accord, conceived in 1983 between the government and the ACTU, represents a political-social-economic strategy. This agreement bound the parties to a process by which they would collectively identify and solve Australia's economic crisis by negotiation and commitment to a solution. Employer groups such as the Business Council of Australia and the Confederation of Industry, while not technically party to

the Accord, nevertheless have generally participated in this corporate approach to economic management.

However, the corporate strategy has extended beyond the Accord to other facets of government. Tripartite or consultative bodies representing a range of interest groups have become a significant feature of contemporary public administration. To progress the social reform agenda, representatives from particular interest groups, such as women and Aborigines have been brought together by government to discuss and negotiate their own agenda with government and other parties, including business and unions.

This process has parties taking responsibility for problems, which in the past were outside their sphere of influence and interest. The dilemma for many interest groups is that they have historically lobbied for the right to be involved in the decisions affecting their futures. The corporation of Labor appears superficially to provide that opportunity. However increasingly many groups have found that the trade-off for participation is that they have to take responsibility for a range of other problems, often compromising their own policies, and alienating their traditional constituents.

Besides using corporatism as a means of controlling the many competing demands, Australian Labor governments have used a corporate managerial approach as the basis of administrative reform in the public sector.

This reform is characterised by three major aspects: efficiency, democracy and equity as described by Wilenski (1987, pp. 167-169):

- \* Efficiency: government departments and agencies need to be able to find creative and effective strategies for the delivery of services that require less human and fiscal resourcing.
  
- \* Democracy: government departments and agencies need to establish participative structures that enable them to be more open to public scrutiny and accountability.
  
- \* Equity government departments and agencies have to be seen to be dealing with all clients fairly, as well as all existing and prospective employees.

In introducing this model for public sector administration, Labor governments have cited the perceived excellence of the private sector, employing the argument that business

administration and management in the private sector is more cost-efficient, client sensitive and performance oriented.

Features of this reform include the replacement of traditional bureaucratic nomenclature with business language (manager, corporate plan, executive, human resources), the creation of a managerial elite (Senior Executive Service), the devolution of responsibility for the achievement of government objectives to departmental heads, flatter organizational structures, reduced expenditure, performance based personnel models and merit-based selection (Kramar, 1988; Yeatman, 1990).

Increasingly these administrative reforms have come under attack from a range of sources, including areas of traditional Labor support (Pomeroy, 1985; Considine, 1988; Yeatman, 1990). Rather than providing an improved public service, a number of observers believe that there has been a distinct decline in the quality and extent of government services. They consider the private sector management model to be inappropriate for the public sector and serves only to reduce the ability of government departments to respond to the needs of clients.

#### 4.3 EQUAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY

It is within this framework that the concept of equal employment opportunity has been introduced, not as a major

focus for the organization but rather as one of many responsibilities that require prioritising and addressing by each unit within the corporate structure. This approach

"...demonstrates not only a failure to acknowledge the financial and structural requirements of an equal employment opportunity change programme but also reveals a very narrow interpretation of the concept of equal employment opportunity." (Yeatman, 1990, p.32).

Internally, while the changes are said to provide more equal employment opportunities for women, there is some conjecture as to whether any real improvements have occurred.

In further understanding these issues, it is useful to examine the New South Wales experience where the Wran Labor government, in 1977, introduced the Review of NSW Government Administration (Wilenski, 1977,1982). This review provided the blueprint for similar activity in other Labor states that included major changes in personnel practices, the most significant being the introduction of merit as a major principle of human resource management and the promulgation of the Anti-Discrimination Act 1977.

Wilenski who managed the NSW review is considered to be instrumental in incorporating the different demands being made upon the State into a programme for Australian public sector

management practice. It is therefore useful to consider his view of the process used to introduce equal employment opportunity onto the agenda, and its effectiveness.

Firstly, there is the goodwill phase, which is characterised by the belief that equal employment opportunity will be achieved by the desire of all people to promote a fair and equitable world. Wilenski (1984) identifies the merit principle, as introduced within the public service as an example of this phase.

"What problem there was...was a heritage of the past and people of goodwill will ensure that it was solved in due course." (1984, p.2).

In hindsight, Wilenski concludes that this has not been the case. The establishment of the equal employment opportunity Board of the Australian Public Service occurred in 1975, and the evaluation of its effects in 1983, showed that the redistribution of women within the workforce had been slight. While women constituted 37% of the workforce they were still clustered at the lowest levels of the hierarchy. Only 3% of the Second Division (senior management) staff were women. Wilenski concluded that at this rate "women would not be 50% of the Second Division until 2053." (1984, p.5).

The second phase described by Wilenski (1984) is the legislative phase, which throughout Australia has become

reasonably uniform and is based on a meaning of "affirmative action" that is unique to Australia. Affirmative action,

"...is a systematic approach to the identification and elimination of the institutional barriers that women and minority group members encounter in employment." (p.4).

The final phase described by Wilenski is the cultural change phase not yet realized within the Australian society, but where the practices of the equal employment opportunity management plan move out of the organization to challenge and change the traditional power base within the society,

"...after we have sensitised everyone to the problems, removed all the barriers, built non-discriminatory practices into our organizational systems, and done all the necessary compensatory training, we will still have to face the difficult task of completing the change in organizational culture without which complete equality of opportunity will not be possible." (Wilenski, 1984, p.5).

Wilenski's observations have been taken further by an increasing number of writers who question critically the implementation of social justice reforms including equal

employment opportunity through the use of a corporate managerial framework (Bryson, 1987; Considine, 1988; Yeatman, 1990).

Increasingly, during the past few years there have been questions about whether or not social justice and corporate managerial goals of efficiency and equity can be mutually inclusive and argue that many of the principles of corporate managerialism such as "doing more with less", managing change effectively and focussing on outcomes and results, contradict much of the research about the introduction of major social change (Jacques, 1976; Kanter, 1985). For example Yeatman (1991, p. 16) points out that,

"...equal opportunity in this context comes to be reframed in terms of what it can do to improve management, not of what it can do to develop the conditions of social justice and democratic citizenship in Australia."

#### 4.4 SUMMARY

The concept of equal employment opportunity is the product of fusion between the processes of Australian government policy and interest representation. Equal employment opportunity policies and legislation in Australia have occurred at the same time as major administrative change



within the public sector. The major thrust of public sector reform in Australia has been founded on three major principles of organizational design: a flatter structure, the emphasis on individual and organizational autonomy and a focus on performance in relation to the clients needs (Kramar, 1988).

This approach, complemented by a reduction in public spending, was based on the belief that the more streamlined the bureaucracy, the clearer the goals, strategies and the responsibilities for achieving them are to employees and the more efficient and open to change will the organization be (Jacques, 1976; Kanter, 1985).

These changes in the management of all Commonwealth and State bureaucracies have come about as a consequence of the economic and political crises facing Australian governments. This crisis of accumulation and legitimation, O'Connor (1973) and Habermas (1976) argue, has resulted in the State being increasingly called upon to provide system steerage by more closely controlling policy formulation and implementation to reduce the cost of state services in order to foster a new period of accumulation.

At the same time there has been the need to meet the demands of social movements such as feminism, in order to legitimize the government's existence and the existence of the current

social order. Corporate managerialist strategies, with an emphasis upon efficiency, effectiveness and the needs of the economy, have become a critical administrative vehicle for the solution to current political and economic problems within Australia (Considine, 1988).

This approach to public sector management has come increasingly under criticism during the past few years, largely on the basis that it is based on a private sector corporate model which is fundamentally out of place in the 'service' oriented public sector (Considine, 1988; Yeatman, 1990). Part of the criticism has centred on the apparent failure of equal employment opportunity legislation to significantly change the employment profile of women. Equal employment programmes have become essentially characterised by managerial aspects rather than those to do with directly changing the position of women within the organization. (Yeatman, 1987) Bryson (1987) describes this management style as having a 'distinct masculine flavour'.

In Chapter Five consideration will be given to the development of feminist perspectives to explain the relationship that has existed between Australian governments and women in the workforce through the implementation of government policies. The influence of women in shaping equal employment opportunity policies particularly in the past twenty years will also be examined.

## CHAPTER FIVE

FEMINIST PERSPECTIVES

This chapter will highlight aspects of feminist theories that attempt to explain and solve the inequalities experienced by women in the work force. In particular this chapter focusses on the interaction between a number of forces from within both the public and private domains to legitimise and maintain the traditional subordination of women through the institutions and activities of the State such as government policies and legislation.

The effect of feminist intervention with the State is also considered in relation to the nature and scope of government policies on the lives of women.

5.1 FEMINIST THEORY AND THE STATE

Since the resurgence of the feminist movement in the 1960s as a major social and political force, there has emerged an increasing body of literature concerned with both an examination of the relationship between women and the State and the development of feminist theory to analyse this relationship.

The State is increasingly being identified by feminists as being a significant factor in maintaining and legitimizing the subordinate position of women within the society through the development and implementation of government policies that either directly or indirectly pertain to women. (Ferguson, 1984; Dowse, 1984, Kenway, 1990a).

Rather than an ideology feminist theory is "not simply an ideology which puts women's problems ahead of all others, but is concerned to identify an injustice which it seeks to eliminate" (Richards, 1980). In searching for a way to understand the problems experienced by women, their cause and possible solutions, feminist theory moves between traditional social and political theories that are concerned with the nature and cause of inequality (Gordon, 1979)

Marilyn Frye (1983) argues that it is difficult for women to be perceived by men and themselves as being dominated, because unlike other suppressed groups they are not forced together physically, overtly controlled or systematically oppressed. However, despite their differences in race and class, women are "...together in a ghetto of sorts", defined not by location but by their subordinate relationship with man, which is essentially one of service that is not reciprocated by men.

"For any woman of any race or economic class, being a woman is significantly attached to whatever disadvantages and deprivations she suffers be they great or small..If a man has little or no material or political power, and achieves little of what he wants to achieve, his being male is no part of the explanation. Being male is something he has going for him even if race or class or age or disability is going against him. Women are oppressed as women. Members of certain racial and/or economic groups and classes both the males and the females, are oppressed as members of those races and/or classes. But men are not oppressed as men." (Frye, 1983, p.16).

This idea is developed further by Yeatman (1990) who outlines three reasons why it is difficult for traditional class ideologies to accommodate gender as a separate power source within the contemporary capitalist economy. Firstly, while men may be disadvantaged in relation to skills, capital and organizational assets, they are generally able to make positive use of their gender assets. Secondly, women are disadvantaged in terms of both gender and skills, capital and organizational assets, although in relation to the organizational assets there is a small percentage of women who are positively placed. Finally, for those women

who are located in a position where they can take advantage of skills, their gender devalues their capital and organizational assets and makes movement out of the limited female labour market very difficult.

"Historically, gender, race and ethnic assets have all worked to keep working-class men who belong to the dominant racial and ethnic groups relatively identified with their capitalist exploiters. This is not simply a situation where gender, race and ethnicity are used by those who are most dominant to divide and rule. No such conspiracy is necessary. White, Anglo, working-class men actually benefit from their gender, race and ethnic class assets, and they act to maintain these assets relative to those who lack them." (Yeatman, 1990, p.72).

Confined by traditional social thought to conform to existing theories, feminists have been unable to concentrate primarily on gender as a source of power and the role of the State in maintaining or changing power relationships. Traditional social theories can deflect analysis of those issues that are critical for women, and instead concentrate on priorities defined by the predominant social theory.

"Feminists have their own utopias, their own theoretical and practical priorities...Feminists need to detach from socialism in order to pursue their own long term aims. This does not mean that they are automatically unfriendly or contemptuous, merely that they have their own priorities and providing a socialist agenda in the current political situation is not one of them...I would question whether socialist feminism or any of the other labels have much meaning in the late 1980s...The distinction between liberals, radicals and socialists no longer adequately describes the debates that are taking place within feminism."  
(Pringle, 1988, 29-30).

This view, however, does acknowledge that there is a range of dynamic forces that interact to construct complex relationships involving social institutions such as the family, government, the law, education, paid employment and bureaucracy, all of which operate to maintain the dominance of men over women (Allen, 1990; Kenway, 1990a). This is not necessarily suggesting that there is a conscious and systematic conspiracy against women by the State but that there is a possibility that there are links between a variety of what appear dissimilar interests, which are

galvanised by the State in many forms. To consider, each in isolation, again provides a limited analysis of the position of women within the society.

Hamilton (1978, p. 91) argues that to effectively analyse women in society both capital-based and feminist perspectives must be used:

"The first is rooted in the social relations of production and the emergence of private property; the second is rooted in the study of how biological inequalities and differences are transformed into their social meanings and institutionalised."

This view is further espoused by Kelly (1979, p. 135) who emphasizes the importance of women's personal lives on their public lives and that,

"...women's place is not a separate sphere or domain of existence but a position within social existence generally. It is a subordinate position, and it supports our social institutions at the same time that it serves and services men. Woman's place is to do woman's work - at home and in the labour



workforce. And it is to experience sex hierarchy - in work relations and personal ones, in our private and personal lives. Hence our analyses, regardless of the traditions they originate in, increasingly treat the family in relation to society treat sexual and reproductive experience in terms of political economy; and treat productive relations of class in connection with sex hierarchy."

Increasingly, there is emerging a more wholistic view of the State which allows for a more extensive range of factors, such as location, history, class, culture, gender and ideology to become part of the analysis of inequality and the means of seeking its removal (MacKinnon, 1983; Dahlerup, 1987; Kenway, 1990).

In attempting to develop models that extend beyond the traditional economic base, and allow for the interaction between a range of factors including situations within the personal and public domains. Bowles and Gintis (1981, p.229) describe society as an "ensemble of structurally articulated sites of social practice." A site is a situation which is "characterised by a specific set of characteristic social relations." Bowles and Gintis (1981, p.229) identify the most recognisable sites in contemporary capitalist economies such as Australia as being capitalist

production, the patriarchal family and the liberal democratic State.

These three sites are by no means exclusive, although they each carry an identifiable set of relations. Capital production has private property as the central focus of production, around which matters such as employment, market exchange, investment and control of production are clustered. In the patriarchal family, relationships are based on sex, kinship and age. The liberal democratic state is characterised by universal suffrage and civil liberties. It is the liberal democratic state that is central to the reproduction and maintenance of the relations that prevail in the other two sites, which means that in capitalist production, capital dominates labour and in the patriarchal family, women are subordinate to men (Porter, 1986).

This creates an inherent contradiction for the State, for while it assumes a role of protecting human rights, in supporting the relationships within capitalist production and the patriarchal family, it must support the subordination of labour and women respectively. This contradiction provides the State with an ongoing need to provide legitimacy. The inequalities found in the sites of capitalist production and the patriarchal family lead subordinate groups to lobby the State for increased control over social policymaking, access to economic security and

general equality. In response, the State, in order to retain its power, must provide the opportunity for these struggles to be played out, yet ensure that the relationships that constitute capitalist production and the patriarchal family remain relatively unchanged (Hartmann, 1981; Porter, 1986; Thornton, 1990).

This type of analysis is particularly useful when examining the relationship between women and the nature and impact of aspects of the State such as government policies in relation to women. It allows for links to be made between factors that superficially appear to be dissimilar and their contact is achieved through,

"...the State as a social process, not just a legal category or set of institutions.

Processes of mobilisation, institutionalisation, the negotiation of hegemony between social groups are all central to the character of the State." (Franzway, Court and Connell, 1989, p.33).

## 5.2 GOVERNMENT POLICIES AND WOMEN

Feminist criticism of government policies falls into four major arguments (Draper, 1991, p. 11). The first argument is that historically the State has directly discriminated

against women and denied them equal opportunities to employment, citizenship, financial security and public entitlements in general. To counter this obvious criticism, governments have introduced legal redress and the removal of direct barriers to access has occurred.

The second argument is that many government policies are based on expectations, values and behaviours that reflect the life experience of men. Consequently, those policies that are developed with a person whose first priority is within the public domain, are clearly based on the assumption that the target for the policy is men (Thornton, 1990). Government employment policies demonstrate this argument in instances where for example promotion is based on state-wide availability, ignoring the likelihood that a woman's career will be secondary to that of her male partner, and she will not be easily able to relocate.

The third argument is bound up in the view that a woman's real role is that of mother, wife and home-maker. This assumption is based on the premise that women are naturally the unpaid care givers within the society. The lack of adequate community-based care programmes for children, the elderly and others in need demonstrates that the absence of government policy, reinforces a particular view of women and contributes to their remaining with these traditional and stereotyped roles (Baldock, 1988).

The final argument is that the State has failed to ensure the physical safety of women. While holding ideological reasons as being responsible, feminist critics of the State also include the institutionalised attitudes of the police, the judiciary, the lack of appropriate medical and community supports as being part of the problem (Thornton, 1990).

A number of issues arise from these arguments. There is firstly, the realization that the government policies affecting women cannot be easily categorised as simply 'women's policies'. A wide range of paradigms and approaches apply, and demonstrate clearly that there is not one single policy model.

Secondly, contradictions emerge when "women's policy" is developed without the specific objective to consider the interests of women and to promote them via the policy. Government equal opportunity policies are founded on the notion of sex equality particularly in the areas of education and employment.

Demands for sexual equality have been linked with the concept of sex-discrimination, a connection that has seen the emergence of legislation that is aimed at "degendering the public domain" (Sullivan, 1990, Watson, 1990). This is a significant factor when examining the design, scope, application and outcomes of equal employment opportunity

legislation. For while Australian law addresses direct discrimination on the basis of gender, it does not attack the indirect and particularly the systematic disadvantages that are attached to women on the basis of their sex (Game and Pringle, 1983; Walby, 1986).

One feminist argument is that rather than men providing the standard, women and men both possess differences that are mutually complementary and of equal value. To develop government policies from this perspective would allow for different performance and equal access to develop.

As Draper (1991, p.10) points out,

"This approach is likely to be too difficult for government because of its complexity and the notion of equality is too stretched."

Further, it would mean replacing the whole gender relations value system that contributes to the traditional capitalist structure and the legitimized dominance of men. Watson (1990, p.10) cites Veda Burdick's view of the role of the State as critical in mediating and regulating advancing capitalism's needs,

"...in such a way as to maintain masculine privilege control-masculine dominance in society as a whole."

### 5.3 ENGAGING WITH THE STATE

Besides analysing aspects of the State such as government policies using theoretical perspectives, there is also an institutional basis for policy, that is complex and shaped by a range of conflicting and unequal interests. If government policy is shaped by feminist theory, then it is also influenced by a need to establish legitimacy and support (Draper, 1991). This is particularly significant when considering the development of equal employment opportunity policies in Australia.

During the past thirty years Australian feminists have been confronted with theoretical and practical dilemmas. In order to influence government policy some women made a conscious decision to participate in the political and ultimately the policy process. This meant working through established political organizations such as political parties and trade unions, and entering government bureaucracy (Eisentein, 1985; Poiner and Wills, 1991; Watson, 1990).

For many women, because of the masculine nature of social institutions including the bureaucracy, and their role in maintaining the subordinate role of women, the prospect of actually joining men and participating in the policy process represented a major conflict. As Franzway, Court and Connell (1989, p.46) observe,

"The rise of bureaucratic forms of organization is historically linked to the rise of new forms of hegemonic masculinity..."

On one hand the need to gain political legitimacy and support was vital to the achievement of certain goals, yet the incorporation of the feminist agenda has also risked depoliticising them, by placing them in a broader government framework.

Adamson et al (1989) in describing this dilemma within the Canadian context distinguishes two basic perspectives: disengagement and mainstreaming. The politics of disengagement aims to find alternative social institutions and processes. By definition, this keeps feminists outside "disengaged" from the traditional power structures and spheres of influence. While this approach provides a freedom to maintain one's own framework and agenda, disengagement is limited in its impact and influence. Mainstreaming provides the opportunity for women to not only



participate in the dominant power structures but also to develop concrete policies and strategies. However, as already indicated this approach has the limitations of working within institutions that have been structured to organize women's lives (Adamson et al, 1989, p. 77).

Both approaches have their inherent problems,

"...if the inherent risks of disengagement are ones of marginalisation, the risk of mainstreaming is one of becoming institutionalised." (Draper, 1991, p.15).

Reaching some sort of accommodation between disengagement and marginalisation has been a dominant concern for Australian feminists. Engaging with the State, has generally been seen as necessary in order to achieve some goals. Trying to maintain the individual agenda of women has been attempted through a number of strategies including the appointment of women to positions within the bureaucracy that have responsibility for "women's' issues and policies and the use of government funds to support women-run initiatives such as refuges, childcare and health centres. (Kenway, 1990; Encel and Campbell, 1991).

Within the women's movement these matters are highly contentious (Franzway, Court and Connell, 1989; Yeatman, 1990). Government resources do not come without "strings"

and there are difficulties facing women trying to maintain their own goals, without becoming diverted by the "...rituals and politics of influencing policy" (Poiner and Wills, 1991, p.40).

The failure of government equal employment opportunity policies to improve the position of women by acknowledging their particular and unique needs is largely to do with the compromise between the State and women that provided both groups a degree of legitimation and support for agenda that are inherently contradictory.

#### 5.4 SUMMARY

Feminist theory is a way of understanding the inequality experienced by women and finding ways of removing it. It is "an analysis of women's subordination for the purpose of figuring out how to change it." (Gordon, 1979, p.109).

Because traditional social and political theories have been focussed on capital as the major source of power, the subordination of women has never been considered within these models as being the result of any factors other than their relation to capital. Increasingly, feminism has emphasized other factors such as gender, class, history and race as sources of societal power.

Feminist literature identifies the interaction of forces from both the public and private domains that have an interest in maintaining the subordinate position of women. Together they make demands upon the State to legitimate their requirements and provide sanctions for the continued subordination of women.

The review of the literature highlights the role played by the State in the subordination of women within the workforce both directly and indirectly. The implementation of policies and legislation that maintained women's powerless position within employment is well documented and ranges from directly prohibitive regulations to the protection and establishment of inherent systemic bias (Encel and Campbell, 1991; Game and Pringle: 1983).

During the past twenty years, many women have attempted to influence the State by participating in the institutions and organization of the State. These interventions have noticeably occurred at the level of organized political parties and the public sector bureaucracy. By involving themselves in these activities many women have sought to legitimize their demands for social equality.

However, increasingly feminist intervention is being critiqued as resulting in co-option. By mainstreaming women's issues, many feminists believe that the uniqueness

of women's experience is overtaken by the priorities of the dominant forces and is incorporated only to the extent that it might support the more powerful agenda.

For women to successfully influence the political agenda and to achieve the desired reforms, major shifts are required within the relations that exist between economic and social forces that exist within both the public and private domains.

Chapter Six describes the major themes that emerge from the reivew of the literature that will provide the conceptual framework for this study and which will direct and shape the specific nature of the research data to be collected.

## CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION

The purpose of the literature review contained in the four preceding chapters has been to develop a conceptual framework within which to search for answers to the four questions that provided direction for this study. These previous chapters have explored four major areas of the literature that provide a range of different perspectives for understanding the relationship between Western Australian government policies and legislation on the equal employment opportunity policies of the Ministry of Education and the promotion of women teachers within the government school system:

- \*Women teachers and promotion
- \*Definition of key concepts
- \*The Australian political context
- \*Feminist perspectives

From the review of the literature, a number of significant themes have emerged which provide a conceptual and contextual framework for the analysis of equal employment opportunity policies that form the focus of this study.

In education, a female dominated industry, women teachers have been prevented by government policies and legislation from experiencing the same conditions and opportunities as men including promotion to senior administrative positions. Despite the extensive body of knowledge that identifies the barriers to women teachers and the introduction of equal employment opportunity policies little change appears to have occurred within the Australian or the Western Australian contexts.

Much of the literature focusses on interdependent forces of the State which interact to maintain the subordinate position of women. Because it has its own set of interests, needs and goals, the State contributes to shifting power relationships within its social structures between competing and often contradictory forces in order to maintain its own dominance. Finally, the State is not necessarily rational in the way in which it deals with these contradictory demands and therefore is able to offer support to interests that would appear to be contradictory to the State (Franzway, Court and Connell, 1989).

Government policies are considered to be a manifestation of this interaction both general and gender-specific, on the lives of women. Despite the appearance of being gender-neutral, the majority of government policies effect men and women differently as they are essentially based on a

set of values and norms that reflect the traditional private domain male-female roles and are developed and administered by an administrative apparatus that is founded on the same values (Walby, 1986; Franzway, Court and Connell, 1989; Poiner and Wills, 1991).

Consequently, gender-specific policies such as equal employment opportunity do little to change the long established relations between women and men. Equal employment opportunity policies adopt as the standard, the values, experience and behaviours of the dominant group which are translated as the position and status of men within the workforce. Essentially equal employment opportunity policies allow for women who can demonstrate that they accept and are willing to compete against this predetermined criteria, the opportunity to compete for employment. Government policies do not require that structures be changed to acknowledge and reward difference, but only that those women who can minimize their difference be permitted to participate (Thornton, 1990; Poiner and Wills, 1991).

Within the Australian context the concept of equal employment opportunity was introduced as a means of maintaining support for the governments of the Australian Labor Party at both the Commonwealth and State levels from a number of contradictory groups within the society. In order

to retain support from traditionally aligned social groups such as the poor, women, migrants and Aborigines, as well as convince capital interests that it could manage the growing international economic crisis, Labor governments across Australia introduced major corporate-based administrative reform to the public sector. An integral aspect of this strategy was the concept of equal employment opportunity.

By advocating that the existence of gender differences in the context of production is inefficient, and that employers should be choosing employees from the largest, most able pool possible, equal employment opportunity has gained some legitimacy with catch phrases such as "the best person for the job" and "merit-based recruitment".

However, using efficiency as a determinant for social equality does not address the systemic bias of social arrangements. Issues such as what constitutes merit or the inability of some groups to overcome social disadvantage in order to compete on an equal basis are not addressed by the unitarian argument (Game and Pringle, 1984; Pateman, 1988; Burton, 1988; Thornton, 1990). Instead, it gives to those in control of production a wider and more flexible prospective workforce. Decisions are still made on the basis of the existing social relations but with the increased freedom to respond to a wider range of factors such as labour shortages and demands for increased production.



Consequently it is acknowledged that when analysing aspects of the State such as government policies, a range of different paradigms and perspectives which while contradictory in nature, can contribute to a comprehensive analysis. The concept of equal employment opportunity might be the fundamental basis of policies but it is not the only precept to be used in its analysis. The rationale for certain approaches will be at times more political and therefore more controversial.

## PART II

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DATA COLLECTION

Part II describes the research methodology used in this particular study.

The questions which directed the research were:

- (i) Was the Ministry of Education's response to the Equal Opportunity Act (1984) influenced by Government administrative policies contained in "Managing Change in the Public Sector" (1986)?
- (ii) Were the Ministry of Education's equal employment opportunity policies shaped by research on barriers to women's promotion that was available from overseas and other Australian states?
- (iii) What other forces may have shaped the Ministry's response to equal employment opportunity legislation?
- (iv) Have government policies in respect to equal employment opportunity changed the traditionally subordinate position of women within the government education system?

To answer these questions a number of important data sources need to be interrogated and analysed:

- . relevant government and Ministry of Education policy documents
- . the views and perceptions of key policy actors
- . employment statistics relating to the promotion of school principals.

Chapter Seven provides a rationale for the selection of the research methodology and the consequent approach taken for data collection and analysis.

Chapter Eight concentrates specifically on the development and application of the research methodology to meet the requirements of this study with particular emphasis on the use of interviews with key policy actors.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter describes the research methodology and highlights a number of important methodological issues relevant to this study.

7.1 RESEARCH PARADIGM

A naturalistic or ethnographic research paradigm was considered to be the most appropriate for this study as it enabled the researcher to consider,

"...the human being as a person that is a plan-making, self-monitoring agent, aware of goals and deliberately considering the best ways of achieving them." (Cohen and Manion, 1987, p.288).

Whereas, the positivist or quantitative approach is founded on the belief that the world is a concrete set of relations to which humans respond accordingly, the naturalistic approach is based on the assumption that the world or social reality is constructed from a range of dynamic factors that influence the lives of human beings and include phenomena such as historical circumstances, political and cultural

contexts, personal attitudes and perceptions (Firestone, 1963; Wilson, 1977; Morgan and Smircich, 1980; Guba and Lincoln, 1982).

Much of the research for this study concentrated on the perceptions of key policy actors. The researcher decided that the naturalistic paradigm not only supported the exploration of this type of phenomena through qualitative techniques, but also provided the opportunity to use other methodologies when collecting, presenting and analysing data from other sources such as policy and statistical documentation.

## 7.2 RESEARCH METHOD

The naturalistic paradigm allows for the phenomena to be studied to suggest the research method to be used. A naturalistic research approach, contend Guber and Lincoln (1982, p.235),

"...is driven by theory grounded in data, the naturalistic does not search for data that fits his or her theory but develops a theory to explain the data."

Within the naturalistic research literature there is strong support for the use of a multi-method approach or

triangulation to collect data for the study of some aspect of human behaviour such as the development and implementation of policy (Simons, 1977; Jick, 1979; Oakley, 1981; Cohen and Lincoln, 1986).

Besides being able to examine policy content by using quantitative methods such as documentary analysis, qualitative techniques such as the interviewing of policy actors provided data that would otherwise have remained hidden to the quantitative approach. Triangulation provided both alternative perspectives to the examination of the same phenomenon and also for a more profound set of understandings to develop (Jick, 1979).

Because this study was focussed on the forces that shaped the development of a number of Ministry of Education policies, a multi-method approach provided, in contrast to a single methodology, a wider perspective of "...the complexity of human behaviour and of situations in which human beings interact" (Cohen and Manion, 1980, p.208). The phenomena to be observed in this study developed and took place within a particular context, characterised by certain political, social and historical forces and required a qualitative methodology with eclectic procedures (Adelman, Jenkins and Kemmis, 1976).

The development and application of this approach for this particular study are detailed in Chapter Eight.

### 7.3 METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES AND QUALITY CONTROL

The adoption of a naturalistic approach brings with it a number of possible difficulties. Because the research strategy is designed specifically to suit the particular problem and the phenomena selected for study, replication is virtually impossible.

In particular, qualitative methods such as intensive interviews are organised in such a way that to re-establish the interview situation with its tone, direction, context and content, and arrive at exactly the same data, would be impossible. Therefore, it was critical that the research was properly focussed conceptually, and the right questions posed, otherwise satisfactory outcomes to the study would be doubtful (Cohen and Manion, 1980; Murphy, 1980; LeCompte and Goetz, 1982).

Consequently, the selection of a multi-method or triangulated research methodology for this study resulted in the emergence of a number of methodological issues that the researcher was required to consider and address both prior to actively undertaking the research and then continually throughout the research.

### 7.3.1 Boundary Problems

Undertaking a naturalistic inquiry carried definite implications for the researcher in establishing boundaries for the study. While the quantitative approach provides a control on the boundaries of the inquiry, within the naturalistic approach antecedent conditions are not constrained in any way" and might in fact become a focus for the study (Guba, 1977, p. 44).

The study of policy is not easily constrained by pre-determined boundaries. Research questions about the influences on the development of a policy and its resultant effects cannot be answered without reference to a range of factors that are "profoundly embedded in its real world situation" (Adelman, Jenkins and Kemmis, 1976, p.142).

This does not mean that there are no limits to the inquiry but rather it is the problem itself that suggests the parameters rather than the researcher. In a quantitative study, the researcher is able to establish the boundaries prior to undertaking the research. While the boundaries of the naturalistic study may be carried in some notional way by the researcher, the nature of the phenomena and the techniques used to gather data will often result in the emergence of new ideas and perspectives that will shift the boundaries of inquiry (Guba, 1977).



The boundaries for this study were established by acknowledging a range of phenomena, significant to the problem and selecting for the purposes of achieving some coherent comprehensive understanding, specific types of phenomena to provide the parameters.

For example, there is a substantial body of literature that debates whether the behaviours and attitudes of women, themselves, can contribute directly to their failure to achieve promotion. These ideas were reflected in the literature review and in some of the data collected from interviews and policy documents. However, the researcher discarded this type of data during the analysis stage, as being beyond the boundaries of the study.

### 7.3.2 Focussing Issues

The focus of this study was a set of forces that influenced the development and shape of the Ministry of Education's equal employment opportunity policies. These forces were government equal employment opportunity policies, the knowledge of policy actors about the barriers to the promotion of women in schools and the perceived commitment of the Ministry of Education to the increased number of women principals.

While much of the available and subsequently collected data concerned a wide variety of matters dealing with the employment of women teachers, any information not relating to this focus was discarded; a process that occurred in an ongoing way both particularly during the data collection and with the analysis of the policies and interviews.

In sifting through the collected data, the researcher followed the criteria of salience and credibility as means of establishing both categories of data and priorities for inclusion within each category (Guba, 1977).

Data was selected for inclusion when its significance or salience was established. Where a particular item figured in a number of data sources the researcher would record it. This occurred particularly through the interviews. For example, a number of key policy actors identified the formal meetings of a particular committee as being unsatisfactory as a means of consultation.

Another example occurred when it became clear to the researcher that there was a pronounced difference between some interviewees, and some policies, as to the meaning of the term "equal employment opportunity". While some of the policy actors believed that it meant appointment on the basis of merit, others considered it to be synonymous with

affirmative action or positive discrimination. Thus, the issue of definition became an important category for inclusion in the analysis.

In testing the credibility of certain items, the opinions of participants were sought to determine their inclusion. In relation, to the Equal Opportunity Act Exemption (1987) a number of data sources, suggested that this policy was adopted by the Ministry of Education as a "stop-gap" measure. Before including this data, the researcher arranged individual meetings with five of the participants. During these discussions the conversation focussed on the interviewee's specific knowledge and experience of the exemption policy. The researcher was particularly interested in possible rationales for the development of the exemption policy and shared with each of the interviewee's her interpretation of the initial data. These interviews subsequently reinforced the researcher's interpretation of the data and for some participants it represented a true reflection of their perspective of events and processes surrounding this policy.

### 7.3.3 Authenticity

Authenticity relates to "...the establishment of bases for trust in the outcomes of naturalistic inquiry" (Guba, 1977, p.61). The criteria that the researcher adopted for

establishing authenticity were those of validity and neutrality.

In relation to this study the researcher concentrated on two areas to ensure validity. Firstly, due to the researcher's professional involvement with the interviewees there was a need to diminish the potential for distortion of the data. This was achieved by the researcher being particularly vigilant about clarifying meanings with the participants.

Because of the various levels of rapport that existed between most of the interviewees and the researcher there was a danger that definitions, concepts and events could be acknowledged at a level immediately familiar to the researcher and the interviewee. Verbal cues such as "you remember" or "you know what they're like" emerged as signals for the researcher to explore more deeply what the interviewee was describing.

Secondly, the researcher sought to establish validity by adopting a triangulated strategy so that phenomena could be tested using a variety of data collection techniques,

"...triangulated conclusions are more stable than any of the vantage points from which they were triangulated." (Guba, 1977, p.64).

How the triangulated approach adopted for this study provided validity to a particular assertion that emerged from the interview data can be understood by the following example. The majority of the participants believed that the equal employment opportunity policies of the Western Australian State government and the Ministry of Education had not resulted in significant increases in the number of women school principals. When examined, the statistical data collected, supported this view and indicated that only small numbers of women gained promotion during the period 1985 and 1991.

The major threat to the neutrality of the researcher in relation to this study was considered to be a combination of unconscious bias and conscious prejudice. The researcher had to be mindful that should her own personal views dominate and influence the data collection or distort the analysis, the study would not satisfactorily address the stated problem.

To maintain neutrality the researcher considered issues of openness and challenged any assumptions that led to untested beliefs about the participants and their comments. Firstly, the researcher was careful not to assume that a policy actor's interpretation of events was based exclusively on experiences similar to her own.

Secondly, some of the policy actors were aware, due to prior involvement, of the researcher's own views about some of the issues to be explored. At times it appeared to the researcher that interpretations were placed on certain phenomena that were considered by an interviewee to be useful in supporting the researcher's previously known view.

To make sure that the data collected were actually the opinions, knowledge and perceptions of the interviewee the researcher had to periodically probe for further understanding of the reasons for particular interpretations. This was illustrated when one of the women principals said, "I know you never agreed with X so you'll be interested in this..."

Thirdly, it was clear that the conceptual understandings of the interviewee and the researcher were not always the same. As indicated previously, concepts that were often contested included equal employment opportunity, merit and affirmative action. With these often used terms, the researcher endeavoured to get each policy actor to provide their own understandings of these terms when used by them during the interviews.

#### 7.4 SUMMARY

This chapter has highlighted the reasons for the selection of the research methodology for this study. This study focussed

on the forces that influenced the development of a number of policies and a major part of the researcher's attention was devoted to the perceptions, opinions and attitudes of policy actors, as well as the review of documents and statistical data. Given the nature of the phenomena to be investigated, an ethnographic or naturalistic paradigm was considered appropriate for this study.

This approach allowed for the consideration of the different phenomena, using both qualitative and quantitative data collection techniques. The methodological issues and problems that can emerge with the use of this approach have also been addressed in this chapter with specific reference to the ways in which the researcher dealt with them during the data collection and analysis. Chapter Eight will describe the conduct of the research and the development and application of the research methodology for the collection and analysis of the data used in this study.

## CHAPTER EIGHT

DATA COLLECTION AND DATA ANALYSIS

This chapter will describe the development and practical application of the chosen research methodology for the collection and analysis of the research data as provided by the different types of phenomena selected for this study. Particular emphasis is given to the interview data as this constituted the major part of the research.

8.1 DATA COLLECTION

The specific types of phenomena used in the study were:

- \* employment statistics relating to the promotion of school principals
- \* relevant government and Ministry of Education policies
- \* the views and perceptions of policy actors

In deciding that the nature of the research problem for this study required the investigation of a range of different sorts of phenomena, a triangulated research methodology was developed. The data collection was conducted within the framework provided by the four research questions that directed the study.



The distinction between data collection and data analysis often became blurred and shifts between the two activities occurred frequently. For instance, when collecting data the researcher would sometimes move from their collection to analysing them for future data collection. This process reflects the model outlined by Glaser and Strauss (1967) in which there is an ongoing movement between existing data and the generation of strategies for gathering new data.

Consequently, within this multi-method strategy the decisions about how data would be collected was integrally involved with issues of data interpretation and presentation. The decision to use a particular data collection technique was based on the consideration of the type of phenomena to be investigated, the sort of information required and how the data would be used.

The specific aspects of the research method adopted for this study were statistical analysis, policy review, developing and conducting interviews and data analysis.

Interviewing constituted the most significant aspect of the research methodology and therefore a central focus for the integration of the data collection and analysis processes. The research concentrated on the preparation for and conducting of, the interviews and comprised four sequential but integrated stages (See Fig 1).

FIGURE 1

STAGES OF RESEARCH

## STAGE ONE

- Preliminary review of the literature
- Identification of relevant documentation
- Initial contact with participants
- Development of interview framework

## STAGE TWO

- Collection of Government and Ministry of Education documentary and statistical data
- Development and trialling of interview guide
- Broadening of literature review

## STAGE THREE

- Conducting of interviews
- Development of a conceptual framework for the analysis of the data

## STAGE FOUR

- Exploration of data
  - Investigation of data
  - Recording of data
-

## 8.2 STATISTICAL DATA

While this study uses predominately qualitative methodology, the researcher believed that it was important to also collect quantitative data to contribute to a more wholistic understanding of the nature and effect of equal employment policies on the promotion of women to school principal. The empirical data helped to focus the study on the aims and actual outcomes of both the policies themselves and the intent and attitudes of the policy actors. Consequently, this data contributed to the development of the interview framework.

The main source of this data was the annual publication "Schools and Staffing" (Ministry of Education, 1985-1991), the "EEO Annual Report" (Ministry of Education, 1988-1991), and various editions of the "Education Circular" (Ministry of Education). In addition, the Human Resource Directorate of the Ministry of Education provided the researcher with further and more particular data regarding the number of women and men who applied for promotion to principal and the actual number who were successful, for each year from 1985 to 1991.

## 8.3 POLICY DATA

In undertaking the collection of policy data, the term "policy" was taken to indicate a range of diverse activities

that included a statement of intent as well as the process for formulating that position and its subsequent implementation (Donald, 1980; Taylor, 1982). Policy was considered by the researcher to be a line of action towards the achievement of a pre-determined or desired end which includes both the intention and the actual outcome. (Friedrich, 1963; Harman, 1973).

Underpinning the policy review for this study was a number of assumptions that emerged from the initial focus of the study and the subsequent review of the literature.

Firstly, policy operates across a range of different paradigms and perspectives that while contradictory in nature, all contribute to a comprehensive analysis. While the concept of equal opportunity might be the fundamental basis of policies, it is not the only precept to be used in its analysis. The rationale for certain approaches will be at times more political and therefore more controversial (Dahlerup, 1987; Franzway Court and Connell, 1987).

Secondly policy is perceived to be political, in that it emerges from the interaction between individuals and groups (Anderson, 1978).

Thirdly, there needs to be explicit identification of the relationship between the groups affected by the policy and the policy itself. In the case of this study this meant that women needed to become part of any analysis of policies that affected them (Sharpe and Broomehill, 1988).

Fourthly, the strategies that form the machinery of policy need to be considered in terms of the policy objectives in relation to the achievement of outcomes (Benson, 1982; Draper, 1991).

In developing this framework, the researcher was able to use as sources of information, a range of policies which related to the promotion of women to the position of school principal and which have been categorised as the policies of either the Western Australian government or of the Ministry of Education.

Many of the policies related to more than one aspect of equal employment opportunity and the researcher had to carefully limit the policy review so that only those aspects that were pertinent to the focus on the forces that influenced the development and shape of the Ministry of Education's equal employment opportunity policies in relation to the promotion of women to the position of school principal were considered:

The four research questions provided the direction for the policy review. Nevertheless, the researcher used a further

strategy to collect and organise the data into more manageable categories to further enhance the analysis of the data and contribute to the focus of the interviews. Using themes that emerged from the policies themselves and the review of the literature the following questions were applied to each policy statement:

- \* What strategies are identified for achieving these aims and objectives?
- \* Who is responsible for the implementation of the policy?
- \* How is the policy to be evaluated?
- \* What does the policy say about the increased promotion of women?
- \* Are there recurring or common themes within the policies?

The policy statements identified as being significant in this study were:

Western Australian State Government,

- (i) Equal Opportunity Act (WA) 1984
- (ii) Managing Change in the Public Sector (1986)

Ministry of Education

- (iii) Equal Employment Opportunity Management Plan (1988)
- (iv) Merit Promotion (1985-1991)
- (v) Equal Opportunity Act Exemption (1987)

## 8.4 INTERVIEWS

### 8.4.1 Developing an Interviewing Framework

For the purposes of this study the perceptions of key policy actors were considered to be essential to understanding the process by which equal employment opportunity policies were developed. Intensive interviewing demonstrated the capacity to uncover hidden factors and offer coherent explanations in relation to a variety of social and political factors critical to reaching some answers to the research problem.

Interviews provided the means to understand how the individuals and groups who had a particular interest in equal employment opportunity policy or a professional responsibility for the development and implementation of such policies perceived both the nature of the policy and its effect on the promotion of women to principal positions.

Stage One of the research allowed for preliminary planning that involved an initial review of the literature, identification of relevant documents and negotiations with policy actors to secure their involvement in the study.

An important aspect of this stage was the preparation for the interviews with the key policy actors. Because the study was developed within a naturalistic research paradigm,

a methodology was sought that would allow the participants to provide their own perspectives on events, decisions, other policy actors and specific policies, and yet also satisfy the questions posed by the study.

As well as reading much of the available literature about the use of interviews in naturalistic inquiry, a number of discussions were organised about the study with a number of academic researchers, who regularly use interviewing as a means of data collection. These included Dr R. Chadbourne (WA); Dr N. Hyde (WA); Dr P. Klinck (Canada); Dr S. Robertson (WA); Dr. MA Sagaria (USA) and Dr H. Simons (UK)

Matters considered were:

- \* the nature of the research
- \* reasons for using unstructured/semi-structured/structured interviews
- \* data sought
- \* selection of subjects
- \* skills required by the researcher (interviewer)
- \* listening and questioning techniques
- \* organisation of actual interview, including time-frames, location, recording of data
- \* possible problems and solutions
- \* processing data



Murphy (1980, p. 75) describes interviewing as "a conversation with a purpose" and outlines a number of different interviewing techniques that range along a continuum from the standardised highly structured question design and format, through to the totally unstructured, described as open-ended and free flowing. Because of its appropriateness for collecting information about human perceptions, the researcher selected the technique of intensive interviewing which Murphy (1980, p. 75) argues,

"...captures the thoroughness of the approach and the concerted effort required, not only to gather quality information but also to collect lively quotations and interesting anecdotes, to capture the life and colour of the government program in action."

This technique provided the means to examine issues of policy, including decision making processes, rationales, attitudes of key actors and complex contextual factors. Intensive interviewing provided the flexibility to enable the researcher to explore the "how's and whys" of these issues. A number of authors including Cohen and Manion (1980) and Simons (1978) contend that there are underlying assumptions that apply to the use of this type of interviewing as a research instrument. Recording people's subjective definitions and explanations of reality is a normal part of

research into social situations. Intensive interviewing allows for a greater complexity of issues to be discovered if the researcher is prepared to allow the interviewee to raise issues that are of particular significance to them.

Within this framework the researcher developed an interview guide that listed key issues and the boundaries of the study and a range of possible questions for each interviewee that sought further information, requested personal perspectives and refocussed the discussion. This guide was not designed to be a structured script but to ensure that the researcher was prepared to cover all topics that emerged in the course of the interview.

During this process, the listening and questioning techniques of the researcher emerged as being critical to the quality of the data collection. Consequently, much time and energy was assigned to developing a range of appropriate techniques that might be useful. These included the designing of opening questions, that would both help to put participants at ease and also be a useful exploratory device; the devising of probes or clarifying questions, to gain more detail or encourage the interviewee and the developing of silence to allow the interviewee to take the initiative.

Stage Two of the research allowed the researcher to trial this interview approach and the interview guide. The

subjects for this exercise were three people who had been included in the initial list of possible interviewees. However, all three indicated that they would be unavailable during the time allocated by the researcher for conducting the interviews. Consequently, they agreed to assist in the trialling exercise.

During the trial interviews, two areas that emerged as requiring refining and modifying were the amount of talking by the researcher and the need to pose more probing questions. The interview guide proved useful in providing a general map of the study and assisted the researcher in covering all those issues identified for investigation. The policy actors participating in the trial offered suggestions about both the style and structure of the interview and some issues that had not been discussed that might be worthwhile to include.

#### 8.4.2 Conducting the Interviews

During the process of developing a framework for the interviews it became apparent that the quality of the interview data was directly related to the suitability of the policy actors in providing the relevant data and the degree of trust that existed between the researcher and the individual interviewees.

Interviewees were selected for the study because of their position and role in the development of equal employment opportunity policies within the State education system. Prior to contacting possible interviewees, the researcher devoted considerable time to identifying key policy actors. This process was assisted by discussions with a number of academics, bureaucrats, teachers and women.

Contact with a possible 18 interviewees initially took place by letter. The researcher believed that by broadly outlining the purpose of the study and the reasons for inviting each person to participate through correspondence rather than verbally would allow individuals the opportunity to reflect on their involvement before making a commitment.

The first contact was later followed up by either a telephone conversation or a meeting with each of these people, fifteen of whom subsequently agreed to participate in the research. During this follow-up, the researcher was careful to allow the policy actors to question or clarify their understanding of both the study and their role in the data collection. This was considered important to building a positive trusting relationship and placing the interviewees at ease with the researcher and the project. The decision not to participate by three of the possible policy actors was made on the basis of their lack of availability. However, these people agreed to assist in the trialling of the interview process.

Of the fifteen willing policy actors, the researcher subsequently chose to interview only eleven. This decision was made on the basis of suitability after further discussions with each of the participants about the criteria for selection.

Some of the selected policy actors representing Government, Ministry of Education and the State School Teachers' Union were directly involved in formal policy activities. Other participants were included because of their roles as activists for equal employment opportunity and the promotion of women, working within professional bodies, the Ministry of Education and the State School Teachers' Union.

Of the 11 participants, 9 were women, and 2 were men. This occurred because of two factors. Firstly, as the literature suggests, equal employment opportunity policy is usually considered by government to be a "women's issue" and women bureaucrats invariably from middle-to-lower management levels are given responsibility for the development of these policies (Poiner and Wills, 1991; Yeatman, 1990). Secondly, it has been mostly women who have lobbied for equal employment opportunity policies at both a general community level and within the education sector. Therefore, a large number of policy actors were women who had actively involved themselves in influencing the policy process.

In order to maintain the anonymity of the interviewees, the researcher ascribed to each person a code for identification. A brief description of each policy actor's background and interest in equal employment opportunity is provided in Figure 2.

---

FIGURE 2

POLICY ACTORS' CODE

DISTRIBUTION

CODE

No of Policy Actors from:

|       |                                  |                |
|-------|----------------------------------|----------------|
| (i)   | Government (1)                   | G - Government |
| (ii)  | Ministry of Education (3)        | M - Ministry   |
| (iii) | Women School Principals (4)      | U - Union      |
| (iv)  | State School Teachers' Union (3) | P - Principal  |
|       |                                  | (F) - Female   |
|       |                                  | (M) - Male     |

G.1(F) was a representative of the Western Australian State government whose brief was to assist the Ministry of Education in the process of developing policies in compliance with the Equal Opportunity Act (WA) 1984.

M1(M) has been a senior Ministry of Education officer for some years. He has had significant involvement with the promotion system and is considered to be one of the experts in both its history and operation. M1 also has been an elected officer of the State School Teachers' Union where he was involved in the development of Union policy with respect to promotion.

M2(F) was one of the first appointments to an equal employment opportunity position within the Ministry of Education. She had responsibilities in the preparation of initial equal employment opportunity documents.

M3(F) has worked in the Ministry of Education for some years in the area of equal employment opportunity and has had responsibility for implementing some policy implementation.

P1(F) has for many years been very active in professional associations including the Primary Deputies and Primary Principal Associations. P1 has also been very active in women's groups through the Ministry of Education and the State School Teachers' Union, supporting equal employment opportunity for women.

P2(F) worked for many years as a senior Ministry of Education officer in a specialist teaching area. In 1987, she returned to the school sector as a principal of a specialist primary school. During her time within the Ministry she was one of the most senior women.

P3(F) is a secondary school principal who for many years has had a very high profile within the Western Australian education community. During that time, she has been a major figure in professional organisations such as the Secondary Deputies and Secondary Principals' Association, the State School Teachers' Union and the Australian Women in Education Coalition. P3 is often invited by the Ministry of Education to participate on advisory bodies, particularly those concerning women.

P4(F) is a secondary school principal who has worked at a senior level within the curriculum area. She has demonstrated over a period of time a keen and vocal interest in the way in which Ministry of Education promotion policies have affected women.

U1(M) was for many years an elected senior officer of the State School Teachers' Union. He had an integral involvement in the development of the merit promotion system and was vocal in his support for the adoption of Union policy in support of the enhanced promotional opportunities for women.

U2(F) is a secondary deputy who has also held elected senior positions within the State School Teachers Union with special responsibility for promotional matters. U2 is active within professional associations such as the Secondary Deputies' and the Australian Women in Education Coalition.



U3(F) has worked both for the Ministry and the State School Teachers' Union in the area of equal opportunity and women's interests. She represented the Union in consultations with the Ministry of Education for the purpose of developing a number of equal employment opportunity policies. U3 has also been a convener of the Australian Women's Education Coalition.

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The major strategy adopted during the interview process was that of allowing interviewees to "direct" or "control" the interview. Specific questions tended to evolve from participants' comments and responses during the interview. All of the interviews were conducted face-to-face and recorded using audio tape with the researcher making written notation of particularly significant information. Typed verbatim transcripts of recordings were prepared for later analysis. The notations proved valuable for clarifying some of the audio data that proved inaudible in the replaying and also in some cases participants were contacted for further clarification or assistance with with researcher's interpretations of their comments.

## 8.5 PROBLEMS IN DATA COLLECTION

### 8.5.1 Interview Data

The problems that emerged in the collection of data related largely to the collection of interview data. Firstly, the relative historical closeness of many of the events provided at times some uneasiness for those policy actors who were still employed by the Western Australian State government or the Ministry of Education particularly at the central bureaucracy level. A number of interviewees expressed views that they indicated were their own, rather than an "official" position, but did not want these personal views disclosed, in what one described as "the current uncertain political climate." Another commented during an interview that took place in the Ministry of Education building; "Do you think the walls have ears?".

At times, the researcher's own background caused some problems in two ways. Because of her political background with the State School Teachers' Union and significant role in the development of employment policies within the Ministry of Education, there was often an assumption on the part of the interviewees that there existed shared meanings and perceptions. Secondly, all of the interviewees were or had been working colleagues of the researcher, which meant that there was a sense of collegiality and even familiarity in the interviews.

This unique set of circumstances meant that the researcher had to be particularly vigilant to ensure that each policy actor explored and clarified their comments and that while the interviews were essentially designed to be unstructured, the researcher often had to work to prevent them from lapsing into general repartee.

In reviewing the interview data, the researcher believes that these problems were adequately recognised and addressed so that any possible distortion was kept to a minimum. To some extent, the second identified problem also worked to enhance the quality of the information, as there existed a natural rapport and mutual acknowledgement between the researcher and the interviewees.

#### 8.5.2 Statistical Data

The collection of statistical data also presented difficulties for the researcher. The employment data published by the Ministry of Education was formally acknowledged as not always reliable or consistent,

"...this can be attributed to a less than perfect database...analysts should be aware of these limitations when interpreting the data presented."

(Ministry of Education, 1991, p.7).

In order to place some control on this aspect of the research, the researcher selected the annual Ministry of Education reports "Schools and Staffing" (1985-1991), as the primary source of statistical data. This annually produced document provides a list of all schools, organised by classification and details by name and status their respective staff.

However, this document provides no summary that highlights any employment trends or comparative data either between male and females within each promotional level or from year to year.

Consequently, the researcher had to manually build profiles of individual women principals and track them year by year.

In relation to the number of applicants for principal positions, the researcher was fortunate that Ministry of Education personnel agreed to provide this information. This task required, the researcher has been told, manual collection of data.

### 8.5.3 Policy Data

Ministry of Education policies were often difficult to locate. Merit promotion for example does not appear within a single policy document. Instead the researcher had to

collect individual Education Act Regulations, administrative procedures, extracts from Education Circulars and interviewee information to piece together a coherent picture of the merit promotion policy.

The Exemption from the Equal Opportunity Act (WA) 1984 is also not found as a written policy. Instead it is referred to in other documents and figured significantly in the interview data.

## 8.6 DATA ANALYSIS

As indicated earlier in this chapter a triangulated method that provided alternative perspectives to the examination of phenomena and also contributed to the analysis was adopted for this study. The researcher believed that while it was important to acknowledge the different types of data, real understandings would only be developed through an integrated approach to its collection, presentation and analysis.

We need methods that are practical communicable and not self-deluding...and aimed towards interpretative understanding in the best sense of the term." (Miles and Huberman, 1988, p.12).

The general framework within which the analysis took place was based on the notions of exploration and investigation as described by Blumer (1969). Exploration is,

....a flexible procedure in which the scholar shifts from one to another line of inquiry, adopts new points of observation as [the] study progresses, moves in new directions...and changes...recognition of what are relevant data as [the scholar] acquires more information and better understanding."  
(Blumer, 1969:30).

Investigation is:

"...an intensive focussed examination of the empirical content of whatever analytical elements are used for the purpose of analysis and this same kind of examination of the empirical relations between such elements."  
(Blumer, 1969, p.43).

In relation to this study, the process of exploration required that as new data was collected from whichever source, upon analysis it could generate a new understanding and therefore a new question for which further and different data were required. For example with the interview data,

the constant shifting from the collection of data to its analysis during exploration required the researcher to adopt three strategies: individual analysis, cross interview analysis and recording. Individual interview analysis describes the analysing of each interview separately, while cross-interview analysis refers to the consideration of a number of interviews to establish common themes and categories. Recording describes the presentation and integration of findings.

Exploration provided the researcher with a comprehensive overview of the study and allowed for the initial inclusion of all possibilities.

At the completion of all interviews, the data was investigated for analytical factors. The data was organised with as little manipulation as possible into categories or themes that represented the concept areas chosen for this study. This process resulted in connections or links being made between concepts and data.

Investigation enables the empirical world to "forever be the central world of concern" (Blumer, 1969, 21-22) and it is during this phase that the process of selecting and analysing data contributes directly into the formation of understandings. The researcher chose to include all of the eleven interviews in the research as each of them directly

focussed on one or more of the five policies that were identified for review in this study.

Each interview was analysed on the basis of the categories that were established by the four questions directing the research and the review of the literature. Further, the researcher adapted an interview framework based on the work of Henerson, Lyons Morris and Taylor Fitzgibbon (1978). This model was considered to be particularly useful in incorporating themes that emerged from the statistical and policy data as well as from the interview data itself. Four themes of personal knowledge, understanding, concerns and judgements constituted the four categories for organising the data (see Figure 3).



FIGURE 3

FRAMEWORK FOR THE COLLECTION OF INTERVIEW DATA

1. Knowledge about equal employment opportunity policies Inclusion of references to:
  - \* Equal Opportunity Act (WA) 1984
  - \* Managing Change in the Public Sector (1986)
  - \* Equal Employment Opportunity Management Plan (1988)
  - \* Merit Promotion (1985-1991)
  - \* Equal Opportunity Act Exemption (1987)
  
2. Depth of understanding about the policies:  
Inclusion of references to:
  - \* extent of knowledge about equal employment opportunity concepts
  - \* perceived quality or effects of the policies
  - \* barriers to the achievement of equal employment opportunity
  - \* perceived operating forces
  
3. Personal concerns:  
Inclusion of references to:
  - \* problematic elements of the policy development process
  - \* concerns with whether or not the equal employment opportunity policies had in fact addressed the barriers affecting women's promotion to the position of principal

#### 4. Personal Opinions:

Inclusion of references to:

- \* judgements about what is needed to increase the number of women principals. During this process, data from separate interviews were recorded within these categories. At the same time, cross-interviewing analysis allowed for the different ideas and opinions about events, people and beliefs put forward by different participants to be linked together by categories that emerged from the data such as the name of a committee or a particular person. These methods of recording data allowed for the emergence of manageable amounts of data organised in a coherent way, linked to the initial concepts that formed the framework for this study.
- 

#### 8.7 SUMMARY

This chapter outlined the research method and associated methodological issues. The study was formed around the principles of naturalistic inquiry with the study of a range of phenomena requiring a triangulated research approach that included policy review, intensive interviewing and the collection of statistical information.

The integrated nature of the research where the data collection, presentation and analysis processes often occurred simultaneously was an important aspect of the

research methodology. The notions of exploration and investigation as put forward by Blumer (1969) were important in developing this process. While each occurred at every stage of the research, exploration was associated essentially with the collection of data and investigation applied to the data analysis.

This research methodology achieved the flexibility required to ensure that themes emerging from the data including the personal views of people could also be included as categories for analysis along with those that were suggested by the research questions. This process also helped to establish boundaries for the research study by permitting concepts to emerge as being interdependent and interrelated.

## PART III

EQUAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY: RHETORIC AND PRACTICEDISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

Part III presents a discussion of the research findings within the research framework established by the four questions that directed the analysis of this study:

- (i) Was the Ministry of Education's response to the Equal Opportunity Act (1984) influenced by Government administrative policies contained in "Managing Change in the Public Sector" (1986)?
- (ii) Were the Ministry of Education's equal employment opportunity policies shaped by research on barriers to women's promotion that was available from overseas and other Australian states?
- (iii) What other forces may have shaped the Ministry's response to equal employment opportunity legislation?
- (iv) Have government policies in respect to equal employment opportunity changed the traditionally subordinate position of women within the government education system?

The findings that emerged from the analysis are presented as an integrated discussion within the context of themes raised in the literature review and the research itself. These themes provide the focus for the following four chapters.

Chapter Nine describes the relationship between the Western Australian State government's approach to equal employment opportunity and reform within the public sector. Chapter Ten concentrates on the relationship between Western Australian government policies and the equal employment opportunity policies of the Ministry of Education. Chapter Eleven considers the effect that merit promotion has had on removing the barriers to the promotion of women to the position of school principal. Chapter Twelve investigates the forces that shaped the Ministry of Education's response to equal employment opportunity policies. Chapter Thirteen provides a summary, draws conclusions and outlines implications of the study.

CHAPTER NINEWESTERN AUSTRALIAN STATE GOVERNMENTEQUAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY POLICIES

This chapter will review the approach of the Western Australian State government to achieving both equal employment opportunities and a more efficient public sector through the implementation of two policies: the Equal Opportunity Act (WA) 1984 and "Managing Change in the Public Sector" (1986).

9.1 INTRODUCTION

The Western Australian government policies identified for this study reflect the national trends identified in the literature review. The State Labor government, elected in 1983, developed a public sector management policy, "Managing Change in the Public Sector" (1986) that was premised on the principle of economic rationalism through improved human resource management (Yeatman, 1990).

The State government's rationale for this approach was:

"Because Government activity, unlike much of private industry, is in the service sector and highly labour intensive, the greatest efficiencies are to be obtained through the better management and deployment of people." (Managing Change in the Public Sector, 1986, p.22).

This management framework was characterised by two major features: appointment by merit and devolution of responsibility

## 9.2 THE MERIT PRINCIPLE

In order to provide the most effective and efficient service "Managing Change in the Public Sector" (1986) advocated that all employment decisions, including promotion, should be founded on merit-based selection procedures and that access to employment must be available to all groups. Within "Managing Change in the Public Sector" (1986), no mention was made of promoting the interests of any specific social group. There was no acknowledgement that women had been disadvantaged or unfairly treated and consequently occupy the least powerful, the least secure and the most poorly rewarded positions within the Western Australian public sector (Department of Employment and Training, 1990). There was no stated commitment within the policy to acknowledge either past discrimination or to compensate those affected by it.

The Equal Opportunity Act (WA) 1984 provided the legal framework for the State government's policy and legislated for the removal of all directly discriminatory provisions from public sector employment policies, awards and regulations. Consequently, because of these policies, women were no longer prevented from applying for the same types of employment, promotion and benefits as men. However, while the legislation did identify women as being a disadvantaged group for whom State government departments must develop equal employment opportunity strategies, it did not have the power to compel these same departments to ensure that the strategies succeed.

The State government's approach to equal employment opportunity was based on a view that the concept of merit is inherently bias-free and consequently when applied to evaluate the worthiness of individuals for appointment, it automatically "factors out" discriminators such as race or sex. Once an individual presents themselves for selection based on merit, it was considered that they would be assessed fairly and objectively.

Policies based on this premise have not acknowledged that within organisations there are forces that work towards reproducing the traditional culture by appointing those people who share the same values and characteristics as the majority of the dominant incumbent group (Kanter, 1977; Burton, 1990). Therefore, while many different types of people may satisfy and even exceed selection criteria,



appointment is likely to be decided on unstated criteria, that have more to do with homosociability or the degree to which applicants share characteristics with organisational incumbents (Kanter, 1977).

### 9.3 DEVOLUTION

The other important aspect of "Managing Change in the Public Sector" (1986) that impacted on equal employment opportunity policies was increased devolution of decision-making in the area of human resource management. Reforms relied heavily on the State government retaining the responsibility for policy-making but placed the responsibility for policy implementation with individual government departments. This meant that within their existing budgets and corporate plans, departments were expected to set their own objectives, develop strategies, describe performance indicators and allocate resources on the basis of priority, to a range of government policy objectives, including equal employment opportunity:

"...public sector organisations can become responsible for their programs and expenditures in the same way that Governments are responsible to the electorate for their policies, public sector management must have the nature of its accountability defined."  
(1986, p.4).

This devolved responsibility was reinforced by the Equal Opportunity Act (WA) 1984. The legislation required that all State government departments prepare and implement equal employment opportunity management plans that would communicate the organisation's strategies and progress towards achieving equal employment opportunity for all employees. This requirement was cited in "Managing Change in the Public Sector" (1986):

"There are a number of other initiatives which have been taken to improve management practice within the public sector. For example, one of the pieces of legislation which has given the Government great pleasure is the Equal Opportunity Act...All public sector organisations have been asked to develop equal opportunity management plans." (1986, p.22).

The Director of Equal Opportunity in Public Employment released a document entitled "EEO Management Plan: Key Requirements" (1986) which provided government departments with information about the government's context for equal employment opportunity and guidelines for the preparation of management plans. This document reinforced the notion already established in "Managing Change in the Public Sector" (1986), that equal employment opportunity was directly linked to organisational efficiency:

"The plan can convey to others a sense of that organisation's concern for effective management" (Directorate of Equal Opportunity in Public Employment, 1986, Preface).

The Equal Opportunity Act (WA) 1984, reinforced the assumption in "Managing Change in the Public Sector" (1986) that through a review of the organisation, those employment policies and practices that discriminate against women will be identified. At the same time management and staff by participating in this process will increase their understanding of the effect of discrimination, and willingly change both their individual attitudes and behaviours and the culture and operation of the organisation.

Over the past twenty years a growing body of literature has emerged that challenges the assumption that organisations willingly change their cultures and behaviours when they are shown to be unfair (Jacques, 1976; Kanter, 1977). Women interviewed for this study were also unconvinced.

"We thought that by showing them the figures that were proof of the discrimination against women teachers they would support increased promotion for women but it was just the opposite." (U2).

"Senior Ministry personnel (all male) sometimes addressed groups of angry hostile men and actually said: "Equal opportunity doesn't mean taking jobs away from men". Imagine how women felt, but how right that was". (P4).

While at the time of this study, there has been no evaluation of the effectiveness of a devolved approach to the implementation of equal employment opportunity within Western Australia, there is evidence from other states that suggests it has limitations.

Research in New South Wales where equal employment opportunity legislation most closely resembles that of Western Australia, indicates that devolution which has involved broad guidelines and non-specific expectations of equal employment opportunity responsibilities to individual departments, has resulted in diverse progress both within departments and across the public sector. For while it appears that almost all departments required to develop an equal employment opportunity management plan and report its progress to government do so, the actual achievement of equal employment opportunities, is still seriously impeded. (Office of the Directorate of Equal Opportunity in Public Employment of New South Wales, 1986).

Much of the relevant literature, indicates that there is a requirement for strong centralised, expert support and guidance during the development, implementation and evaluation of a change programme (Bennis, 1966; Kanter, 1985). Kanter (1985) also asserts that programmes designed to provide equity require strong corporate leadership to create a range of innovative programmes.

As with similar Labor government policies throughout Australia, "Managing Change in the Public Sector" (1986) incorporated social justice issues within the corporate managerial framework by introducing equal employment opportunity as an integral part of public sector reform:

"The following are those which will be addressed:

- merit as the basis for recruitment and promotion...
- social responsibility ...
- equal employment opportunity
- fairness, justice, equity and respect in the treatment of staff
- industrial democracy." (1986, pp. 11-12).

There is growing scepticism within the literature that equal employment opportunity can be achieved within a context of corporate managerialism that requires "doing more with less" and increasing the devolution of responsibility for prioritising and evaluating outcomes. The principles

underpinning corporate managerialism appear increasingly to contradict much of the research about the introduction of major social change. For example, Yeatman (1991, p.16) points out,

".....equal opportunity in this context comes to be reframed in terms of what it can do to improve management, not of what it can do to develop the conditions of social justice and democratic citizenship in Australia."

Bryson (1987, p.259) describes this management style as having a "distinct masculine flavour" and argues that:

"Equal employment opportunity policies have been developed within a managerialist framework, using essentially formal management techniques. This presents an obvious potential between means and ends. The equal opportunity goals are officially toward greater equity, an outcome which is not getting great billing in public administration. On the other hand, the managerial processes which are the means of achieving equity objectives form part of a policy of administrative reform focussed explicitly on the goal of efficiency."

#### 9.4 SUMMARY

A review of "Managing Change in the Public Sector" (1986) and the Equal Opportunity Act (WA) 1984 indicates that the Western Australian State government was able to incorporate a number of political imperatives into a single agenda for creating more efficient and effective management of the public sector through the adoption of a corporate managerial approach.

The demands of traditionally disadvantaged groups such as women for better employment were integrated with the need to impose greater control over the public sector.

The focus of these policies including the legislation was on the provision of equal access or opportunities, rather than the achievement of equal outcomes. By removing legal barriers in the form of rules and regulations women were able to apply for positions previously denied to them. However, this concept of equal employment opportunity did not acknowledge the extensive research that shows that barriers to women gaining employment comparable with men is the result of more subtle factors that impact on the nature and organisation of work in relation to women and men. State government policies did not attempt to address these factors, by either setting quantifiable targets for the employment of women, or legislating for greater accountability within

public sector organisations to achieve increased and more diverse employment of women at all levels and in all areas of the workforce.

Equal employment opportunity is shaped by two major features of Western Australian State government policies. These are the application of the merit principle and the devolution of responsibilities to public sector human resource management departments. In Chapter Ten the influence of these features in the equal employment opportunity policies of the Ministry of Education will be discussed in relation to the promotion of women to the position of principal.



## CHAPTER TEN

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION EQUAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY POLICIES

This chapter will examine the Ministry of Education's equal employment opportunity policies through an exploration and analysis of the policies themselves, a review of employment statistics as they relate to the promotion of women to the position of school principal and an analysis of interview data directly related to these policies. The first section will present a statistical profile of the position of school principal during the period 1985 - 1991, by comparing the number of women and men who were appointed during this period.

The second section will investigate the major features of two policies, the Equal Employment Opportunity Management Plan (1988) and the Exemption from the Equal Opportunity Act (1987).

The third section of this chapter highlights features of the policy development process as perceived by the policy actors interviewed for this study.

## 10.1 WOMEN PRINCIPALS 1985-1991

For the purpose of reviewing the nature and effect of the Ministry of Education's equal employment opportunity policies this study highlights the promotion of women principals during the period 1985 to 1991. The starting year is particularly significant : 1985 was the first year of operation for both the Equal Opportunity Act (WA) and the Ministry of Education's merit promotion system.

The employment data collected for the study show a combined increase of women principals in the Primary and Secondary Divisions from 27 (3.8%) in 1985 to 77 (10.1%) in 1991. While superficially these statistics could be viewed as a positive sign the following data reveals a somewhat different picture.

### 10.1.1 Primary Division

In 1985 there were 510 primary schools in Western Australia, yet only 13 (2.5%) women occupied the position of principal. This represents 2.5% of the total number of principal positions. Six years later the number of primary schools had increased to 549 - a 7.6% increase. Yet in 1991 the number of women principals had increased to only 32, 5.8% of the total number of principal positions.

In the largest primary schools (Class 1A, Class 1, Class 11) in 1985 there were only 3 women (0.8%) filling the 342 principal positions. Six years later there were 385 principal positions (11.2% increase) in these largest schools but only 15 (3.9%) were filled by women.

While in percentage terms, the figures are arguably positive, they need to be treated cautiously. Table 1 below shows that in absolute terms, women have actually made little progress in gaining increased representation at the level of principal in the largest primary schools.

TABLE 1

## NO OF VACANCIES (CLASS 1A, CLASS 1, CLASS 11 PRIMARY SCHOOLS)

|             | Increase in | Males     | Females   |
|-------------|-------------|-----------|-----------|
|             | Number of   |           |           |
|             | Vacancies   |           |           |
| 1985 - 1986 | 13          | 9         | 4         |
| 1986 - 1987 | 1           | 0         | 1         |
| 1987 - 1988 | 7           | 7         | 0         |
| 1988 - 1989 | 6           | 3         | 3         |
| 1989 - 1990 | 11          | 8         | 3         |
| 1990 - 1991 | 5           | 4         | 1         |
|             | <u>43</u>   | <u>31</u> | <u>12</u> |

Table 1 starkly reveals that in the Western Australia's largest government primary schools, where arguably the greatest need exists to increase the number of females in leadership positions, representation of women at the level of principal is actually going backwards. Of the 43 principalship that have fallen vacant since 1985, women have gained promotion to only 12, while men have filled 31 of the positions.

#### 10.1.2 Special Education

In 1985 there were 46 Education Support Centres with 7 women (15.2%) occupying the position of principal. By 1991, women held 29 (50%) of the 58 principalships. This is a significant improvement for women but it to must be placed in perspective. .

Special education is an area of employment within the education sector where female workers are in the overwhelming majority. It is also an area of education activity that is regarded by many as not part of the mainstream. Finally teachers who work in special education have severely limited prospects for promotion and this largely explains why very few males have sought to make a career in special education.

### 10.1.3 Secondary Education

In 1985 there were 146 secondary schools with 7 women (4.8%) occupying principalships. By 1991, the number of secondary schools had increased to 153. In the same period the number of women principals increased to 16 (10.4%). Again this improvement, albeit a fairly modest one, needs to be treated circumspectly.

For instance, the apparent improvement in the number of women gaining promotion to the position of secondary principal masks the fact, that despite a significant increase in the number of promotion applications from women, there was no proportionate concurrent improvement in the number of women gaining promotion. This matter is discussed further in the next section, "Application for Principalships".

And the statistics do not show that the number of women occupying the position of principal of a Class 1 or Class II District High School has fallen from three in 1985 to zero in 1991. In fact, there has been no substantive female principal of a District High School since 1989.

### 10.1.4 Applications for Principalships

The merit promotion system was phased in over a period of five years. Therefore between the years 1985 to 1988, not

all promotions to the position of principal were based on merit. With respect to the information regarding the number of applications for principalships during this period, the Ministry of Education advised that they were unable to differentiate between those applications made on the basis of the traditional seniority system and those applications made in accordance with the merit promotion procedures.

However since 1989, merit promotion has been in full operation at the principal level and therefore the information provided by the Ministry of Education for 1989- 1991 is likely to be more meaningful for the purpose of an analysis of the effect of the merit promotion system on the promotion of women to the position of principal.

The Ministry of Education's data shows that since 1989 the number of women applying for promotion to school principal has increased from 69 to 131 in 1991 (90% increase). Yet despite this very significant increase in the number of women applying for promotion, the actual number of women who were promoted in 1989 was 10; and it was exactly the same number in 1991.

The data further reveals that:

- (i) In 1989, of the 609 applicants for promotion to principal, 11.3% were women, yet only 7.9% of these women gained promotion.

- (ii) In 1990, of the 688 applicants, 13.7% were women, yet only 11.5% of the vacancies were filled by women.
- (iii) In 1991, there were 694 applicants, 18.9% were women, but only 16.4% of vacancies were filled by women.

This information provides a useful context for the following discussion of the Ministry of Education's equal employment opportunity objectives, policies and strategies.

## 10.2 MINISTRY OF EDUCATION EQUAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY POLICIES

Since 1983, the Ministry of Education has increasingly been required to comply with the employment policies and principles adopted for the administration of the public sector. Consequently it followed that the Ministry of Education's employment policies and procedures would reflect the principles of "Managing Change in the Public Sector" (1986) and the requirements for compliance with the Equal Opportunity Act (WA) 1984. In particular the application of merit for the selection of staff and the devolution of human resource management responsibilities are major features of the Ministry of Education's approach to equal employment opportunity.

### 10.2.1 Equal Employment Opportunity Management Plan

In accordance with the requirement of the Equal Opportunity Act (WA) 1984 the Ministry of Education produced an Equal Employment Opportunity Management Plan (1988) that represented a plan for the achievement of better employment opportunities for those groups identified in the legislation including women. The objectives and strategies contained in the Management Plan were developed on the basis of an employment survey that profiled the workforce on the basis of occupation, level and gender.

The Management Plan contains a policy statement that stated as its major aim:

"...the achievement of equality of opportunity in employment and to ensuring that all employees or potential employees are treated with justice, respect, equality and dignity in relation to access to employment entitlements..." (Ministry of Education, 1988; Preface).

This policy statement of approximately 300 words makes direct reference to the Equal Opportunity Act (WA) 1984 and identifies senior Ministry of Education administrators as having responsibility for the implementation of the Management Plan.



In line with government policy to promote devolution of responsibility, the nature of the Management Plan and its subsequent evaluation of progress towards the achievement of stated outcomes were left to the Ministry of Education to design and implement.

Additionally, the Ministry of Education's Management Plan contains eight major objectives that cover the issues of awareness raising, the development and communication of policies and the review of current procedures to:

"...ensure that they confirm to EEO principles and demonstrate fair practice", and training and development, which includes special career counselling programmes for "all employees" (1988, p.2).

The Equal Employment Opportunity Management Plan contains 58 more specific objectives described within a framework of a rationale, strategies, target groups, timelines and monitoring procedures. The objectives were organised into eight categories:

1. Equal Employment Opportunity Policy
2. Equal Employment Opportunity Awareness
3. Demographic Profile/Monitoring of the Management Plan
4. Recruitment

5. Appointment, Promotion and Transfer
6. Training and Development
7. Conditions of Service
8. Review of Permanency

Only one objective relates directly to promotion:

"6.0 To review and where necessary revise appointment, promotion and transfer policies to ensure they conform to equal employment opportunity principles and demonstrate fair practice." (Ministry of Education, 1986, p.61).

Of the accompanying nine strategies only four relate directly to promotion:

"6.2 To investigate the feasibility of providing job descriptions and selection criteria for all positions in the Ministry."

"6.3 To investigate the feasibility of providing post-selection counselling to applicants for positions and promotion."

"6.4 To continue to review Merit Promotion procedures for teaching staff and establish monitoring mechanisms."

"6.8 To seek a permanent extension of the Exemption granted by the Equal Opportunity Tribunal for sex-linked deputy principal positions."

(Ministry of Education, 1988, p.61)

The only mention of women and promotion is made in relation to strategy 6.8 where the rationale states:

"...the sex-linked deputy principalships have been instrumental in raising the number of women in senior positions in the Ministry (Ministry, 1988, p.70).

One of the difficulties in assessing the effect or success of the Management Plan is that none of the stated objectives are linked to a specific or quantifiable outcome, nor is there any formal process for the evaluation of progress. Instead, the Management Plan essentially prescribes "monitoring" strategies that require the collection of data for annual reporting to the Director of Equal Opportunity in Public Employment, as required by the Equal Opportunity Act (WA) 1984.

As G1 indicated during an interview for this study, the Director of Equal Opportunity in Public Employment does not have the power to insist on either measurable outcomes or measurable progress towards the achievement of the Management Plan objectives. The Director's power is limited to ensuring that all public sector organisations develop and submit both a Management Plan and an Annual Report as required by the legislation:

"The Management Plan unfortunately can be used as an end in itself ... its actual effect on the organisation and things like the promotion of women were out of our [Directorate of Equal Opportunity in Public Employment] control"

(G1).

In assessing the effectiveness of the Ministry of Education's Equal Employment Opportunity Management Plan in increasing the number of women principals, a number of aspects need to be highlighted. The Management Plan's objectives are general, rather than specific and tend to focus more on raising awareness amongst personnel about equal employment opportunity issues rather than implementing strategies to increase the promotion of women. Significantly, because there was no accountability mechanism to monitor whether the Management Plan's objectives were being met, progress did not have to be demonstrated.

Another significant aspect of the Ministry of Education's Management Plan is that it does propose strategies by which women can learn those skills and behaviours that were considered necessary for promotion. Career development workshops and an annual conference are examples of these strategies. However, while the Management Plan provides for women the opportunity to change, this did not extend to the organisation.

Staff appointed at a central level to co-ordinate equal employment opportunity initiatives were generally involved with the development and communication of policies but had no line management authority to enforce the implementation, let alone the achievement of the policy objectives.

Interviewees, M2 and M3, while both holding at various stages over the past six years designated equal employment opportunity positions within the Ministry of Education, admitted to little involvement in the actual formulation of policy. Both perceived their roles as being generally removed from the decision-making with their focus on the administration and communication of the Equal Employment Opportunity Management Plan. Some of the difficulties they perceived with the Ministry's policies are to do with status of personnel, physical and functional location of personnel and failure of equal employment opportunity policies to be considered as anything other than a women's issue and therefore marginalised.

When commenting about the extent to which the policies had increased the number of women principals, both M2 and M3 believed that the policies had failed. Both women indicated that there was never an objective to increase the number of women principals, despite the belief by many women teachers (and men) that this in fact would be a policy outcome.

M2 believed that the problem was that the legislation did not compel the Ministry of Education to produce results such as an increase in the number of women principals:

"We needed an affirmative action programme...there should've been a push for that. I think it should have been part of the legislation...looking back on it, we thought it was absolutely marvellous and that it was going to do all sorts of wonderful things. But I don't think it's a good piece of legislation, I think it's watered down." (M2).

Clearly from the point of view of policy actors, the Equal Employment Opportunity Management Plan's objectives did not address the known barriers to women's promotion as revealed by extensive academic research some of which was cited as supporting evidence by the Ministry of Education when applying for the Equal Opportunity Act exemption (Equal Opportunity Commission, 1987). Further, the Ministry of Education's own workforce profile prepared as the preliminary

requirement of the Management Plan also provided information about the barriers to promotion that were specific to Western Australian women teachers (Ministry of Education, 1987). The findings of all of this research identified the major barriers to women teachers achieving promotion as:

- \*lack of permanent status
- \*State-wide availability
- \*limited administrative experience
- \*lack of essential qualifications
- \*negative attitudes of men towards women

With this significant body of available knowledge about the barriers to women teachers getting promotion it is not unreasonable to assume that the Ministry of Education's Equal Employment Opportunity Management Plan would target these known difficulties. That it didn't is relevant to understanding why there was no major increase in the number of women school principals.

The Management Plan contained the Ministry of Education's "Equal Employment Opportunity Policy Statement" which states that:

"..it is the responsibility of all staff to accept their personal involvement in the application of this Policy and Equal Employment Opportunity Management Plan."  
(Ministry of Education, 1988, p.1)

While reflecting the State government's policy of devolving responsibility, this policy statement is problematic in its application. The Ministry of Education's Equal Employment Opportunity Management Plan provides a set of objectives that are framed in general terms of promoting awareness of equal employment opportunity policies and reviewing existing employment policies and procedures.

There is no explicit attachment of responsibility to specific line management personnel, including school staff for the achievement of, or progress towards these objectives. Further, there is no indication of what constitutes the achievement of these objectives within different organisational settings such as schools. The policy and the Management Plan fail to describe what the Ministry of Education considers to be "bottom line" performance in the achievement of equal employment opportunity objectives.

Policy actors interviewed for this study highlighted the lack of impact of any practical achievement of equal employment opportunity policy with respect to the promotion of women:

The Ministry was supposed to promote EEO, but it failed to get the message across. Men in promotional positions still think that women are being promoted by quotas." (P1).



"Why should principals develop or distribute equal opportunity policies? No one is going to check up on them?" (U3).

"If men knew they were going to be assessed for promotion on their achievement of EEO, then we'd see some progress". (U2).

Without setting clear expectations about what constituted equal employment opportunity and the assessment of its progress within the Equal Employment Opportunity Management Plan, the Ministry of Education consigned the policy to a diverse and according to many of the interviewees,

"...at best a poster on the pin-up board, at worst the rubbish bin." (P4).

Both U1 and M1 believe that both women and men had false expectations of the government's equal employment opportunity policies. Both contended that the State government was not going to risk its electoral power by changing the status quo in the general workforce, or specifically in education.

### 10.2.2 Exemption from the Equal Opportunity Act (WA) 1984

The only Ministry of Education equal employment opportunity policy that was supported by most of the interviewees was the retention of sex-linked deputy principal positions which ran counter to the government's policies. While government policies and equal employment opportunity legislation did not support the quarantining of employment or particular positions on the grounds of sex, in order to ensure a pool of experienced and qualified women, in July 1987, the Minister for Education was granted an Exemption from the operation of the Equal Opportunity Act. The Exemption allowed for a five year retention of sex-linked deputy positions in those schools where they exist.

Traditionally, in the Western Australian government school system, there has been sex-linked promotional positions, at the deputy principal level. This has meant equal numbers of men and women eligible to apply for the position of school principal. Under equal employment opportunity legislation, this practice became unlawful.

In all other states, where equal employment opportunity legislation has been introduced sex-linked positions were abolished. The result was that women's representation at the deputy principal and principal level fell dramatically. This was despite their numbers in the teacher workforce

generally remaining unchanged, their number of applications for promotion increasing and the introduction of merit based promotion (Equal Opportunity Commission, 1987, p.81).

The evidence presented in support of the Exemption was based largely on the importance to students and the community that women be seen in positions of authority and that there was the need to redress the imbalance between the sexes at the principal level. In relation to the latter point it was argued that the retention of the sex-linked positions would ensure that a substantial group of women with the requisite administrative experience would be able to promote to the position of school principal (Equal Opportunity Commission, 1987, p.119).

Because of the implementation of equal employment opportunity policies including merit promotion, the Ministry of Education witnesses contended that by 1992, no exemption would be necessary and that women would be represented more equally at the principal level. As the research data demonstrates this has not occurred and many of the interviewees for this study dispute both the Ministry of Education's contention and its commitment to increasing the number of women principals.

The Exemption was considered by G1 as being very significant in ensuring that whatever the promotion system, women would

have guaranteed senior administrative positions. However, she believed that the Ministry of Education fought the introduction of regular external monitoring of progress towards increasing the number of women principals because of a lack of commitment to this objective:

"Why would you reject regular monitoring? The Ministry didn't have a clue what it was going to do. The Exemption gave them five years in which to continue to do nothing." (G1).

The Exemption was considered by the four women school principals interviewed, as being significant in ensuring that women had an equal opportunity with their male peers to apply for promotion to principal. Without the deputy principal (female) position being quarantined, all believed that women would not only find it extremely difficult to become principals, but that they would disappear from the senior school administration all together.

None of the eleven policy actors believed that the Ministry of Education had any intention or plan for increasing the number of women principals. The Exemption was in itself a significant strategy but was not supported by any strategic approach to achieving equal employment opportunity outcomes.

The perceived or actual lack of administrative experience is an acknowledged barrier to women achieving promotion. During the Exemption case before the Equal Opportunity Tribunal the Ministry of Education acknowledged this problem. However, the Ministry of Education is perceived by all interviewees to have done little to implement other strategies designed to either directly complement the Exemption or provide alternatives to ensuring that women teachers undertake administrative roles:

"The Ministry has organised some ad hoc seminars and workshops to inform women about promotion, but getting women interested in promotion doesn't change the attitudes or behaviours of the system or of men." (U2).

There was a very strong perception amongst the majority of the interviewees that the Exemption needed to be maintained,

"The Exemption has been really important but it expires in 1992. Then how will women get the administrative experience or status to become principals?" (P3).

The Exemption ran counter to both State government policies and the general tenor of the Ministry of Education's response to the Equal Opportunity Act (WA) 1984. In

identifying what the forces might have been that influenced the adoption of such a policy, the policy actors provide the most information. Unlike other matters concerned with promotion, which would have been widely communicated and debated within the Ministry and Union forums, the application for the Exemption was given a very low profile, with even senior personnel in both organisations claiming ignorance of the case, until after the event.

The reason for the Exemption, put forward by nine of the interviewees was that the Ministry of Education was afraid that the removal of the sex-linked positions would result in a major decline in the number of women in promotional positions, and that this would prove politically embarrassing for the Government. Somewhat cynically, the majority of the interviewees believed that while the Exemption was argued on the grounds that it would provide the Ministry of Education with time to develop and implement strategies that would ensure increased numbers of women in the position of principal the reality was that the Exemption was an end in itself:

"I'm sure they (the Government) were buying time. The Ministry employed a large number of women, many of whom had become very active within the Union, women's groups and political parties. The Exemption was a way of looking like they were doing something." (U1).

"The Exemption's allowed women the opportunity to gain the administrative experience needed to apply for principals' jobs. It's kept women there. The pity, though, is that the Ministry of Education didn't use the five years to actively encourage and ensure that women from the pool of deputies were promoted." (U2).

The fear of increased promotions for women was also identified by U2 as the rallying point for male teachers in opposing any equal employment opportunity policies that advocated affirmative action strategies specifically to advantage women. U2 recalled how some men, who were aware of the Exemption application, fought against the retention of the sex-linked deputy positions on the very grounds that it ran counter to the intent and spirit of equal opportunity principles. However U2 was convinced that this was not their real motive for opposing the Exemption:

"They (men) believed that if the sex-linked nature of the deputy position was removed, then there would be twice the current number of available positions for them (men) to apply for...So men were suddenly jumping on the equal opportunity bandwagon, saying that it was unfair and discriminatory to keep these positions for women. The exemption was described as being "anti" equal opportunity." (U2).

Ul considered the Exemption as being the only affirmative action strategy still in place and therefore thought that there would be vigorous opposition, particularly from men, if an extension was sought by the Ministry in 1992. When questioned about why the Ministry introduced such a measure, in the first place, Ul contended:

"They didn't know what to do, so they had to do something. The Exemption in itself didn't improve things for women..it just kept things the way they were. I think the Ministry was hoping that the whole thing would eventually go away, possibly with a change in Government".

(U1)."

Ul was convinced that the Exemption was critical to ensuring that women would have the necessary status to apply for principal positions. However, unless there were major changes to the promotion system that acknowledged gender and also a commitment by the Ministry of Education to guaranteeing that a quota of principals would be women, women would continue to be unsuccessful in gaining these positions.



While M1 took a very prominent role in the presentation of the Ministry of Education's Exemption application, he had very little to do with the development of the Exemption as a policy decision:

"I'm sure that it was Dr Louden's idea. He almost single-handedly directed the Ministry's equal employment opportunity." (M1).

M1's extensive knowledge of the promotion system's history and procedures was an integral part of the evidence to convince the Equal Opportunity Commission that women had been previously disadvantaged, and that an affirmative action strategy was necessary to allow them to have the opportunity to apply for principal promotion. Like some of the other participants, M1 remembers that there had been very little publicity about the Exemption:

"Given the strong opposition to previous attempts to introduce affirmative action strategies by the professional associations, it was surprising that there wasn't a greater backlash. Only two male deputies appeared in the Commission to formally oppose the Exemption. I'm positive that had the Ministry announced its intention more loudly, things may have been different." (M1).

### 10.3 POLICY DEVELOPMENT

The investigation of the data reveals that there existed a disparity between what was expected by women teachers of equal employment opportunity policies and what in fact was the reality of the Ministry of Education's commitment. Many of the women interviewed believed that because men were in control of the government, the legislature and the Ministry of Education, there was no practical commitment to any real redistribution of power that would include women; and that present equal employment opportunity policies at State government and Ministry of Education level, clearly demonstrate this has been the outcome.

G1 was responsible for assisting over 200 government departments and statutory bodies, including the Ministry of Education, in the implementation of the Equal Opportunity Act (WA) 1984. She had a very thorough knowledge of the Equal Opportunity Act (1984) in both content and scope and carried a strong understanding of the sorts of policies and actions that were expected as a demonstration of compliance with the legislation.

In recalling her interaction with the Ministry of Education as they developed their equal employment opportunity policies, G1 observed that senior Ministry of Education personnel had limited knowledge about the legislation, its

purpose or its power. Further, G1 considered that there was at times resentment shown towards the imposition of the legislative requirements and therefore towards her and her role. This was demonstrated by the tardiness of the Ministry to meet set deadlines and provocative comments made at Working Parties:

"...we'll [the Ministry] do what we want." (G1).

The Ministry of Education according to G1, was concerned to be seen to comply with the requirements of the legislation, rather than the spirit:

"The Ministry was not going to be seen not to be producing the required policies, but they weren't committed to doing anymore or making a real difference for women." (G1).

Given the nature of the legislation, it was the policy production that was important, rather than its effect and G1 indicated that this was a weakness of the legislation.

In order to comply with legislative requirements that required consultative mechanisms the Ministry of Education established the Equal Opportunity Working Party. This committee was established with representation from the Ministry of Education, the State School Teacher's Union

(WA), Civil Service Association and the Federation of Miscellaneous Workers' Union, Government nominees and school-based staff.

According to interviewees who had been involved with the Working Party, the group did not formulate or develop policies but rather was used as a sounding board to "run things by". It was politically inspired, met irregularly and served little worthwhile purpose. The Chairperson of the Working Party, Dr Warren Loudon (Ministry of Education's Chief Executive Officer), was identified as being the driving force behind the Ministry of Education's equal employment opportunity policies and was perceived to keep tight control over the operation of the Working Party.

U3 was involved with the Ministry of Education's Equal Opportunity Working Party and remembered the Working Party as a very frustrating process.

"Most of the women on the Working Party believed we would be able to really improve things for women, but we increasingly got the feeling we were to be a "rubber stamp" for the Ministry." (U3).

On a number of occasions the Union wrote to the Ministry of Education about the conduct of the Working Party,

particularly its infrequent meetings and lack of opportunity for the representatives to table concerns or formulate policy:

"It was a very ad hoc process and I think nobody understood, myself included, at that stage, the work that was required to get a meaningful structure in place and an incredibly comprehensive review of policies and practices ... it was the equal employment opportunity legislation that imposed and brought it about."  
(U3).

In describing the Working Party's operation as being "ad hoc", U3 remembered the committee as being:

"...very much dependant on personality." (U3).

U3 identified the cause of some of these problems as being to do with lack of decision-making structures:

"In retrospect the Ministry was caught very much unaware because they literally didn't have a structure other than top down, so they had no formal mechanisms to put in place for reviewing and working..." (U3).

Many of the objectives of the Management Plan are to do with raising awareness of Equal Employment Opportunity with Ministry of Education staff. U3 argued that these objectives in the early days after the enactment of the legislation were given very high priority especially by the Chief Executive Officer who raised the issue at all levels of the organisation.

In observing the policy process in the Ministry of Education, G1 believed that the consultation process was superficial, with the women representing the Ministry of Education from central office and schools having little status or power within the organisation:

"The Equal Opportunity Working Party was controlled by senior personnel - all men. The Working Party was not involved in actually examining or developing employment policies or procedures such as the Merit Promotion system...that was done somewhere else, also by men." (G1).

Some of the difficulties perceived with the Ministry's approach to equal employment opportunity are to do with status of personnel, physical and functional location of personnel and failure of equal employment opportunity policies to be considered as anything else than a women's issue and therefore marginalised.

When commenting about the extent to which the policies had increased the number of women principals, both M2 and M3 believed that the policies had failed. Both women, indicated that it was their belief that there never was an objective to increase the number of women principals, despite the expectation of many women teachers that this in fact would be a policy outcome.

M2 commented that it was not only women who had held this expectation, but also men. In particular, professional teacher administrator groups such as the Western Australian Primary Principals' Association (WAPPA) lobbied the Government, the State Opposition and the Union to reject equal employment opportunity. These groups were (and still are) overwhelmingly male and hostile to equal employment opportunity. Both M2 and M3 believe that despite certain objectives in the Management Plan, the Ministry of Education has committed little time and resources to overcoming either the hostility of men or their lack of understanding. Men believed that equal employment opportunity meant quarantining a certain number of school principal positions each year specifically for women:

"They've never understood equal employment opportunity: Even now they believe it's affirmative action." (M2).

10.4 SUMMARY

The discussion of the research findings reveals that there is disparity between what was expected by teachers of equal employment opportunity policies and what in fact is the reality. The findings reveal through an analysis of the statistical data, that limited progress has been made in increasing the number of women occupying the position of principal. The increase in numbers within the primary division, is almost exclusively due to the establishment of schools in traditionally female occupational areas such as Junior Primary and Special Education, where at the time of their creation women constituted the vast majority. The growth in the actual number of primary schools has outstripped the rate at which women have gained promotion to the position of principal.

Within the secondary division, the increase is slightly more marked but hardly significant and is attributed by interviewees to the existence of particularly talented women who were prepared to go to any school in the state.

The reasons for the failure of the Ministry of Education's equal employment opportunity policies considered in this study, to significantly increase the number of women principals is attributed by policy actors to the fact that none of the policies has, as a stated objective, improved quantifiable outcomes for women.



Despite the expectations and belief of many women, increasing the number of women principals was not an objective for the Ministry of Education. Rather, in line with State government policy all direct regulatory barriers to women applying for promotion were removed. It appears from the study that none of the extensive literature that provides reasons for the limited promotion of women teachers has been used to remove the indirect and systemic bias that exists within the State government education system.

Also emerging from particularly the interview data, is a view that the Ministry of Education was prepared only to comply with the letter of the Equal Opportunity Act (WA) 1984 and not the spirit. The lack of effective decision making processes, poor consultation and the resistance to change traditional organisational structures contributed to an 'ad hoc' approach in providing genuine equal employment opportunities for women.

Many of the women interviewed believed that while the positions of authority within the Ministry of Education bureaucracy and schools remain the province of men, there will always be resistance and hostility to increased promotion for women.

In Chapter Eleven one of the most important Ministry of Education equal employment opportunity policies, the merit promotion system will be examined in detail.

CHAPTER ELEVENMERIT PROMOTION: THEORY AND PRACTICE

This chapter will describe the development and operation of the Ministry of Education's policy of merit promotion. Merit was a fundamental principle underpinning Western Australian State government public sector administration and equal employment opportunity policies and argued by the Ministry of Education to be an important aspect in improving the promotion opportunities of women.

11.1 MERIT PROMOTION

In 1985 as a direct response to State government policies in general and the recommendation of the Beazley Committee in particular, merit promotion was introduced into the government school system to replace the traditional seniority-based procedure. A five year phased implementation plan was adopted with the stated objective that all appointments to all promotional levels would by 1991, be merit-based.

Merit has already been identified in the literature review as an important aspect of contemporary Australian public sector management and its attendant equal employment opportunity policies. As a concept, merit was considered to

be bias-free and was established as the basis of all appointments and promotions.

The merit model is largely based on the view that once direct discriminatory barriers are removed, inherent organisational biases also disappear and appointments are then based on levels of competency. While its proponents argue that the merit principle is equitable, they fail to acknowledge the complex nature of organisations. Merit is defined according to the values and perceptions of the person charged with the responsibility of evaluating types of work and related work performance. Burton (1987) argues that merit is an outcome of organisational processes, of access to opportunities that develop it and which provide for its demonstration. Gender, for example, is a critical factor in the type of work undertaken and the power relationships that exist within organisations (Kanter, 1977).

The merit promotion system was seen by most of the interviewees as being used to demonstrate at best, a superficial commitment to the principles and practice of equal employment opportunity. In reality however, it reinforced traditional behaviours of the organisation. Many policy actors admitted that there appeared to be little difference, particularly in the primary division, between the men who were promoted to the position of principal under the seniority system and those who were promoted on merit:

"I don't believe a lot's changed - we have a different system but the same men." (P1).

The major features of the merit promotion system were qualifications, minimum service requirements and the provision of referee reports from peers, superordinates and subordinates. The referee reports were written on a standard form which identified criteria for each promotional level. Referees were required to write descriptive reports plus rank the applicant against set criteria using a numerical scale.

The reports were considered by a Promotion, Review and Advisory Board, comprising equal representation from the Ministry of Education and the State School Teachers' Union, plus an independent chairperson. For each level of promotion the Board ranked the applicants. The number of promotions each year was determined by the number of vacant positions (schools) at each particular level. Whether an applicant received a promotion was therefore determined not only by their ranking but also whether the ranked applicant had nominated one of the schools where there existed a vacancy for principal. Therefore, while an applicant may have been ranked highly, they would only receive a promotion if they had selected one of the schools where a vacancy existed. It was not uncommon for many highly ranked applicants not to gain promotion.

Invariably it was the more remote schools that were regularly vacant. And once the need to apply State-wide disappeared, applicants had only to nominate schools of their own choice. In consequence, some successful applicants received their promotion over more highly ranked colleagues, due to their preparedness to relocate. A number of the interviewees who had been members of the Promotion, Review and Advisory Board considered this to be a weakness in the system generally but very damaging to women,

"Because of their family roles many women can only apply for metropolitan schools." (P1).

"Look at most of the women principals - they're either single, divorced or supporting a retired husband" (P3)

The Ministry of Education's merit promotion system used a set of centrally developed criteria for each promotional position. These criteria focussed on administrative roles and associated behaviours. Referees were asked to assess the applicant against each of the criteria, giving each a numerical ranking from 1 to 5 plus a written description of the applicant's performance.

Many of the women policy actors interviewed believed that the criteria reflected the traditional masculine leadership

values and behaviours of the organisation and emphasised aspects of educational leadership and administration that focussed on the hierarchical nature of schools and the status of the principal:

"Part of the criteria refers to relationships with the local community. I know that a lot of men are able to involve themselves in more community based activities like sport and service clubs. Women often can't do this because of family responsibilities." (P4).

"I don't know whether being involved in local clubs means that you have a good relationship with the local community. I know women administrators who spend a lot of time with parents and kids, talking about school...maybe that's just taken for granted...not very visible." (P3).

"Some men really don't think women can be good principals. They genuinely believe men are better managers. How then will these men ever be able to rank women highly?" (P2).

In explaining how some women managed to gain promotion via the merit promotion system, all of the participants,

including the men, described the successful women as being very intelligent and high achievers:

"There are plenty of mediocre men, but all of the women principals are topnotch." (P2).

"The women are bright..." (U2).

"Women who become principals, whether you like them or not, are generally considered as exceptional, whereas many average performers amongst the men still make it." (U1).

Besides the application of the merit principle there were two other features of the merit promotion system that have been identified through the literature review and the interview data as working against women achieving promotion. These are the attitudes of men towards women and the limited opportunities for women to gain administrative experience against which they can be assessed for promotion.

Merit promotion was based essentially on the applicant being assessed by a group of referees against established criteria. The number of referees ranged between three and five, depending upon the position, with peers and superordinates constituting the majority in each case. As the majority of promotional positions are held by men, women

deputies applying for promotion to the position of principal would invariably find that their peer and superordinate referees would be men.

In relation to promotion to either principal of a high senior high school or a primary school (Class 1A), the referees included two subordinates, a peer, the principal and the district superintendent. Therefore, a woman deputy applying for promotion would be able to nominate women subordinates without too much difficulty, but would have to nominate the male deputy as a peer. Further, her school principal and district superintendent would invariably be male. It is also important to note that all referee reports other than that of the district superintendent were not cited by the applicant and they were prepared in the strictest confidence.

All of the women interviewed for this study identified that the dependence of women on male referees could and had disadvantaged women:

"I have known a couple of women whose principals were openly hostile to women being principals... what sort of support could they expect?" (U3).



"A real problem can arise when the male deputy is going for promotion either at the same time or in the future. It introduces a sense of competition...The principal doesn't want to be seen treating one differently...but I think men are loyal to men." (P1).

"Many of the complaints we (the Union) received from women deputies was about the sort of duties assigned to the male deputy by the male principal. Many women believed that there was a strong mentoring role being taken on... they couldn't put their finger on it, but they felt there was generally more support for him." (U3).

"A good reference depends on your referees knowing something about you, or liking you. Men hang out together, go to the pub together, talk sport together...more likely to be on committees together. It's harder for women to establish these sorts of relationships with men." (P4).

The final feature of merit promotion that was identified as actively working against women achieving promotion is the lack of opportunities for women to undertake visible or 'official' administrative roles within the education system, particularly at school level.

The review of the literature supports this as constituting a real barrier to women's promotion. Sampson (1987, 1987a) and the Ministry of Education Equal Employment Opportunity Survey Report (1987) highlight that both women and men teachers considered that perceived administrative experience was often more significant than actual and that women were generally stereotyped as being poor or inexperienced administrators.

The majority of the criteria for the selection of principals focussed on a range of administrative experience and skills. On the surface it appears that these criteria should be able to be met equally by women and men. All women and men who were eligible to apply for the position of principal (except for the position of Class IV Principal) would have earned at least one promotion to an administrative position. In most instances that position would be as a deputy principal.

However, as is evidenced by much research (Sampson, 1987, 1987a; Randell, 1990), women's administrative experience, despite holding the same position as men (e.g. deputy principal) may be quite different, due to the culture of the particular school, the context of their experience and the attitudes of their colleagues. Many women's administrative skills and experience have been gained and applied in marginal unrecognised roles within the school

setting including pastoral care, community liaison, early childhood and the coordination of traditionally sex-stereotyped marginal subjects such as domestic science, art and languages.

The division of labour between female and male deputy principals, highlights the inherent gender bias within the government school system. While most schools will have a male and female deputy, the roles are not formally defined, and therefore their duties and responsibilities can be significantly different. A popular view amongst women deputies during the 1970s and 1980s, and mentioned by many of the women interviewees was that their role was "to organise the morning tea and to hand out the tampons and the bandaids." Men, however, were given the more authoritative roles of student discipline, school organisation (timetabling, staff deployment, resource allocation, etc), external school representation and financial management.

The merit promotion system's criteria places heavy emphasis on the experiences and skills that are traditionally associated with school administration and therefore with male administrators. The sorts of work and responsibilities that constituted the traditional lot of women administrators has been given little or no value. Consequently, many eligible women have found it extremely difficult to measure the quality, nature and relevance of their experience

against the merit promotions selection criteria that inherently reflect the traditional values that underpin school administration and the role of the principal.

In many schools, ad-hoc administrative appointments such as year coordinator or house-person are made by staff election. A number of the participants identified the attitudes of men, and sometimes women, towards the ability of women to be able to successfully undertake the duties of these positions, as often working against women applicants,

"It's very hard to stand for an election for a professional position. I think personal attitudes about women generally and the women candidates in particular were more important than their ability to do the job." (U4).

"I try and encourage women to take on these roles - just as senior men encourage young men. I'd have to say though, women seem to more seriously question whether or not they will be the best person for the job...good for the school, good for the kids. The men though tend to be more aware of the importance of the experience for their curriculum vitae." (U2).

The one feature of the merit promotion system that was considered by all interviewees as working for women was the removal of the seniority bar. Traditionally, women had been unable, because of enforced resignation on marriage and inadequate accouchement and maternity leave provisions, to satisfy the continuous service requirements prescribed for placement on promotion lists. Merit promotion introduced minimum service eligibility requirements.

For the four women principals interviewed, the replacement of the seniority system with merit promotion, had been a major focus of their professional lives:

"I knew that unless the old system was changed women like me who have been forced to resign, or had to follow their husbands' careers, or had to raise kids alone, would never have the security or the same rewards as men." (P1).

"I wanted to be promoted because I knew that I would be the sole support for my children - the old system made it very hard for young women, or women who had returned late to teaching to ever become a principal." (P2).

The merit promotion system has been cited by Ministry of Education officials as an equal employment opportunity

policy (Louden, 1985). Similar references are cited in the transcript of the Ministry of Education's application for an Exemption from the Equal Opportunity Act (Equal Opportunity Commission, 1987).

Through these statements the Ministry of Education has contended that merit promotion has been an important plank in its equal employment opportunity programme. In particular the Ministry of Education has claimed that merit promotion would increase the promotion of women to the position of principal, by removing the disadvantage created by forced broken service, an essential feature of the seniority system (Louden, 1985; Equal Opportunity Commission, 1987).

However, this view is contested by two of the participants in this study. Both were extremely knowledgeable about merit promotion and were described by U1 (a senior union official) as the "architects" of the system. It was M1's knowledge of the promotion system over many years that resulted in the major role that he played in the Ministry of Education's Exemption case before the Equal Opportunity Commission, appearing as a major witness. In his verbatim evidence given on transcript to the Exemption case proceedings, the comprehensively outlined document a coherent and systematic description of the promotion system and those features that have worked against women.

Together in 1984 M1 and U1 began to develop the merit promotion system. However neither M1 or U1 were operating with a personal brief or formal instruction to develop a merit system that would increase the number of women principals.

Neither U1 or M1 believed that merit promotion was introduced for the purpose of ensuring that more women gained promotion. While the removal of the seniority bar was significant, both agreed that it was removed to open up the system to less senior men rather than to specifically promote the interests of women. In developing the merit promotion system and its selection criteria, the implications for women were never considered. U1 observed,

"I think if we gave it any thought it was that women as well as men could be objectively measured against the criteria. None of us had ever heard of the arguments that merit could be gender-biased".

Six years after the introduction of merit promotion, M1 believes that women have benefited from the system and points to the numbers of women principals in 1991, compared to the numbers under the seniority system. However, he does acknowledge that in comparison to men, women do not seem to be able to easily gain promotion to positions that are not

sex-linked. His reasons for this are that generally women have less chance of being able to demonstrate the required administrative ability, the bulk of the referees are male by virtue of status, and women are still limited in their promotional options by their need to stay in the metropolitan area.

Ul since leaving the Union has spent some time working with human resource systems in areas that include job classification and staff appraisal. He identified the lack of acknowledgement of gender issues at the time the next promotion system was being devised merit promotion system was being devised as significant in the failure of the merit system to increase the number of women occupying principalships:

"I have done a lot of reading about these issues....people like Clare Burton who clearly demonstrate that unless there is a deliberate objective of removing gender bias then women will be disadvantaged when merit is the basis for selection...The merit promotion system was developed by men, the candidates were generally men and the referees were mostly men. I think this explains why women have not benefited very much from the system...it wasn't designed to benefit them."



All of the women principals interviewed had received their promotion to principal under the merit system. However, they did not believe that they had been advantaged in any way other than by the removal of the seniority bar. They unanimously considered that the women who 'made it through' were exceptional and generally carried a very high profile. While they did not resile from support for merit-based promotion, all believed that there were some complex issues that at the time of the establishment of the merit promotion system, they had been unaware.

These included:

- \* gender bias inherent in the selection criteria and measurement of merit process
- \* no understanding of the roles undertaken by women in schools
- \* the very real hostility by men towards increased promotion of women
- \* the social constraints that made country service difficult for women
- \* the power of sex-stereotyped roles on referees
- \* little encouragement for women to seek promotion.

"If merit promotions has worked for women - where are all the women principals?" (P2).

## 11.2 SUMMARY

The discussion of the findings reveals that there is disparity between what women expected merit promotion to deliver and what in fact was the reality. The findings reveal through an analysis of the statistical data, that limited progress has been made to increase the number of women occupying the position of principal.

The Ministry of Education's merit promotion system was based on the premise that once an individual is able to present themselves for selection based on merit, then they will be considered fairly and objectively. The policy did not acknowledge that within organisations there are forces that work towards reproducing the traditional culture by appointing those people who share the same values and characteristics as the majority of the dominant incumbent group (Kanter, 1977; Burton, 1988).

Therefore, while many types of people may meet and even exceed selection criteria, appointment is likely to be decided on unstated criteria that have more to do with the degree to which applicants share characteristics with organisational incumbents.

As with the Equal Employment Opportunity Management Plan (1988), examination of the research data revealed that the

merit promotion system was not developed with the object of increasing the number of women principals. The procedures, including the selection criteria and the references were not formulated with any acknowledgement of the possible inherent bias towards women.

This goes some way to explain why many well-qualified women have been unsuccessful in gaining promotion under the merit system. Within the government education system the majority of positions of authority have been held by men and therefore the traditionally favoured values and behaviours for promotional positions are masculine by definition.

Chapter Twelve will highlight some of the major groups that influenced the development of the Ministry of Education's equal employment opportunity policies.

## CHAPTER TWELVE

THE ROLE OF THREE GROUPS IN INFLUENCINGTHE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION'S EQUAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY POLICIES

In response to research question four, this chapter attempts to identify other forces that shaped the Ministry of Education's equal employment opportunity policies. It will highlight the role played by the professional associations, the State School Teachers' Union and women teachers.

12.1 THE PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS

The Ministry of Education's response to the Equal Opportunity Act (WA) 1984 can be described as a position of passive non-discrimination, whereby all policies in relation to staffing including promotion were made without regard to characteristics such as sex, pregnancy or marital status. While the Ministry of Education, like other government departments, was required to comply with a range of government equal employment opportunity policies emanating from the Equal Opportunity Act (WA) 1984, the shape, effect and outcomes of its policies, were very much dependent on a number of forces, peculiar and internal to the government school system.

An important factor in understanding the particular nature of the Ministry of Education's response to equal opportunity legislation is the history and organisation of the government school sector. Despite the fact that women have always represented the majority within the teaching workforce, male teachers have traditionally enjoyed better working conditions and gained appointment to the more powerful positions of authority at both the school and central bureaucracy levels. Therefore, the introduction of any policies that may in any way alter this traditional system, would be unlikely to be initiated internally, and whatever its source, be opposed.

The introduction of equal employment opportunity legislation for public sector organisations, was considered by many men, including teachers, as a major imposition and threat to their career expectations. Consequently, many of the professional organisations, representing school principals and deputy principals were active in their opposition. Because the vast majority of principals are male, the principals' associations were made up almost exclusively of men. Additionally, until the late 1980's the deputy principal associations were established on the basis of sex. The male deputies' organisations were visibly more politically active than their female counterparts and consequently had a significantly greater impact on educational and industrial policy matters.

Evidence of the capacity of the professional associations to impact significantly on the political process was patently on display in 1983.

On this occasion, the professional associations successfully lobbied the Liberal Opposition in the Legislative Council to defeat a Regulation amendment, that was an affirmative action strategy designed to remove the disadvantage experienced by a group of women primary deputies who had previously been barred access to the Class 1 Principal Promotion List on the grounds that they could not satisfy the service requirements. Five women managed to take advantage of this regulatory change, albeit that it existed for only one year.

"The associations spent a lot of time speaking with politicians of both major parties. While it was Labor policy, there were plenty of government 'pollies' who privately were opposed to equal opportunity for women for both personal and political reasons." (M1).

The professional associations had both the financial and human resource plus the status to promote their views within the general community and the education industry. They promoted the view that the equal opportunity legislation was designed to introduce affirmative action targets or quotas that would specify certain numbers of promotional positions

being quarantined for women. They further argued that the legislation was, in fact contrary to the very thing that it sought to promote namely "equal opportunity;" and would eventuate in unqualified and inexperienced women being promoted. This would ultimately result in the undermining of the government education system and the educational future of Western Australian children. Their arguments were pervasive and persuasive.

It was considered by many of the policy actors that not only did these arguments persuade the Liberal Opposition to reject the Regulation amendment in the Legislative Council, but it contributed significantly to the Ministry of Education's almost passive approach to equal employment opportunity two years later:

"I've been a principal for five years and male colleagues still insist that I was promoted because of a quota. They either do it deliberately to irritate me or they honestly believe the misinformation put about by the associations." (P2).

"There are some very strong loyalties in the Ministry, particularly amongst the "old guard". There was no way that the Ministry hierarchy was going to let their mates in the schools down." (P3).

Unquestionably the professional associations were effective in convincing Government and the Ministry of Education that any affirmative action or equal opportunity strategy that provided women with any promotional advantage would be met with strong political opposition. However, while the membership of the professional associations may have been united on this issue, there was not the same level of consensus on the issue of merit promotion. While many of the long-serving school administrators were opposed to changes to the traditional promotion system based on seniority, younger men supported a more open selection system founded on the principle of merit.

While the opposition of the professional associations to any policies that would advantage women was very obvious, it is difficult to understand why the Exemption claim by the Ministry of Education went largely unchallenged by men in general and the professional associations in particular. As discussed previously, the reasons for this appear to be largely to do with the lack of information about the proposed claim for Exemption from the Equal Opportunity Act 1984 by the Ministry. Certainly, there was a view amongst the interviewees that had the professional associations been aware of the Exemption application, they would have formally opposed the policy before the Equal Opportunity Tribunal.



## 12.2 THE STATE SCHOOL TEACHERS' UNION OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA

The State School Teachers' Union was another significant force in shaping equal employment opportunity policies. Historically, the Ministry would not enact any changes to promotional procedures without the agreement of the Union and more significantly, its members as reflected by decisions taken at the Union's annual conferences. An important aspect of the Union's annual conference is the debate on promotion issues.

Just as the professional associations were dominated by men, the Union had traditionally been run by teacher administrators; school principals and deputies who were elected to political office. However, women constituted a majority of the Union membership and a number of major changes to the working conditions of women workers in general, such as equal pay, had been secured by the activities of women teacher unionists (Hutchinson, 1981; Porter, 1986).

The Union provided many women with an opportunity, denied to them by their employer and the professional associations, to participate in decision making about education and their own employment. In the mid-1970s the Union established a Status of Women Committee and in 1979, appointed a full-time Women's Officer. The establishment of this position generated

considerable ill feeling amongst many men. This ill feeling is still evident today.

This creation of the full-time position resulted in the establishment of women's networks, the election of women to the Union Executive, the appointment of women to senior Union positions and the election of women as delegates to the Annual Conference. Promotion for women became a focus for the women's lobby and synonymous with equal employment opportunity.

Union support for women was significant because it enabled women teachers to find a legitimate forum for their discussion. Many women teacher activists became members of the Union's women networks and active in general industrial matters. U3 identified the Union as a training ground; providing women with political skills to influence policy outcomes. U2 identified the Union as being one of,

"...the chief sources of information about promotion." (U2).

Both U2 and U3 commented on the role of the Union in providing an effective vehicle for women's issues. U2 believed that it was the Union's policies on women's issues in the early mid-eighties that were directly responsible for the removal of the seniority bar that had for decades

disadvantaged the promotional prospects of women and the introduction of the merit promotion. However, Union interviewees conceded that unless there was seen to be something in it for men, women's issues were either given low priority and ignored, or seen as dangerous to men and opposed:

"There were some really heated debates at Union conferences about affirmative action and equal employment opportunity. When it came to arguing on the basis of doing something for women, there was not a lot of support, but these things (the removal of seniority promotion and the introduction of merit promotion) were wanted by an increasing number of men." (U2).

She also remembered that it was the issue of promotion and the associated issues of affirmative action and equal employment opportunity that caused the most hostile and open opposition from men.

The agenda for Union conferences during the period 1980 - 1985 were dominated by two issues: equal opportunity for women and merit promotion. Policy actors who were involved in these meetings remembered the spirited and emotional tenor of the debate:

"Many of the arguments used against promotion for women were based on views about women being too emotional or unsuited to become principals...or that it was unfair to all those men who had been waiting around for seniority-based promotion to increase the pool by including women." (U2).

However, there were increasing numbers of men who could see their own opportunities for career advancement diminishing with the retention of the seniority-based promotion system. Similarly, women as they became more aware of the restrictions that the Education Act Regulations and the seniority-based promotion system placed on their promotional opportunities, also became committed to supporting merit-based promotion.

Consequently, while opposition towards any affirmative action for women remained strong within the Union, the women's lobby were able to make progress by making their agenda, the removal of the traditional seniority-based promotion system. Increasingly equal employment opportunity used in the context of merit promotion became not only acceptable but an important objective of Union policy. As explained by U1:

"Merit promotion is a bit like motherhood.

You can hardly come out openly and oppose it."

Historically, all changes to promotion policies have been mutually agreed between the Ministry of Education and the Union. While promotion directly affects only a relatively small group of teachers, any change to the promotion system can cause great debate and has the potential to mobilise usually industrially conservative administrators and those teachers aspiring to these positions. Just as there was support in both the Ministry of Education and the Union for a new promotion system there was active opposition within both organisations to either equal employment opportunity or affirmative action policies.

Ul remembers that his own personal support for policies that improved the promotional prospects of women, while perplexing many of his traditional supporters, was critical in gaining majority support within the Union. Asked why he lent his support to this unpopular platform, in the face of strong political opposition, Ul commented:

"I couldn't reject the hard data that clearly showed that women were being disadvantaged in the system. I believed that equal access was not going to be enough ... women were going to have to be given something extra, in order to overcome their disadvantage. There was an injustice - I felt that I couldn't ignore it."

(J1).

While the Union had been a party to the Equal Opportunity Act Exemption case neither U1 or U2 could remember any formal discussion within the Union about the case, although the Union did have a policy that recommended the retention of sex-linked positions until merit promotion was in place for all positions.

U1 knew very little about the Union's involvement in the Ministry of Educations Exemption submission to the Equal Opportunity Commission to retain the sex linked deputy positions:

"One of the other senior officers, a woman, carried this case herself. The rest of us only knew about it after the event. My view is that we could've been tougher in our demands to get women promoted and used the Commission's power. Instead, we naively supported the Ministry's position ... and nothing's happened." (U1).

### 12.3 WOMEN

The women principals interviewed believed that their activities and those of other women, through professional associations, political parties, women's networks and the Union, helped the introduction of the merit promotion

system. Prior to its implementation, there was not full-hearted support from men, for many saw that at least the seniority system guaranteed promotion, albeit in the long term. However, increasing numbers of men, who found themselves at the bottom of the promotion lists that numbered in the many hundreds, believed that unless there was some system of open selection, their promotional prospects would increasingly fade:

"At Union conferences men who opposed any policy that appeared to benefit women, were suddenly joining with us in support of merit promotion." (U2).

"Some of the men who were seen as spokespeople for the associations and had championed the fight against promotion for women, emerged as being interested in maintaining the status quo and there were plenty of younger men who saw this as a block to their own careers" (P3).

All of the women policy actors agreed that the women's lobby within the education sector had actively worked for the introduction of the merit promotion system, believing that the major barrier to women becoming principals was their broken service records which adversely affected their seniority. They believed that merit promotion would focus

on applicants' performance rather than their continuous service. Also it is acknowledged by women, active in the lobby, that merit promotion was a more comfortable position for many women to support. It was a respite from the often open male hostility levelled towards women over the concept of affirmative action:

"Many good supportive women could not counter the male argument that redressing past discrimination, meant being unfair to men. They felt it was better to believe that a merit system would mean that we would all be treated the same." (P3).

Most of the interviewees believed that women were politically naive in believing that merit promotion or any of the other Ministry of Education's equal employment opportunity policy would advantage women.

An important forum for women to meet and discuss equal opportunity issues was the annual Women in Education Conference. This official gathering of women from across the State began over 10 years ago and was the result of the personal initiative of a small group of women. Subsequently, the Ministry of Education assumed responsibility for the organisation and coordination of the conference, as well as providing teacher relief for women to attend during work hours.



Apart from a range of high profile speakers, a significant part of the two day conference was devoted to training workshops concerned with imparting knowledge and skills identified by women as being important to their work lives. These include career planning, communication, conflict resolution and stress management:

"The Conference allows women to legitimately leave their schools to meet other women on a professional basis." (P1).

"It was at this Conference that I began to meet women who were to become role models for me." (P3).

The significance of the Conference for women teachers and the majority of the women policy actors was made very clear during the interviews. However, many of them acknowledged that it was essentially women being permitted to prepare themselves to be able to effectively operate within the organisation, rather than the organisation preparing itself to acknowledge the different experiences and qualities of women.

All women interviewed believed that despite the Ministry of Education's Equal Opportunity Management Plan's stated commitment to changing attitudes and communicating equal

opportunity policies, it was women teachers, deputies and principals who did this work. Because of the Ministry of Education's failure to take on the responsibility, most teachers and school administrators were either ignorant or hostile towards the promotion of women.

In order to be able to have some influence on employment policies all of the principals interviewed had been members of a range of professional groups including specialist education groups i.e. early childhood, special education, languages, Deputy Principals and Principals' Associations. In addition, all were very active Union members, both at branch and Union committee levels. The two secondary principals, P3 and P4, were also very much involved in women's groups and activities.

The involvement in policy development was through the operation of these various groups both at an informal and formal level. The professional associations gave women access to information about employment, particularly promotion, that was not easily available in schools or from the Ministry of Education. Also, the Ministry of Education regularly invited comment from the associations on a variety of prospective policies and programmes and while women were infrequently elected to represent the organisations in discussion, they were able to participate in debating and considering items at the association level.

All policy actors contended that because of the male dominance of the associations, women's issues were very rarely raised and that the open hostility directed towards women, when they were, was often too daunting for women members to face. All cited the enactment of the Equal Opportunity Act (WA) 1984 as resulting in very violent outbursts from their associations.

However, as women started to take on working roles in their associations, (e.g. Committee person, Secretary etc.) all participants believed that women began to grow in stature and their overt strength affected equal employment opportunity policies.

P3 and P4 received their promotion to secondary principal positions in 1986. As members of the Secondary Deputies Association their appointments were greeted with open hostility from many male colleagues. During that year, three out of five vacant secondary principal positions were awarded to women. Both P3 and P4 remembered suffering with anonymous letters and phone calls, though it was never formally complained of or raised at the association level.

"I remember how a number of men just howled. However, it was hard to formally complain through the association because we (women) had become very active in the formal management committees. Having visibility encouraged other women deputies to participate in the professional group." (P3).

All of the principals interviewed worked very hard at lobbying through the Union. While none of them were elected officers, or participated in public debate, all four considered themselves to have had strong networks that they used to mobilize membership support for equal employment policies.

One of the problems for women working through formal bodies such as the Union or the associations was that in many instances they felt that at times they had to compromise themselves. Just as they often felt discriminated against in the workplace these formal organisations also displayed similar hostility towards women. In order to have success in matters that were of importance to women, some of the interviewees believed that women had to work harder to be seen to be knowledgeable about a whole range of issues and be prepared to be openly harassed and attacked by men.

"I've never been very comfortable taking a high public profile or speaking to large groups...but seeing some of those women standing up and having to put up with the derision of the men...they were so brave, I thought it was important to be working to support them and voting with them." (P4).

At times women active in lobbying for better working conditions and promotional opportunities for women found themselves being criticised by other women. Some interviewees considered this to be a defensive reaction of some women teachers to the open hostility that the mention of equal opportunity caused in many men:

"It's a great tactic to set women up against women. The way many male teachers and principals spoke about equal employment opportunity made it so uncomfortable even frightening for women that many of them were openly critical of activists just to protect themselves." (U3).

Without the power within the Ministry of Education, the Union or the professional associations women had to operate largely in an informal and defacto way to assert their point of view.

#### 12.4 SUMMARY

As the Western Australian State government devolved responsibility for equal employment opportunity to individual government departments to develop their own policies, the nature of the Ministry of Education's approach was very much a product of forces internal to the government education sector.

Beyond having to demonstrate compliance with the Equal Opportunity Act (WA) 1984 which meant the development of an Equal Employment Opportunity Management Plan, an annual progress report and the removal of all directly discriminatory barriers to women, the Ministry of Education was free to do as much or as little as it wished, to achieve equal employment opportunity for women. While State government policy required the establishment of a merit-based promotion system, the Ministry of Education was not required to ensure that the policies and procedures were developed with attention to removing known inherent or systematic bias against women.

Without the imposition of tighter guidelines, it is clear from the literature and the research data that the nature of the Ministry's policies would reflect the demands of the most dominant groups within the school sector. As an essentially masculine organisation, with almost all senior positions within schools and the central bureaucracy held by

men, the Ministry of Education's response to equal employment opportunity was developed in such a way as to reflect the needs of this dominant group.

Other groups such as the professional associations and the Union that were involved in the development of policies were also controlled by men. While the Union did provide women with a forum for debate, support for women was generally only forthcoming if there was a perceived benefit for men. Women often had to compromise their position in order to win any support. While the Union was opposed to increased promotions for women, it did support merit promotion.

While women were often unwelcome in these organisations it is clear that the commitment and energy of many women to network with each other and with men, to represent their views in sometimes hostile forums and to constantly raise their concerns within the formal structures had some limited influence in at least mobilising women's support to be considered significant in the debate on merit promotion.

## CHAPTER THIRTEEN

SUMMARY, DISCUSSIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

This chapter summarises the study, responds to the guiding research questions and discusses the conclusions of the findings.

13.1 A SUMMARY OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study was to focus on the forces that influenced the development and shape of Ministry of Education's equal employment opportunity policies and to analyse their implications for the promotion of women to the position of principal during the years 1985 to 1991. The forces selected as being of critical importance to the development of Ministry of Education's policies were the relationship between the Ministry of Education's equal employment opportunity policies and those of the State government, known barriers to the promotion of women and the commitment of the Ministry of Education to increasing the number of women principals.

Four questions were developed to guide the research. These were:



1. Was the Ministry of Education's response to the Equal Opportunity Act (1984) influenced by Government administrative policies contained in "Managing Change in the Public Sector" (1986)?
2. Were the Ministry of Education's equal employment opportunity policies shaped by research on barriers to women's promotion that was available from overseas and other Australian states?
3. What other forces may have shaped the Ministry's response to equal employment opportunity legislation?
4. Have government policies in respect to equal employment opportunity further entrenched or at least maintained the traditionally subordinate position of women within the government education system?

Data was collected from selected policies, employment statistics and the perceptions of chosen policy actors representing State government, the Ministry of Education, the State School Teachers' Union (WA) and women school principals to address these questions.

From the data two sets of forces emerged as being integral to the nature of Ministry of Education's equal employment policies and their effect on the promotion of women to the

position of school principal. The first set of forces was the political imperatives of the Western Australian State government. The second set of forces was the organisational culture of the government education system. These two sets of forces appear to be separate and can be considered important in their own right. However, the data that emerged indicated the significance of the relations that existed between the two.

### 13.2 THE ROLE OF THE STATE GOVERNMENT

The analysis of the research data for this study supports the critical view of Australian equal employment opportunity that dominates the literature. This view considers that the introduction of equal employment opportunity policies and legislation across the public sector was a political and overt response by Labor governments to varying and often contradictory demands.

The economic crisis of the past twenty years has placed increasing pressure on the state. In an attempt to manage the crisis, Australian governments, particularly Labor governments, have introduced corporate managerial policies as a political imperative to effect an economic rationalisation of the public sector. At the same time, these policies have also contained strategies such as the

introduction of the concept of equal employment opportunity to meet the growing demands for social reform expected by the traditional Labor constituency.

Equal employment opportunity in Western Australia was intrinsically linked to the State government's reform policies for public sector administration. The Western Australian government produced a blueprint for the operation of the state public sector. The government policy document 'Managing Change in the Public Sector' (1986), linked the efficient management of the public sector with social reform. Equal employment opportunity was described in terms of its value in ensuring that the selection and promotion of staff would be on the basis of merit. The provision of efficient and effective government services was to be achieved by making the best possible appointments for the widest pool of eligible applicants.

A legal framework for this approach was established by the Equal Opportunity Act (WA) 1984. According to all of the policy actors interviewed for this study, many women teachers believed that the intention of the Equal Opportunity Act (WA) 1984 was to deliver tangible and substantial benefits to women and other identified social groups in a number of areas including employment. However, the concept of equal employment opportunity underpinning the legislation and guiding its practice, has emerged as a

vehicle for the achievement of political and economic goals rather than promoting the interests of its stated beneficiaries. Initiatives towards achieving social justice are predicated on the extent to which they can support goals of administrative efficiency, rather than from a position of creating social justice.

Western Australian government policies do not appear to have achieved major changes to the traditional value systems of public sector organisations that identify as being meritorious and valuable, compliance with traditional attitudes, experiences, qualities and behaviours. This is demonstrated by the examination of indicators such as comparisons between men and women on the basis of salary and organisational level. The research for this study specifically highlights this situation by focussing on the promotion of women within the Western Australian government school system.

Analysis of the Equal Opportunity Act (WA) 1984 and "Managing Change in the Public Sector" (1986) reveals that neither policy indicates that its aim is to reduce the differences between the employment experiences of women and men. Neither policy requires that organisations actively redress past discrimination and ensure that women are represented at all levels of the organisation.

Based on a rational and liberal view that women and men are equal in their attitudes and experiences, and that the only gendered barriers to women in employment are the historical regulations that directly excluded women from appointment, the State government's policies did no more than remove the technical impediments to women entering sections of the workforce.

This argument for equality relies on the assumption that women and men have equal natures and experiences which if treated equally will result in equal performance. The Equal Opportunity Act (WA) 1984 and "Managing Change in the Public Sector" (1986) provided women with the legal right to put themselves forward for selection, which is ultimately determined by how well candidates are perceived to meet the criteria established within the framework of the dominant value system of each organisation.

The Western Australian State government's approach to equal employment opportunity was that merit is defined by the nature of the work and the qualities and skills required to undertake that work. The efficiency, excellence and equity model precluded the recognition of broader or alternative definitions of merit, that could recognise different experiences and qualities of individuals or groups from outside the traditional pool of incumbents. An integral aspect of this perspective is that the concept of merit is

considered to be bias free and consequently when applied to evaluate the worthiness of individuals for appointment will ignore irrelevant characteristics such as race or sex.

This view does not acknowledge a range of differences between social groups. Instead, it further strengthens the dominance of traditionally accepted behaviours and values. Criteria developed for appointment may appear to describe the skills, experiences and knowledge required for a particular position but selected candidates tend to reflect the characteristics of the incumbents. The interpretation of merit is dependent upon the values and opinions of the people determining what is meritorious.

The Western Australian State government was opposed to policies which allowed women to be appointed over men in order to redress past discrimination or to ensure that women would be represented within certain occupations or at particular levels of the organisation. Where women had been legally barred from entering areas of the labour market and receiving the same benefits as men, Western Australian State government policies sought to remove all directly discriminatory provisions from public sector employment policies, awards and regulations. Government policies did not attempt to address the effect of these factors, either by setting quantifiable targets for the employment of women, or legislating for greater accountability within public

sector organisations to achieve increased and more diverse employment of women at all levels and in all areas of the workforce.

Neither the Equal Opportunity Act (1984) WA or "Managing Change in the Public Sector" (1986) reflect any acknowledgement of the extensive research that reveals the homosociability of organisations. It is therefore unlikely that any male dominated organisation would willingly initiate a process that aims to promote the interests of women above those of men. Instead, Western Australian State government policies were based on an assumption, rejected within the literature, that organisations through a review of their employment policies and practices will identify and eliminate those that discriminate against women. Simultaneously, management and staff by participating in this process will increase their understanding of the effect of discrimination and willingly change both their individual attitudes and behaviours and the culture and operation of the organisation.

The introduction of social reform at a time of economic restraint suggests the level of commitment by the Western Australian State government to affecting real change. Equal employment opportunity was not listed as a priority for the public sector and resources therefore were limited. This further reinforced the State government's use of the concept

of equal employment opportunity as a strategy in its economic rationalisation of the public sector rather than as a real attempt to improve the employment experience of women. Additionally, the lack of resources when implementing significant culture change is contrary to what is known about effective change management.

Women policy actors interviewed for this study believed that because women teachers knew that the culture of the Ministry of Education was one that was founded on the dominance of men over women and therefore opposed to the promotion of women, they depended upon external intervention to force the Ministry of Education to change its operations.. All of the interviewees believed that prior to the introduction of the Equal Opportunity Act (EA) 1984, there existed a perception amongst the majority of women teachers that the legislation would force the Ministry of Education to increase the number of women principals. Some also believed that this view was also shared by a significant number of male teachers and resulted in hostile and vocal opposition by the professional associations that were dominated by men to equal employment opportunity policies.

This expectation presupposed that the State government's equal employment opportunity policies were based on the concept of 'affirmative action', as adopted in the United States of America in the sixties. Organisations that were



covered by the United States legislation had to establish quotas for the employment at all levels of qualified people from identified disadvantaged groups including women. This was based on a stated premise that organisations were unconsciously biased in their structures and policies against the appointment of women to certain occupations and levels of authority and that therefore they would have to consciously redistribute power throughout the organisation. The United States experience defined for many Australians the concepts of equal employment opportunity and affirmative action as policies of positive discrimination that deliberately and systematically guaranteed a certain number of positions to suitably qualified women.

The fact that Australian governments including the Western Australian State government, decided to adopt the accepted terminology of equal employment opportunity and affirmative action but attach to it a set of meanings other than what was generally understood within the general public raises some questions about their commitment to improving the employment opportunities of women and in the motives for creating confusion with a false expectation that real change would occur.

### 10.3 STATE GOVERNMENT EDUCATION - ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE

From the research literature it is clear that the barriers that face women teachers in achieving promotion are similar to those that affect women in every section of the workforce.

The bulk of this extensive and ever growing body of knowledge concludes that the major obstacles erected against women are created by the traditional structures, values and behaviours of work-based organisations. Women have been described in the literature as 'invaders' in the world of paid employment and as being treated accordingly (Game and Pringle, 1983 p.7). The fact that the term 'invader' is used suggests that women in the workforce are from another place and are unwelcome. That other place is the private domain where the position and relations that apply to women and men, contribute to their relations in the public sphere and paid employment. The gender relations that are clearly defined within the domestic, familial setting are critical to the delineation of women's workplace relations.

In response to State government policies, the focus of Ministry of Education equal employment opportunity policies was on the provision of equal access and opportunity, rather than the achievement of equal outcomes for women. This approach to equal employment opportunity did not acknowledge

that the formal direct barriers that existed against women teachers were the result of social and economic factors that impacted on the nature and organisation of work in relation to women and men.

The Ministry of Education was not required by government policies to ensure that these traditional, systematic barriers to women gaining promotion were removed. So while women could apply for promotion to the position of principal, the Ministry of Education did nothing to provide that the well documented inherent barriers were targetted. These included negative and entrenched attitudes of male teachers towards women administrators, the lack of administrative experiences available to women teachers, the difficulties of rural appointments for women with families, social expectations that women's careers are secondary to those of men including their male colleagues and domestic partners and the absence of women from senior policy-making positions.

The isolated situation of the retention of the sex-linked deputy principal positions is the only example of a policy that recognised that without the artificial maintenance of a pool of eligible women, the likelihood of women being promoted to principal positions would be severely reduced. However, the five-year duration of this Exemption from the Equal Opportunity (WA) 1984 Act is to end in 1992 and

interviewees for this study believe that once deputy principal positions are no longer quarantined in equal numbers for men and women, few women will gain promotion to this position in competition with men. Consequently, the position of school principal will be even more difficult for women to achieve.

Given the extensive knowledge about the inherent bias that exists within organisations against women, it is not unreasonable to assume that policies or legislation introduced to create equality in employment would target the known causes of inequality. In relation to the Ministry of Education it is clear that the organisation has always been administered and shaped by men. Policy actors interviewed for this study confirmed that any proposed change to the traditional order such as the increased promotion of women was opposed openly and vehemently by men, individually and collectively. While policies and practices that directly discriminated against women have been removed there still remains hostile and negative masculine attitudes against women.

Within the Western Australian government education system, this mobilisation against equal employment opportunity and the promotion of women was demonstrated by the levels of activity of formal groups such as the professional administrator associations and the State School Teachers

Union. At a more subtle level, the mobilisation of bias was reflected in the decision making bodies that surrounded policies in relation to employment and the procedures for promotion which involved and were administered by men. Yet, despite this significant body of knowledge about both the hidden and inherent and the explicit and officially regulated bias against women teachers, there is little evidence that the Ministry of Education's equal employment opportunity policies were developed to address the known causes of inequality.

### CONCLUSIONS

The conclusions that emerge from this study can be summarised as follows:

1. Despite the expectation of women teachers, neither the State government nor the Ministry of Education's equal employment opportunity policies were aimed at compensating for past discrimination against women nor at increasing the number of women principals.
2. The Western Australian Labor government through changes to institutions and structures was able to maintain, support and nurture the prevailing power position, ideas and relations of dominant groups, in

such a way that gained consent from the very groups that were oppressed. By incorporating the social-cultural and political spheres, the State government was able to coopt women into supporting their traditional subordination through attracting their support for the concept of equal employment opportunity.

3. The Western Australian State government's equal employment opportunity policies such as the Equal Opportunity Act (WA) 1984 and "Managing Change in the Public Sector" (1986) were not introduced to improve the social system and the position of women in the workforce, but to reinforce the political power of the State government and support the economic rationalisation of the public sector.
4. Equal employment opportunity was a concept that in the rhetoric of the State government, would redistribute power within organisations, but in practice was a means of legitimising the values and behaviours of the incumbent group. In the Ministry of Education, the implementation of equal employment opportunity policies at every level of the organisation was the responsibility of men. Without any State government demands or legislative requirements to demonstrate an increase of women in non-traditional roles such as

school principal, the masculine culture of the Ministry of Education was able to prevail.

5. The concept of merit was used by the State government to justify its continued maintenance of the status quo through challenging women to put themselves forward to compete for appointment by objective assessment on the basis of merit. In the Ministry of Education the positions of authority such as principal attach to them a set of criteria determined by men and based on generations of male incumbents. The experiences and values of women are not reflected as they have not in any significant way been able to contribute to the definition of promotional merit.
  
6. A redistribution of power within the Ministry of Education that results in an increase in the number of women principals will require a strategy that targets the organisational culture and values of the organisation. This is most likely to occur when there is a change in the current political and economic relations both within and outside the organisation. Currently, this is unlikely as men continue to dominate and control both the public and private domains of society.

Alternatively, this study concludes that there are factors both internal and external to the State government school system that actively work together against the promotion of women. Currently, the dominance of the traditional masculine culture of education is legitimated by State government policies and legislation. The challenge for those who seek to establish proper recognition for the work of women teachers will be to identify ways of creating a political imperative for the decision makers both within the Western Australian government school system and in the broader community to redefine albeit through artificial means such as policies and legislation the traditional relations between men and women. Until this is achieved, there is little indication that men within the education sector will willingly share their power and dominant status with women.



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