

**FACTORS INFLUENCING  
PROMOTION IN EDUCATION: THE  
PERCEPTIONS OF FIVE FEMALE  
HEADS' OF DEPARTMENT**

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## ABSTRACT

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This study grew from a concern about the reasons for the low representation of women in management in the Queensland Department of Education. Some of the local research (eg. Limerick, 1991) cited in Chapter Two has highlighted the disproportionately low representation of women in senior management positions in education, at or above head of department. For example, at least sixty-five percent of the teaching profession is female, yet less than half of that proportion reach those senior managerial positions.

In an attempt to understand the reasons for this position of disadvantage, specifically from a female perspective, five successful managers were interviewed to explore whether there were experiences in women's lives that might be different from men in their respective pursuit of careers. Therefore, this study explored the careers of five females who were currently in head of department positions in the Queensland Education Department in 1993. The research examined the factors that these women perceived had significantly influenced their promotional opportunities throughout their career histories, their current positions and their future career aspirations.

The aim was to identify the major gender-related factors that the women in this study perceived to be influencing their career advancement in education. This data was gathered through a qualitative research approach involving individual interviews with each of the interviewees. The indepth experiences detailed by the interviewees provided information from which common factors emerged. Factors influencing promotion were evident in social attitudes; organisational structures; and at the personal level.

The interplay of organisational, socio-economic and personal factors is very strong and all of these groups of factors are important separately and collectively. The overriding important factors, however, relate to the organisation, at least in so far as they represent a group of obstacles that are subject to modification in a way that personal and societal factors are not.

A strongly held perception of the women in this study is that despite recent attempts to enhance equal opportunity through structural reorganisation and policy development, promotional structures consistently favour males. Well intentioned changes of policy have corresponded with a period of rationalising the number of promotional posts available. Women are disadvantaged in this pursuit of a career, in a diminishing number of available career positions. Coupled with the strongly discriminatory, but often disguised, views of senior males, mentoring of women is rarely evident, despite the desire of women for mentoring. The traditional societal expectations placed on women to take primary responsibility for child-care and domestic responsibilities were also a significant deterrent. A woman's personal commitment to her spouse and family also brought factors of geographical immobility, breaks for child rearing, and a lack of self-confidence which acted as obstacles to her career advancement opportunities.

The research indicates that further research is necessary to explore the organisational dimensions of the Department that obstruct the careers of women. Further structural reforms have to be contemplated if there are to be qualitative and quantitative advances in career opportunities for women. Recent reforms are perceived by the five women as relatively ineffectual in the changing organisational and social context, which in turn undermines self-confidence at a personal level.

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The work contained in this thesis has not been previously submitted for a degree or diploma at any other higher education institution. To the best of my knowledge and belief, the thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made.

Signed: Date:

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## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

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This study examines the perceptions of female heads' of department on the factors that influence promotional opportunities for women in the Queensland Department of Education. Upon reviewing the literature relevant to women in management and leadership positions, it becomes obvious that the terms management and leadership are very closely linked. In some literature these two terms are used to describe quite different roles and positions within organisations, yet in many contexts they are used synonymously. For the purpose of this research, the terms management and leadership will be used interchangeably. Where a distinction is drawn in the usage of the two terms, management will be used to denote the administrative role of management, for example:

processing paperwork, preparing and administering budgets, monitoring policies and procedures, and maintaining the stability of operations (Megginson et al, 1983: 38).

The term leadership on the other hand will be used in a more visionary sense, to embrace what Rogers (1988) terms:

the three new leadership concepts of transformative leadership, vision and empowerment (cited in Limerick and Cunningham, 1993: 147).

The dominant theme arising from the literature on women in educational

management, is that the representation of women in senior levels of management is very low (McDonald, 1993). This research study explores whether the traditional explanations of family and community responsibilities; lack of career aspirations; lack of mobility; and interrupted careers, are adequate and whether new perceptions of this anomaly are required. This study looks specifically at five women in head of department positions<sup>1</sup> in the Queensland Education Department and their perceptions of the factors that influence their own and other women's access to promotional positions in education. The study begins by examining the issue briefly against a wider background of women in educational management in Australia and overseas.

## 1.1 Background

Before 1980, in most Australian states teaching offered very few women the opportunity for a career. Sampson (1989) goes so far as suggesting that Education Departments throughout Australia, with regard to promotion and careers in teaching, are so structured and built around male paradigms that while men have opportunities for a career in teaching, women have a job in teaching.

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<sup>1</sup> A Head of Department position is defined as a middle management position. The person occupying such a position should satisfy the following criteria:

- (1) display competence in teaching;
- (2) demonstrate organisational ability;
- (3) be involved in continuous professional development both in and outside of the school;
- (4) achieve and maintain good interpersonal relationships with pupils and the school community; and
- (5) demonstrate a capacity for leadership (Department of Education, Promotional Appraisal Form, 1988).

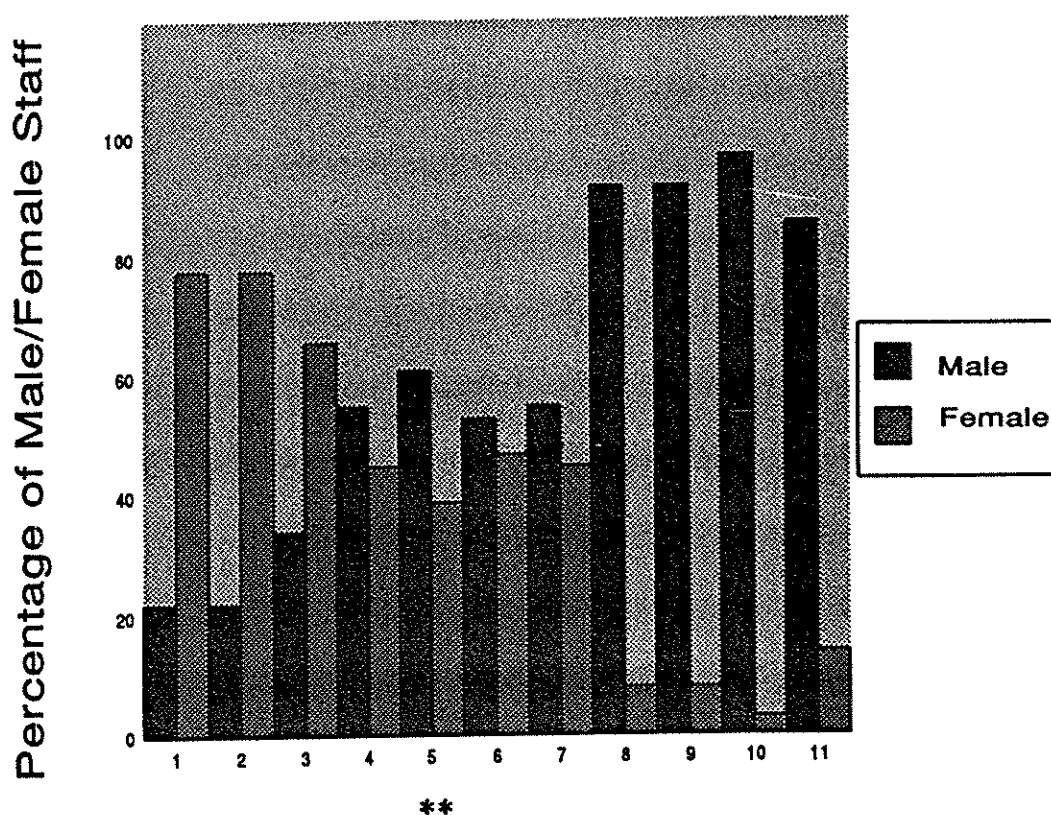
Women have over the years consistently represented more than sixty five per cent of the teaching force in the Queensland Department of Education, yet they currently fill only thirty four per cent of the promotional positions in schools (Limerick, 1991: 15). Recent statistics have indicated that less than one per cent of female teachers in Queensland are state school principals, with this disproportionate representation becoming even more acute at higher levels of management (Clarke, 1985:78). Figure 1.1 displays clearly that the majority of female administrators in the Queensland Education Department are in the lower band levels and that the male employees dominate the higher levels of management (Edpers, 1992). This level of representation does not reflect an equitable or fair distribution of women as senior managers. There is no doubt that gender is still one of the most pervasive influences on occupational promotions and career patterns in society (Sampson, 1989; Department of Education, 1982), however some change is occurring due principally to national government and more recently, local government policy initiatives.

The national government set up a committee to examine social changes and their influence on the education of women. Their first report entitled *Girls, School and Society* (1975) officially recognised the need to evaluate the position of girls and women in the Australian education system. This prompted the Commonwealth Schools Commission (CSC) to release a report in 1984 proposing a national policy for the education of girls. This report recommended that steps be taken to ensure the equal participation of men and women in school hierarchies (*Girls and Tomorrow: The Challenge for Schools in 1984*, cited in Nicoll, 1992: 34).

**FIGURE 1.1**

**DISTRIBUTION OF PROMOTIONAL  
POSITIONS ACCORDING TO GENDER:**

**(Includes positions in all State schools in Queensland)**



**BAND LEVEL**

The Band level represents the school size (ie. number of students/staff managed by the Principal), with Band 11 being the top end of the scale.

**\*\*** Secondary School Heads of Department are included at the Band 5 level.

Source: Ad-Hoc Report produced by EDPERS, June 1992.

Following initial work at the national level there were further attempts to promote the participation of women in educational management. The Australian government has implemented employment policies of equal pay and equal opportunity for female and male teachers. The commonly stated goal of these changes has been the introduction of greater equity for women. However, the common outcome in all cases has been a decline in the number of women in positions of authority within schools (Education Department of Victoria, 1984; New Zealand Department of Education, 1982; National Union of Teachers, 1980). In general the removal of restrictions in the name of equal opportunity has allowed men to move into principalship positions in girls' and primary schools, positions formerly held by women, but women themselves have not expanded their numbers correspondingly by moving into boys' or secondary school principal positions.

At the state level the issue of equal opportunity for women was not officially recognised until 1990 when the *Focus on Schools* document proposed that selection processes needed to be reviewed to examine why 'relatively few women have gained promotion to senior positions in the Education Department' (Department of Education, 1990: 99). Since this document the Department's concern for matters of equity and social justice have been evident in several papers including: a review of *Promotional Appraisal Procedures* (1990); and the Public Sector Management Commission's identification of key *Executive Competencies* (1992). These and other recent documents are discussed further in Chapter Three.

Early in 1990 the Equal Employment Opportunity Committee of Queensland recognised that appraisal procedures, particularly promotional opportunities presented to women were of obvious concern and that recommendations for action should be an integral part of the Department's *Corporate Plan* (Department of Education, 1992). This committee had recognised the need to develop 'women-friendly promotional structures' (Grant, cited in Acker, 1989: 47) which were likely to benefit all by placing the best person in the job. Although it is recognised that these recommendations are quite recent, they have not produced sustainable increases in the representation of women in management positions in schools or in the educational bureaucracy (McDonald, 1993). Therefore, there is a need to reassess the situation to account for the continuing under-representation of women and to seek new explanations as to why there has not been an increase in the level of women's participation in educational management at senior levels. This remains a key research focus, given that studies conducted over the past twenty years do not provide an adequate explanation for the current situation.

Literature on educational management has claimed that women are under-represented because they are unsuited for school management or they do not desire such careers. In the past, both female and male educators have believed these findings (Limerick, 1991). In the 1970's however, some researchers began to question these underlying assumptions. Diaz (cited in Edson, 1988) found a higher level of motivation among women than men and noted the difference between aspirations of women and their representation in the management ranks. She concluded that such evidence indicated that women do aspire to

administrative careers (cited in Edson, 1988). Ortiz and Covell in an indepth case study of one female principal stated that 'women do have the same career ambitions as men but they do not have the same opportunities' (cited in Edson, 1988: 1). Valverde (1992) suggested that women and minorities are held back, not by lack of aspirations but by faulty characteristics that promote their failure as school managers. For example, the negative assumptions and attitudes that come from males and society in general that discourage women from applying for promotional positions (Randell, 1990). In fact, many complex organisations such as government school systems tend to overlook the promotional obstacles that are presented to minority groups. With emergent evidence on the success of women managers, many authors suggest that future research needs to 'focus on the needs of present and potential women managers and investigate the means by which their success can be brought about' (Edson, 1988: 2). Ideally, such studies will identify changes in individual career strategies and examine the interactions between these strategies and organisational contexts.

When considering individuals' perceptions of their own careers, many believe that their level of success is largely a matter of personal ability, aspiration or choice. In order to ascertain individuals' perceptions of promotional opportunities, Sampson (1985B) conducted a study with Australian teachers and asked whether they thought women were discriminated against in promotion, either explicitly or implicitly, in the system in which they worked and to give reasons for their response. Fifty four per cent of women and twenty four per cent



of men replied that they believed women were treated unequally and gave a variety of explanations. The reasons most often advanced by both sexes were: (1) women are not perceived as having administrative potential; (2) men run the schools; and (3) males are prejudiced against females. Also both males and females agreed that the influence of womens' career and family commitments, career breaks for child-rearing, departmental regulations and the lack of administrative experience, disadvantaged women (Sampson, 1985B). Information from other existing studies reinforces the view that equal opportunity does not exist (Maclean, 1992; Davidson and Cooper, 1992). Burton (1987) suggests that Australian schools demonstrate a complex, continuous and highly effective process of male apprenticeship in which very few women are inducted into organisational leadership roles, thus preserving the largely male authority structure of schooling. Other research indicates that women are often ignorant of career paths, have few mentors and may perceive a career in administration unfavourably, rather than as an effective way to influence children's lives and schooling (Adkison, 1981). Many researchers conclude that women will continue to be under-represented until the spirit of equal opportunity legislation is practised in administrative and leadership roles throughout the entire system (Blackmore, 1993; Parkyn, 1988).

## **1.2 Significance of Research**

Very little research has been undertaken on the career patterns of school teachers in Australia. In fact, most of the research on teachers in Australia concentrates on examining beginning teachers and teacher induction programs

administrative careers (cited in Edson, 1988). Ortiz and Covell in an indepth case study of one female principal stated that 'women do have the same career ambitions as men but they do not have the same opportunities' (cited in Edson, 1988: 1). Valverde (1992) suggested that women and minorities are held back, not by lack of aspirations but by faulty characteristics that promote their failure as school managers. For example, the negative assumption, the negative assumptions and attitudes that come from males and society in general that discourage women from applying for promotional positions (Randell, 1990). In fact, many complex organisations such as government school systems tend to overlook the promotional obstacles that are presented to minority groups. With emergent evidence on the success of women managers, many authors suggest that future research needs to 'focus on the needs of present and potential women managers and investigate the means by which their success can be brought about' (Edson, 1988: 2). Ideally, such studies will identify changes in individual career strategies and examine the interactions between these strategies and organisational contexts.

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(McArthur, 1981 cited in Maclean, 1992: 8). The New Zealand Department of Education (1982) has conducted research specifically on the promotion and careers of women teachers, however, the available knowledge about school teachers as an occupational group in Australia is minimal. Maclean suggests that:

one of the main ways of achieving a deeper understanding of the behaviour, perceptions and occupational culture of school teachers as an occupational group is to study promotion and career patterns in teaching (1992: 7).

This research has been conducted at a time when Education Departments, teacher unions and individual teachers are showing an increased interest in and concern about promotion and career opportunities in teaching (Maclean, 1989; Department of Education 1982). Nationally, statistics show that there is a decrease in the number of students attending government schools which has led to a reduced demand for teachers and leaves an oversupply of qualified persons seeking employment as teachers (Maclean, 1992). This factor has considerably 'dampened down the career and promotion opportunities available in teaching' (Maclean, 1992: 9). Thus the effect on the already disadvantaged minority groups, for example women, ethnic/migrant groups, Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders is magnified.

The former Queensland Minister for Education Mr Paul Braddy expressed concern that without the representation of women in all areas of our society, there will be a resulting failure to benefit from over half of the human potential. He stated that:

apart from the tragedy of women not realising their own potential, it is bad management in that women's skills are not being utilised properly by the system (The Practising Administrator, 1990: 2).

Robie observes that:

from a management point of view, perhaps the strongest argument for revision of employment practices so as to increase the number of women in management positions, is that industry can simply no longer afford to waste so valuable a resource (cited in Ginzberg and Yohalem, 1973: 11).

Such views clearly underscore that as long as women continue to be under-represented in educational management, education will remain entrenched in the traditional paradigm of male construction, with consequent results for our society (Blackmore, 1993). In a reflection on the call for excellence in schools Shakeshaft observes that 'without gender equitable schools, excellence will remain ever beyond our reach' (1989: 500). She goes on to note that 'a school culture that is hostile to female students, teachers and administrators is not a place that is conducive to their best efforts' (1989: 502). The Education Department as it is presently constructed in Queensland, is based on the male paradigm (Blackmore, 1992; Connell, 1987). If an education system purports to make any claim to providing a balanced perspective on the human condition, the voice of women needs to be heard, not only in classrooms but also from positions as principals and administrators in education (Blackmore, 1992; Silver, 1981). Therefore to allow women greater access to senior management positions, the current 'male orientated career and promotions ideology' operating in State Education

Departments will need to be questioned and perhaps substantially modified (Maclean, 1989: 3).

Research suggests that this under-representation of women is not specific to education but is still evident in other government organisations and many professions outside the field of education (Davidson and Cooper, 1992). Recent research conducted by Still, Guerin and Chia (1992) into the position of women in private organisations in Australia, suggests that in general 'the position of women in management over the last decade has regressed rather than progressed' (cited in Smith, 1993: 17).

### **1.3 Aim of Study**

The perceptions of a sample group of women in leadership positions within the Queensland Education Department has become the focus of this research. The five female teachers in the sample have been chosen as women who are actively pursuing careers in education. All five women have advanced to a middle management position as a head of department in a large metropolitan high school.

The aim was to identify some of the major gender related factors they perceived to be influencing their promotional opportunities in education. This would encompass perceptions of their past career paths, their current circumstances and their opportunities for future career advancement. Therefore, the study will be concerned with the women in their current leadership roles, their

personal beliefs and motivations, their perceptions of factors influencing promotion, as well as how they characterise their career experiences as women within their specific work organisations.

The research seeks to achieve the aim outlined above through an indepth interviewing procedure focusing on the interviewees' career patterns and perceived factors influencing promotion.

In summary, specific themes have influenced the development of this research. These are:

- (1) that the traditional explanations of domestic responsibilities and career breaks for the low representation of women in educational management seem to be inadequate and new perceptions of this anomaly may be overdue; and
- (2) that the structure of the Queensland Education Department's promotional system seems to present barriers to the advancement of women into formal positions of leadership within that organisation and further explanations should be sought for the persistence of this issue.

## **1.4 Organisation of the Chapters**

Following this First Chapter, which has explored the overall background of the identified research problem and specified aims and procedures, Chapter Two reviews the current literature related to women in educational management. The review establishes a broad framework for the study of women teachers' careers and the perceived factors that influence their promotional opportunities in education. Chapter Two begins by exploring the general issues related to women and leadership and then focuses specifically on women in positions of educational management. From the reviewed literature, many factors were identified as influencing the career advancement of women. These can be grouped into three key categories:

- (1) the socio-cultural level - examining societal attitudes towards women as leaders;
- (2) the organisational level - a look at whether administration and management practices tend to disadvantage women; and
- (3) the personal level - a review of the challenge for women in attempting to combine a career and family, and the lack of visible female mentors to model themselves upon.

These themes were subsequently pursued with the interviewees, within their specific organisational context. As the teachers surveyed in this study are all employed by the Queensland Education Department, a brief history of the context



of this organisation is presented in Chapter Three. Also included in this chapter is a review of previous work which has elaborated on the factors that women perceive are preventing them from attaining promotional positions within the State Education Department.

Chapter Four outlines the research design and details the procedures adopted in selecting a sample group and conducting the interviews. This chapter also outlines the procedures for analysing the collected data.

Chapter Five presents the findings from the qualitative research data organised according to the format of the interview schedules, namely: career history; current position; and future career aspirations (see Appendix 2).

Chapter Six uses the same three categories used in the literature review to discuss the interview data. Within these categories eight key factors were identified from the interview transcripts as perceived factors influencing promotion and these are used as a framework through which the collected data are analysed. The discussion however, allows for analysis that extends beyond this framework.

In Chapter Seven the results reported and analysed in the two previous chapters are summarised. Finally, attitudinal, organisational and personal initiatives to enhance promotional opportunities for women are suggested and possibilities for future research are outlined.

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## CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

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The purpose of this chapter is to first review the research and literature on the issues related to women and leadership both internationally and within an Australian context. Secondly, this chapter looks specifically at the participation of women in educational management and reviews explanations as to why the representation of women in positions of leadership in education is disproportionately low when compared with the fact that women make-up a clear majority of the teaching profession (Edson, 1987). The third section of this chapter looks at the factors that influence the promotional opportunities of women by following Connell's (1985) suggestion that an individual's career opportunities and choices can be analysed by examining their career at three levels. These levels are:

- (1) the dynamics and contexts of larger social structures, for example social attitudes;
- (2) the possibility of institutional constraints; and
- (3) the personal life history of the individual.

The literature reviewed on women and their perceptions of factors influencing promotion will thus be presented under three identified categories. These are:

- (1) the socio-cultural level - examining societal attitudes towards women as leaders;
- (2) the organisational level - exploring the structures and 'maleness of organisations' (Burton, 1991); and
- (3) the personal level - a review of the many roles women play in their lives and the lack of available mentors for female career aspirants.

The final section of this chapter looks at the characteristic career strategies that Weiner and Powney (1991) suggest are either used or experienced by educational managers, particularly female careerists.

## **2.1 Limitations in the Literature Base**

There are several limitations in the literature base. Firstly, as was mentioned in Chapter One, Australian research on women in management and leadership positions is meagre. As a result most studies referred to are mainly from situations in Britain and the United States. Secondly, in order to cover an adequate range of ideas that are important to this field of study some research studies that were undertaken in the 1960's and 70's need to be examined.

Although these studies may provide useful theoretical and empirical insights into the topic being examined they are not necessarily comparable with the findings from more recent studies. Finally, the focus of this thesis is upon women and their perceptions of factors that influence their promotional opportunities within the Queensland Education Department. Therefore this chapter will review general literature on women in educational management and Chapter Three will look at the representation of women within the specific context of the Queensland Education Department.

## **2.2 Women and Leadership**

Philosophers, historians, psychologists, political theorists, theologians, and others have given much attention to this social phenomenon termed leadership. Some scholars have attempted to explain leadership by the development of theories, while others have sought practical guidelines for successful leadership. The difficulty lies in attempting to create a conceptual and operational definition of this concept.

Traditional views of leadership have dominated the field of management, where the emphasis has been on male oriented values of rationality, competition and independence (Limerick and Cunningham, 1993). These views have been socially and historically constructed in a manner which looks to characteristics of successful masculine leaders as those constituting leadership (Smyth, 1989). In the past this male domination has served to: (1) restrict the entry of women into

the labour force; (2) filter women into a narrow range of occupations; (3) channel them into low pay/low status work; and overall to reinforce notions of female inferiority (Hearn, et al, 1983). Limerick and Cunnington (1993) suggest that to promote equity, modern organisations will have to adopt new structures and new organisational cultures and strategies, which in turn will require new sets of managerial leadership competencies. Although most of Limerick and Cunnington's (1993) recommendations are based on modern, private sector organisations they suggest that changes to the hierarchical structures typical of most bureaucratic organisations are also imminent. They propose that changes in organisational cultures will require leaders that have additional skills to those required to manage within traditional hierarchical structures. Organisations will require individuals with the leadership skills of negotiation, trust and empathy, attributes usually associated with women (Limerick and Cunnington, 1993). Thus the 1990's is predicting an increased number of women in managerial leadership roles (Naisbitt and Aburdene, 1990) as democratic, co-operative, collaborative and flexible styles of management preferred by most women, are coming to be valued (Limerick and Cunnington, 1993). Loden (1985) suggests that this positive emphasis on the leadership styles of women may mean that:

women managers may be better prepared to cope with the challenges of the future than many traditional leaders who succeeded in the past (cited in Limerick and Cunnington, 1993: 148).

This managerial perspective which emphasises gender differences in leadership styles, is being strongly challenged (Rizzo and Mendez, 1988).

Weiner and Powney's (1991) study in Britain looked at leadership styles used by managers in educational institutions. They concluded that it is not gender that determines a leader's style, but a number of other factors. The factors they included are the:

- (i) value position of the individual;
- (ii) ethos of the institution;
- (iii) conception of feminine and masculine views; and
- (iv) endemic patterns of inequality.

Erikson's (1985) research also reported that:

women develop leadership styles that are neither masculine nor feminine but 'androgynous' - that is self, rather than culturally defined (cited in Weiner and Powney, 1991: 3).

Thus, it is recognised that a certain type of person has leadership abilities whether male or female (Tkach, 1980) and regarding leadership capabilities, it seems that there is no significant difference between the sexes (Bartol, 1973). Chapman and Luthens (1975) suggest that even though there may not be a difference in the leadership capabilities of men and women there may be a difference in their actual leadership behaviour. With reference to leadership styles, women tend to be 'relationship' or 'participative' orientated as opposed to 'task' oriented (Lee and Alvares, 1977). White, et al (1981) reinforces these findings by citing a number of studies that indicate that women tend towards

'person' orientation rather than 'task' orientation leadership style. They question also, the typical assumption that a focus on tasks or goals leads to more successful management. Beasley (1983) argues that womens' roles as wives, mothers and organisers of households gives them the necessary skills to be more participative leaders than men, thus enabling women to practice efficient administration and management (cited in Evans, et al, 1988: 46).

In examining female and male management practices Knowles and Moore reviewed a comprehensive body of research on biological and sociological factors of the female. They concluded that women demonstrated equal competence (with men) in abilities such as objectivity, abstract thinking and conceptualisation and communication skills, but found superior ability had been demonstrated in interacting with others (cited in Burrows, 1976). Bartol agrees with these findings and states that:

about the only 'testable' difference between males and females seems to be women's greater ability in interpersonal relationships ... [that is] they are more able to work with people (1973: 6).

Many studies have examined the differences in the way men and women perform the role of leader (Gilligan, 1982; Schaefer, 1981). However, most research investigating this concept has been undertaken in the United States. Frasier and Frasier (1979) suggest that findings from research are so favourable towards the leadership styles of women, they marvel that there are still so few women in educational management. Shakeshaft (1987) summarised the findings

from studies conducted in the 1970's and 1980's and discovered many similar behaviours amongst women in educational administration. These studies suggest that women:

- are more likely than men administrators to use an informal style with teachers and others;
- communicate differently from male administrators as they use more expressions of uncertainty, hypercorrect grammar, and give more justification for statements;
- listen more, while men interrupt more often;
- are more democratic and participatory, while men make final decisions and take action without involving others;
- use power tactics, such as coalition, co-option and personality; and
- are more likely to withdraw from conflict or use collaborative strategies, whereas men use authoritative responses (cited in Limerick and Cunningham, 1993: 147).

Shakeshaft concludes with a definite point by stating that:

I am not making the case that all women respond in one way and all men in another. What my research and the research of others demonstrates is that, as a group, women tend to have a different administrative style than do men (1987: 190).

The literature suggests that both male and female managers are perceived as competent (Wood, 1976) and that the differences between the sexes are trivial as compared to the range within each sex (Albaneser and Hellriegel, 1977). Many studies, including those of Shakeshaft, 1987; Gilligan, 1982; Schaefer, 1981; and Frasher and Frasher, 1979 assert that women and men approach administration tasks differently - in their administrative style; decision-making; communication;



leadership style; and work preferences. These differences however, must be seen as complementary for the effective functioning of organisations. The issue of women in leadership is not about women conforming to a male system, but about women valuing their own qualities and experiences and integrating them into their role as a leader. Feline says:

the masculinization of woman is one of the most horrible things possible. No, woman mustn't emancipate herself for imitation - but discover her own reality, a different one ... It would be a step towards a happier humanity (cited in Leonard, 1983: 177).

Thus, the effective leader is not determined by their sex but will win commitment through leading by example (Weiner and Powney, 1991); by setting an example of excellence, being ethical, open, empowering and inspiring (Naisbitt and Aburdene, 1990). Naisbitt and Aburdene suggest that the primary challenge for a leader in the 1990's is to 'encourage the new, better educated worker to be more entrepreneurial, self-managing, and oriented toward life-long learning' (1990: 228), reinforcing the notion that the art of true leadership is the art of empowering others (Limerick and Cunningham, 1993).

To consider this issue in its Australian context, statistics show that the participation of women in paid employment has steadily increased over the past twenty years to 42.2 per cent of the workforce with projections of equal numbers of men and women in full-time employment by the year 2000 (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 1992). This increase however, is not reflected in the number of women who occupy positions of management within organisations particularly in

education (Victorian Education Department, 1984). Despite Commonwealth initiatives to enhance equal access for women to opportunities for recruitment and advancement in the workplace (*Sex Discrimination Act*, 1984; *Affirmative Action Act*, 1986), an equitable representation of women in positions of leadership is yet to be achieved. The struggle for equal opportunity in the workforce is also evident in women's earnings. Twenty one years after an equal pay decision in Australia (1972), women's work in full-time employment across all occupations is worth only eighty seven per cent of men's earnings (McDonald, 1993: 55). White and Tulip summarise the position of women in the paid workforce by stating that:

the structures of employment remain patriarchal: men are overwhelmingly in control and benefit from women's access to and conditions in the workforce. Men are paid more, and are in higher jobs, keeping control and power and defining value (1991: 69).

This male dominance is one factor restricting women's career opportunities within organisations, however there are other significant factors that are hindering women's access to management positions.

Martin, Harrison and Dinitto (1983) identified five main areas that need to be examined when attempting to conceptualise and understand the difficulties for women in advancing to powerful positions within organisations. These are:

- (1) cultural and societal values;
- (2) market and sector issues including occupational sex segregation;
- (3) work organisational structures;

- (4) job characteristics; and
- (5) female worker characteristics and issues.

In their report they concluded that to achieve equitable treatment in the workplace for women, fundamental efforts and changes would need to occur on each of these five levels (Martin, et al, 1983). In summary, these five levels recognise that there are many significant factors influencing women's promotional opportunities. Organisational structures (Riger and Galligan, 1980); societal attitudes towards women as leaders (Sampson, 1985A); lack of role models, mentors and networking systems (Shakeshaft, 1989); and women's commitment to child, family and home responsibilities are all in conflict with the career opportunities and advancement of women (Cook, 1993).

The career patterns of women are significantly influenced by factors that are different from that of men, yet the present structure of organisations makes little allowance for such differences. A major equity issue arises as to the flexibility of organisational structures to accommodate the extra demands impacting on women and their career paths. The literature search revealed that during the 1980's Education Departments in most Australian states had begun to address the issue of teachers' career structure with respect to the issue of equal opportunity (Maclean and McKenzie, 1989). During this period the issues of participation, access and equity for women in educational administration were addressed in conferences, books and diverse journal articles across Australia and internationally. Despite this heightened awareness, the National Projects Committee of the Australian

College of Education was alarmed at the lack of progress in this area and in 1982 declared 'the issue of participation of women in educational management a national priority' (Randell, 1990: 1). The more recent combination of state and federal initiatives coupled with mounting concern in professional associations has led to more current research focussing on the issues affecting the representation of women in educational management. Edson acknowledges that:

when a profession, [for example education] has a large pool of female employees at lower levels, logic would suggest that a representative portion of those qualified and experienced women would move up into the managerial ranks. The fact is they do not (1987: 272).

### **2.3 Women in Educational Management**

Traditional views of leadership have dominated educational management. Such views have been socially and historically constructed in a manner which looks to characteristics of successful masculine leaders as those constituting good leadership. Leaders are required to display attributes and behaviours and possess moral virtues and principles which are generally associated with 'masculinity' (Smyth, 1989: 94). Martin, et al (1983) suggests that this view has effectively displaced women in educational thought and therefore rendered women invisible in administrative practice. They concluded that if education is to be considered a site for emancipatory change then this view of leadership must be reconstructed.

Historically, schools have been organised in traditional, hierarchical ways. The implications of this hierarchical and gendered division of labour within

education for pedagogical and organisational concerns are now being questioned (Connell, 1987; Apple, 1985). Educational administration is being criticised for its traditional practices including 'gender-blindness' (Hearn and Parkin, 1983). Giroux asserts that there is a 'crisis of authority that has beset both the sphere of education and the larger society' (1988: ix). He argues that leaders should push against the oppressive boundaries of gender, class, race and age domination and take on the real challenge to broaden the definition of leadership 'beyond the narrow parameters of these concerns, to more vital imperatives of democracy, citizenship and social justice' (Giroux, 1988: xi).

Although many researchers have recognised the leadership capabilities of women, they are still not selected for senior positions within organisations (Shakeshaft, 1989). Historical records show that women have always been second choice in the selection of school leaders. Much research has been undertaken to determine more clearly what barriers exist and how salient each barrier is for preventing women from entering school administration. Adkinson (1981) examines these barriers within the domains of internal and external forces and Hansot and Tyack (1981) provide three models that support this framework.

The first model focuses on the individual woman possessing internal barriers that keep her from advancing, such as socialisation factors and sex stereotyping. The second approach describes the external barrier of an organisational structure. This approach suggests that:

women behave in self-limiting ways, not because they were socialised as females but because they are locked into low-power, low-visibility, dead-end jobs (Hansot and Tyack, 1981: 7).

The third model subsumes all other models under the notion of male-dominance, suggesting that all organisations are male defined and male run (Hansot and Tyack, 1981). Shakeshaft (1987) agrees with this third model and argues that male hegemony<sup>2</sup> is the cause of all conditions that keep women from advancing into positions of power and prestige. However, not all factors will affect all women. Therefore, the elements that currently affect women in educational management must be examined within a particular situational context.

In Australia sixty per cent of teachers are women, however they are not proportionally represented in positions of leadership (McDonald, 1993). Chapman's (1984, 1986) studies of the profiles and selection of principals in Australian schools, revealed that seventy seven per cent of principalships are held by men and only twenty three per cent are held by women. Figures in Australia generally show that 'rather than women's influence increasing over recent years, the number of senior positions held by women has actually been declining' (McDonald, 1993: 41). A Victorian Education Department Report described the decline in the number of women principals by stating that:

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<sup>2</sup> 'Hegemony is used to denote the predominance of one social class over others. It is the success of the dominant class to project its own way of seeing the world, human and social relationships, so that it is accepted as 'commonsense' and part of the natural order by those who are in fact subordinated to it' (Bullock, Stallybrass, Trombley, 1988: 379).

within the primary division ... in the last fourteen years the figures indicate a decreasing proportion of women in the highest classification. Under the classification system 1970 to 1972, the proportion of women in the special class declined from forty one per cent to thirty seven per cent. Under the classification system operative between 1973 and 1977, the proportion of women in the special class declined from thirty four per cent to twenty eight per cent. Under the following system of classification, the proportion of women in the principal class declined from twenty eight per cent to twenty one per cent and under the latest system of classification, eighteen per cent of primary school principals are women. These decreases have taken place in a period when the proportion of classified women teachers in the total primary teaching service has increased from sixty one per cent to seventy per cent and a formal situation of equality of opportunity is technically in operation (1984).

This decrease in the number of women in senior positions in educational administration is occurring globally. In Britain, surveys reported that the number of female principals had fallen from fifty six per cent early this century to thirty eight per cent in 1980. In the USA figures showed that in 1928, women were fifty five per cent of elementary school principals but in 1970 they represented only twenty per cent (cited in McDonald, 1993: 41). These statistics illustrate similar trends to the decline in the numbers of women in educational administration in Australia. Figure 2.1 displays some recent statistics published by the Queensland Education Department. These statistics show a severe decline from the middle of the century through to the 1970's when the proportion of female principals declined to a low three per cent, although there has since been an increase in the number of female principals to sixteen per cent in 1990. In comparison to their male counterparts however, this is still a proportionally low representation (Clarke, 1985). The statistics displayed in Figure 2.1 show that at present there is a disproportionate representation of women in positions of educational management. Various explanations have been offered in an attempt to explain this low representation.

**FIGURE 2.1**

**PRINCIPALS OF SCHOOLS BY SEX:**

**ALL STATE SCHOOLS (PRE-SCHOOL,  
PRIMARY,SECONDARY,SPECIAL) in QUEENSLAND**

**SELECTED DECADES 1870 - 1990**

<u>Year</u>	<u>Female</u>	<u>Male</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>Females as % of Total</u>
1870	33	78	111	30
1920	768	847	1615	47
1950	168	1264	1432	12
1970	37	1187	1224	3
1990	219	1133	1352	16

Sources:- Years 1870 -1980: Clarke, E (1985: 78);

- Year 1990: 'Distribution of full-time teachers' Education Office

Gazette, Education Statistics for 1981-1990.



Factors influencing access to and participation of women in educational management in Australia have been documented by such researchers as Randell (1990, 1985), Sampson (1987, 1985) and Chapman (1985). Factors they include are:

- (1) societal attitudes about the roles of men and women as leaders and followers, a long process of legitimation of male authority, and the identification of leadership with male behaviour (Randell, 1990);
- (2) culture of educational systems and institutions - masculinity is embedded in the procedures, assumptions, processes and formal rules of contemporary organisations (Randell, 1990);
- (3) lack of mentoring, perception of lack of encouragement and images of women in leadership being 'negative or threatening ones for women' (Sampson, 1987B: 37);
- (4) lack of experience in administration (Randell, 1990);
- (5) poor selection and promotion procedures (Randell, 1990);
- (6) homosociability in selection - men are more comfortable with one another than with women as superiors or peers (Burns 1992);

- (7) women's reluctance to apply for promotion for several reasons:
- poor self perception;
  - well-founded belief that their application will not succeed;
  - commitment to teaching (Randell, 1990); and
- (8) value placed on family commitment is not shared by educational systems - the broken or interrupted work pattern of women is seen as abnormal or deficient (Randell, 1990).

Hale and Kelly (1989) cite extensive literature on women in the labour market, their general employment trends and the difficulties they face in achieving top level management and administrative positions. They cite various research that suggests reasons for the scarcity of women in administrative positions and group these factors into three major categories:

- (1) internal barriers such as gender role socialisation, a passive self-concept and role prejudice (Bayes, 1985; Cook, 1985);
- (2) structural barriers such as employer biases, sex segregated jobs, sexual harassment and pay inequities (Vertz, 1985; Cherpas, 1985; Gutek, 1985); and
- (3) support availability barriers such as limited financial resources, education and training, collegial networks, role models and mentors,

along with domestic constraints (Bayes, 1985; Vertz, 1985), (cited in Hale and Kelly, 1989: 19).

Research suggests that there are many complex factors that are not allowing women to advance equally with men into management positions (Randell, 1990). Much research has been conducted in an attempt to explain this anomaly, particularly in areas such as education where females represent the majority of the profession yet are confined to the lower ranks (Edson, 1987).

## **2.4 The Socio-Cultural Level**

In western society gender is a major factor in the denotion of status and role in society (Nicoll, 1992). Societal attitudes and cultures have prescribed certain notions of the appropriate roles for each of the sexes. The male role has been seen as denoting autonomy, aggression, independence, competitiveness, career orientation and ultimate power and control, whereas the female role has been confined to notions of dependence, passivity, nurturance, co-operation and an orientation centred on the family and home. Where this particular role division has matched with the female's role or occupation in the paid workforce, there has tended to be an acceptance and encouragement of the participation of women, and teaching is one such occupation. However, when the female role was perceived as transgressing the traditional place of women, contradictions and obstacles have arisen (Nicoll, 1992). The obstacles for women in teaching have become apparent

when they have attempted to move outside of the traditional confines of their female role.

Teaching in the classroom is considered to be within the bounds of women's 'natural' place (Acker, 1989). This natural talent for teaching children however, suggests that women are 'incapable of administrative authority' (Trotman, 1984: 135). Much research on gender roles in schools supports this notion. Deem concluded that:

maternalistic and pastoral roles are often played out by women teachers and paternalistic and authoritarian roles by men teachers ... although some aspects of teaching are considered appropriate tasks for women, other aspects are considered unsuitable (1978: 112).

The strength of such social stereotyping has been expressed as one of the greatest barriers to the increased participation of women in educational management (Nicoll, 1992). Marland supports this by claiming that 'the most powerful factor holding women back is probably the very stereotype that attracts them to teaching' (1983: 53). Nicoll's in her evaluation of literature and research on the socialisation of gender roles concluded that:

it is ironical that those engaged most closely with the client - the student and arguably the most influential in terms of students' growth are those with the least perceived value in the educational sector (1992: 138).

Clearly, the socialisation of gender roles in our society acts as a powerful deterrent for women in their struggle to attain formal leadership positions within

education (Randell, 1990). Part of the complexity of understanding and recognising the sexual inequality embedded in social attitudes is that it is manifested in such subtle, yet pervasive ways (Nicoll, 1992).

#### **2.4.1 Attitudes to Women as Leaders**

Deeply entrenched in our society are attitudes that discourage women from assuming roles of leadership (Randell, 1990). Evans et al asserts that in our language:

the word leader has no female connotations or characteristics. In fact many men and some women believe that women do not have the necessary qualities to be good leaders (1988: 46).

Haag reinforces this assertion by stating that:

stereotyped assumptions about what makes a good strong manager are incompatible with what makes a good (soft warm) woman (1987: 11).

This traditional masculine perception of leadership that emphasises power, individualism and hierarchy, still pervades organisational structures. Limerick and Cunnington (1993) assert that such imposing masculine attitudes are why women are moving away from formal organisations and creating their own small businesses. Raynolds (1987) predicts that women will 'own fifty per cent of all small businesses in the United States by the turn of the century' and suggests that:

male resistance to women's advancement persists as the single most difficult challenge of the late twentieth century (cited in Limerick and Cunningham, 1993: 148).

In the past, attitudes towards women as leaders have been negative as they were perceived as lacking managerial capability (Maier, 1992). Beasley (1983) asserts that there has been a dramatic shift in the concept of leadership and that many men are now valuing the contributions of women and realising that 'co-operation, communication and conciliation [characteristics traditionally associated with female behaviour] are key factors in understanding good leadership' (cited in Evans, et al, 1988: 46).

## **2.5 The Organisational Level**

The culture and management structures of organisations are important factors to consider when examining the barriers that are persistently excluding women from positions of leadership. Morgan asserts that:

it often makes a great deal of difference if you're a man or a woman! Many organisations are dominated by gender-related values that bias organisational life in favour of one sex over another. Organisations often segment opportunity structures and job markets in ways that enable men to achieve positions of prestige and power more easily than women and often operate in ways that produce gender-related biases in the way organisational reality is created and sustained on a day-to-day basis. This is most obvious in situations of open discrimination and various forms of sexual harassment, but often pervades the culture of an organisation in a way that is much less visible (1986: 178).

In recent years a number of researchers have argued the need for a re-evaluation of the field of organisational analysis (Clegg, 1981; Clegg and

Dunkerley, 1980) and in particular to examine the impact of 'gendered rules of control' upon organisational cultures (Hearn, et al, 1989: 29). This gender related bias in organisations appears particularly evident in the field of educational management.

Tancred-Sheriff believes that 'masculinity is embedded in contemporary organisations' and asserts that this structure effectively excludes women from its practices (1988: 14). Randell's conclusions were similar from her review of research conducted on the gendered culture of educational institutions. She stated that:

researchers who have documented practices in schools, TAFE colleges and universities have found evidence that these institutions are male-oriented in terms of physical space, assumptions, procedures and rules, both for students and staff (1993: 5).

Thus, the organisational structures of most educational institutions do not encourage women to see themselves in positions of leadership (Randell, 1993).

In 1984, Sampson conducted an Australia wide research project to determine teachers' perceptions of the promotional systems in government schools. One question asked the respondents whether they thought women were discriminated against in the promotional system. In Queensland, sixty four per cent of the female respondents indicated 'yes', as compared to 27.4 per cent of the males. This response was the second highest of the states, (Australian Capital Territory being 68.4 per cent) suggesting that women teachers in Queensland are not

content with the promotional opportunities provided by the present system of education.

### **2.5.1 The Homogenous Nature of Organisations**

In most organisations, managerial hierarchies, role models, networking systems and organisational politics frequently exhibit a male ambience which contributes to the exclusion of women in positions of power (Burton, 1991). Constructions of masculinity are built into the very definition of many jobs through societal beliefs, perceptions and realities about masculinity and femininity and strongly held ideas about the place of women and their capacities (Burton, 1991). Despite the steady increase in the participation of women in the workforce they continue to be perceived by men as 'invaders in the workplace' (Game and Pringle, 1983: 7).

Caplow (1954) asserted that cultural attitudes expect that intimate groups (except for family and sexual groups) be made up of one sex - the principle of homosociability (cited in Burton, 1991: 4). Lipman - Blumen defined 'homosocial' or 'homogenous' as the 'seeking enjoyment and/or preference for the company of the same sex' (1976: 16). Kanter follows this with the notion of 'homosocial reproduction' by quoting Wilbat Moores' (1962) idea that 'managers tend to guard power and privilege for those who fit in' (cited in Burton, 1991: 5). The selection of managers on the basis of social similarity is to ensure a certain degree of predictability in their responses and to allow for planning without the



input of new perspectives, which might lead to different ideas and upset the status quo (Burton, 1991). Clearly women are seen as different and men are uncertain as to whether they can 'fit into organisations in positions of power and influence' (Burton, 1991: 5). Kanter's research (1977) showed that men regarded women as incomprehensible and unpredictable and commented that women took longer to communicate with, were difficult to understand and that they were unsure of how to treat them (cited in Burton, 1991: 5).

Acker (1990) proposes that many organisations are in fact constructed along the lines of gender. He suggests that this construction is maintained by at least five interacting processes within organisations. First are the divisions created along gender lines: the divisions of labour; allowed behaviours; positions of power; and the fact that the 'men are almost always in the highest position of organisational power' (1990: 146). Second is the construction of symbols and images that explain, express, reinforce or sometimes oppose such divisions. The image of the top administrator is usually constructed around an image of success, power and masculinity. The third factor is the social structure within an organisation. This defines the interactions between the sexes and can reinforce the pattern of dominance and submission. All these processes produce the fourth component of gender differences in individual identity. This identity determines the appropriate choice of work, language, clothing and presentation of one's self as a gendered member of an organisation. Finally, Acker proposes that social constructions of gender underlay all the processes which create and maintain gendered, rather than gender neutral organisations (1990). Novarra (1983)

suggests that management should not be perceived as gender specific but as 'a unisex or androgynous activity' where women are perceived to be equally as competent as men (cited in Randell, 1993: 2). Randell (1993) asserts that this gendered structure that exists within organisations significantly disadvantages women in their opportunities for promotion.

At all levels of organisations there are documented complaints about discriminatory procedures in the processes of employee promotion and selection (Allen, 1990). Thornton argues that homogeneity is a central value of organisational culture in Australia which 'manifests itself most dramatically through the phenomenon of homosocial reproduction or cloning' (1989: 122). She suggests that senior men are more comfortable with each other rather than having women as superiors or peers, so they give patronage to youthful images of themselves (Thornton, 1989). Grant describes such men as 'gatekeepers' in the sense that they are the 'people with the power to control the promotional system' (cited in Acker, 1989: 41). Limerick's (1991) study in the Queensland Education Department revealed that the positions of power within state secondary schools, for example the principals and deputy principals, were still very much dominated by men. If men in such positions clearly showed no bias between men and women in their selection of applicants for promotion there would be no question of equal opportunity. This however, is not always the case.

Stockard and Johnson's (1981) studies in America indicated that male school administrators and male school board members showed a strong bias against

appointing women to administrative positions. Kanter (1977) explains this bias by saying that men wish to recreate what they 'know'. Therefore they ultimately choose males to fill positions of management because they are a 'known quantity', whereas women are seen as 'unknown packages' (Kanter, 1977: 49). Stockard and Johnson argue however, that even though this exclusion of women exists it is not the result of deliberate actions by men. They concluded that men:

do not have to be deliberate in their attempts to keep women out and in their intentions to keep all the power for themselves in order for women to be excluded (1981: 245).

Part of the complexity in identifying sexual inequality within organisations is that it is often embedded within the culture in subtle, informal ways. Epstein suggests that organisations are:

characterised by a high degree of informality, much of it within an exclusive, club-like context ... especially in the top echelons (1970: 968).

Marshall's research supports this notion and suggests that male networks in American organisations work to:

deny women access to important information, feedback about their performance, an understanding about the organisation norms and the opportunity to be socialised to truly belong (1989: 93).

Nicolls' evaluation of research on sexual inequality within organisations concluded that:

where the norms and practices of a particular occupation are draped in an informal and often unspoken guise, the ability of 'outsiders' like women, to break in and come to terms with the profession is severely limited (1992: 178).

Tancred-Sheriff (1988) believes that in many ways schools are 'male spaces' and that masculinity is embedded in the procedures, assumptions, processes and formal rules of these institutions. Blackmore (1993) states that educational theory and administrative practice has always been dominated by men, who have acted as 'gatekeepers' in setting the standards, producing the social knowledge and decreeing what is significant, relevant and important in the light of their own experience. This androcentric perspective systematically eliminates women and hinders their access to and participation in educational administration (Gilligan 1982).

Connell's analysis of gender relations in Australian organisations suggests that management 'institutionalises hegemonic masculinity' where dominant theories of management favour values, ideologies and structures associated with certain images of masculinity (1987: 183). From a cultural perspective, the Australian image of management has become associated with a particular type of masculinity, that of 'the heterosexual, white, rational and technically capable male' (Blackmore, 1993: 30). These ideological constructions of masculinity are obvious in the sexual division of labour within educational organisations, in the notion that teaching is for women and administration is for men (Blackmore, 1993). This gender construct subordinates women and 'conspires to exclude women from most positions of power' (Connell, 1987: 215). Thus, Blackmore

(1993) asserts that critical attention must be made of how the nature of organisations are being restructured so as to develop structures that reduce this sexual division of labour and enhance the movement of women into educational management.

Some studies however, totally negate the negative impact that organisational structures may have on the career advancement of women. A study by Woo (1985) concluded that many women who gain promotion feel that it is solely due to their own personal qualities and deny that institutional discrimination is a problem (cited in Weiner and Powney, 1991: 2). Ball (1987) suggests that women who don't cite any discrimination as a factor influencing promotion believe that 'the main impediments to other women's advancement are their own stereotyped attitudes and their lack of ambition' (cited in Weiner and Powney, 1991: 4).

## **2.6 The Personal Level**

An examination of the literature reveals significant differences in male and female career paths (Shakeshaft, 1987). However, most research and career development theorists up until the 1960's focused their studies on the male population only (Northcutt, 1991). Therefore, a great deal of existing literature on careers and career paths does not fit the experiences of women (Shakeshaft, 1987). The assumption that a woman's career development can be described or

predicted using existing theories is untenable because there are clearly evident sex differences relevant to career choices and patterns.

The career development of women involves one more step or choice than men must make (Fitzgerald and Betz, 1983). Women must decide if a career will be a major focus in their life and if so, whether they choose to juggle the roles of worker/spouse/parent. Biklen (1985) states that:

in spite of changes in the workforce, of the opening of fields that were previously restricted to women, of the addition of women in professional and upper management positions, the structure of career is based on the ways in which men have been able to live their lives free from primary responsibility for the family (cited in Shakeshaft, 1987: 64).

At least some thought must be given to how children and/or career can be ordered, given the biological limitations of childbearing time for women. Men are not subject to such choices or decisions about whether or not to work - only what work they would like to pursue (Northcutt, 1991). Women's careers are also likely to be interrupted for childrearing purposes, a break which can have a significant impact on their promotional opportunities (Grant, 1987). This commitment to the importance of family responsibilities is also likely to mean reduced mobility because of the tendency of women to favour their spouse's career and move in response to his promotional opportunities (Sampson, 1987B).

Many researchers have suggested that women's lack of access to mentor relationships is another significant factor influencing promotion (Arnold and

Davidson, 1990). In addition, Randell (1993) cites a study which suggests that women's passive self concept can act to reduce their opportunities for promotion. The following review of literature will now expand upon these factors.

### **2.6.1 Career and Family Conflicts**

The fundamental way in which women's and men's lives differ is in their blending of home and career responsibilities (Cook, 1993). Social stereotyping has traditionally prescribed that 'men should be the providers and women the nurturers of home and family' (Cook, 1993: 230). Sekeran and Hall (1989) assert that dual career couples typically favour the husband and the wives career is the one usually adapted to meet the needs of the family. Thus, the career pattern of women is significantly influenced by their commitment to family, parental and domestic responsibilities (Shakeshaft, 1987). The present structure of the workforce makes little allowance for non-work responsibilities and is still based on a model of the two parent family, where one partner is in full-time paid employment and the other has sole responsibility for the household (Cook, 1991). This traditional occupational ethos is however, being challenged by alternative family structures and priorities for both men and women. Hall (1990) suggests that many men are actively attempting to achieve a more rewarding balance between family and career commitments. Unfortunately, there seems to be a universal stigma attached to men not being 'dedicated to their organisation twenty four-hours-a-day' (Sekaran and Hall, 1989: 177) and that men using flexible work options are typically viewed as 'eccentrics who are not serious about their careers'

(Hall, 1990: 9). These attitudes have negative implications for women and their careers.

Working women must attempt to successfully combine the responsibilities of the public sphere of work and the private sphere of home and family (Yeandle, 1984). Many women choose accommodated careers which involves balancing personal and work responsibilities over the course of their working lives. For many women who develop accommodated careers it is mainly because they regard their family and other personal out-of-school commitments as their main priority (Evetts, 1990).

Women's career and family conflicts have been recognised by many researchers (Randell, 1990; Shakeshaft, 1987). Their commitment to family responsibilities and time away from paid work for child rearing presents many problems and often 'closes the career path to promotion' (McDonald, 1993: 53). The result of family commitments for women means that their work is largely concentrated in a few industries, with low skill definition and often involving part-time employment<sup>3</sup>. Work in these spheres often has a poorly defined career path, thus contributing to women's limited access to senior and middle management positions (McDonald, 1993).

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<sup>3</sup> In 1991, females represented 41.6 per cent of the labour force. Of this group 53.8 per cent were in full-time employment, 36.9 per cent were employed part-time and 9.3 per cent were unemployed (Women's Education and Training Advisory Group, 1991, cited in McDonald, 1993).



One of the traditional explanations for the low representation of women in management has been their lack of commitment, because of their refusal to give precedence to work over their domestic and family responsibilities. Grant summarised many of the issues relevant to this traditional assumption and concluded that:

given traditional role expectations and responsibilities it is inappropriate to expect the majority of women to adopt the consistently single-minded approach to career advancement attributed by Lyons (1981) to so-called 'career ambitious' teachers (1989: 41).

Grant's (1989) findings built on Deem's research which concluded that:

it is not justifiable to assume that because women often have heavy responsibilities for carrying out domestic labour and caring for children, their commitment to any other task is necessarily lower than that of men (1978: 116).

Women's commitment to family responsibilities has always had a noticeable impact on their careers (Evetts, 1990). Maclean in his study of the teaching careers of women in the Tasmanian Education Department concluded that two of the main reasons for the under-representation of women in positions of leadership are:

- their disrupted work histories; and
- the difficulty of combining promotion positions with family responsibilities (Maclean, 1989: 35).

Limerick's (1991) research in the Queensland Department of Education suggests that women are making crucial decisions about their family relationships and consciously taking responsibility for the planning of their careers. It appears that women are either gaining their first promotional posts before they take time off to have children or they are having children without taking long periods off work. Limerick's (1991) research also found that more women are applying for promotional positions and are doing so at a younger age. For example, at the time of her research, one hundred and one (sixty four per cent) of the one hundred and fifty seven subject masters under thirty years of age, were females.

Grant (1987) however, approaches such statistics with caution and suggests that findings on the promotional orientation of women teachers that are based on group norms, do not account for the complexity of women's lives. She concluded that:

links between women's promotional orientation and low career status should be made cautiously. It may be that women reject dominant male values or embrace alternative commitments or that at certain times their aspiration levels are tempered to take account of their other life experiences (1987: 232).

The realities of domestic and family responsibilities are powerful factors influencing the choices women make about their careers. Teaching has always been seen as an attractive occupation for women, as the holidays and hours of schooling make it a suitable occupation to attempt to fulfil the triple roles of paid worker, mother and wife (Nicoll, 1992). However, Grant's (1989) research with

women teachers found that more single women applied for promotional positions than did married women. She argues therefore, that the impact of marriage and having children has a negative effect on women's intentions to apply for promotional positions in schools. The irony arises however, in Grant's earlier research where she found that:

the onset of greater family responsibilities seems to have the opposite effect on men teachers' promotional orientation and may help explain their higher status (1987: 233).

Limerick's recent research with teachers in the Queensland Education Department also reported differences between the sexes by stating that:

it is very clear that children, whether they have them or not, play a major role in women's decisions while they do not feature prominently in males' decisions (1991: 76).

Nicoll (1992) suggests that whilst women remain classroom teachers, they can more easily combine their work and family life, however an administrative position involves a different set of commitments which are not necessarily as flexible or adaptable to domestic and family responsibilities. Many researchers observe that family commitments and responsibilities do not diminish as women promote into more senior positions (Evetts, 1987; Epstein, 1971). Evetts discussed the issue of family commitment and responsibilities with a sample of female primary and infant headteachers in Britain and observed that:

women had to continue to meet family and work commitments, balancing one against the other, for the whole of their working lives (1987: 27).

Epstein states that the pressure for women attempting to combine work and family commitments is clearly an obstacle to them seeking promotion. In her study of women's diversity of roles she observed that:

much of the strain experienced by the woman who attempts to work is structured strain, caused by a combination of an overdemanding set of role obligations, lack of consensus as to the hierarchy of obligations, and the clash of obligations from home and occupational statuses (1971: 134).

As a result the stereotyped role which defines women as the domestic worker and primary caregiver to children remains a major factor influencing the career progression of women.

However, it is not simply the duality of the family and work roles that influences the careers of women. There is a strong possibility that women choosing to have children will have a career break of one or more years to rear the children. Allen (1990) refutes the traditional explanation that women do not reach positions of management because of such periods of leave, by citing Sawyer (1984) and Harper's (1987) research. In Allen's (1990) own research with university academics she found that there are not large numbers of women academics taking maternity leave. She does recognise however, that this is a very select sample group of women and accepts that the broken and interrupted work

pattern of women is frequently described as a barrier to women's advancement (Grant, 1987).

### **2.6.2 Interrupted Careers**

Grant cites that approximately sixty five per cent of all women teachers in the United Kingdom broke service during their careers (1987: 232). Grant (1987) argues that this interruption to a career can have long term effects and tends to come at times when teachers are most likely to be seeking promotion. She also suggests that women tend to finish their childbearing and rearing before they consider their career and promotional opportunities. Evetts' studies support this notion. She suggested that:

women who had taken time off teaching to care for their own young families did not begin to consider their own careers until they had returned to teaching and their own children were settled in school (1987: 20).

Therefore, the age of these women re-entering the profession may be an obstacle to seeking further promotion. Grant explored this issue with both male and female teachers and found that:

many teachers expressed the view that access to promoted posts is related to age and that applications from older candidates for headships and deputy headships in particular, are regarded less favourably (1987: 235).

Although Limerick's research in Queensland found that, 'females' career histories are more typically interrupted' (1991: 80), she suggested that this pattern is changing. Her research in the Queensland Department of Education suggests that today, women are either gaining their promotional posts before taking time off to have children or they are having children without taking long periods off work (Limerick, 1991). Jessica Barnard (1983) supports this by stating that having children will no longer interrupt the career patterns of many women. She argues that:

the rather astonishing change which is taking place in the work lives of women is that the effects of the birth of a child on work life continuity is rapidly diminishing. Increasingly women work right through their pregnancies and are then returning to work after a lapse hardly longer than a somewhat lengthy vacation (cited in Shulman and Sykes, 1983: 256).

### **2.6.3 Reduced Mobility**

Another of the traditional explanations often raised in literature as a factor influencing the promotional opportunities of women is their reduced mobility. Societal expectations suggest that married women should be tied to their husbands' career paths rather than their own (Marland, 1983). Thus women tend to move with their husbands' promotional opportunities rather than vice versa (Sampson, 1987A). This voluntary immobility or lack of ability to relocate to take up promotional positions has been clearly documented as detrimental to the career advancement of women (Randell, 1990).

Sampson (1987A) states that men's ability to move and relocate is a definite advantage in accessing the promotional ladder. Limerick's (1991) study of teachers in the Queensland Education Department stated that an ability to move freely around the state was an important criteria in accessing successful promotional opportunities. Limerick (1991) stated that because of the pressure to fill promotional positions in the remote areas of Queensland, teachers had to be prepared to uproot their families and move away from their present homes. Regional inspectors employed by the Queensland Education Department stated that:

the most unanimous and significant characteristic for promotional success ... was mobility, which could over-ride ability on most occasions (Limerick, 1991: 85).

Therefore, women teachers who choose to be immobile because of family and spouse commitments severely limit their promotional opportunities within this profession (Nicoll, 1992).

#### **2.6.4 Lack of Role Models and Mentors**

Many researchers in the field of management have identified mentoring<sup>4</sup> as perhaps the most important factor in the career success of women (Limerick and Heywood, 1992; Arnold and Davidson, 1990). Limerick in her study of the career

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<sup>4</sup> A mentor is a person usually several years older and of greater experience and seniority in the world the young person is entering (Levinson, 1978); Most mentors have direct supervisory capacity and organisational responsibility, and are in an ideal position to provide career enhancing functions for the protege (Burke, 1984, cited in Limerick and Heywood, 1992: 2).

opportunities for men and women in the Queensland Department of Education recognised the importance of role models and mentors by commenting that:

patronage and sponsorship developed through networks and associations with people in a position to assist and guide and encourage one in one's career were thought to be invaluable (1991: 84).

Schmuck's research in education concludes that lack of access to such sponsorship may be 'a major deterrent to further advancement in administration' (1981: 183). Yoder's (1984) research findings suggest that the scarcity of female mentors exists because women occupy proportionally so few of the senior management positions within organisations. This inability to find suitable sponsorship contributes to a lack of support for career development thereby creating significant barriers for women pursuing academic careers.

Finding a mentor is the first vital step in the career paths of many successful men and women. Swiderski's research suggests that 'women's advancement is more dependent on sponsors than men's' (1988: 29), yet many women do not have the same opportunities as their male colleagues to develop such a relationship (Sampson, 1987). Collins argues that:

women simply have not been given the proper help, training or coaching to compete successfully in the professional world. If women want to succeed they need to be mentored into these positions traditionally held by men (1983: 1).



Stockard and Johnson's (1981) study of male school superintendents and school board members in America supports this argument. Their findings showed that women were encouraged less than men to seek promoted positions. Feminist researchers such as Richey, Gambrill and Blythe (1988) suggest that mentor relationships are perpetuating the male dominated hierarchical systems of authority. They suggest that:

most people in a position to be a mentor are men and as such are predisposed to select male proteges or mentees in their image (Paludi et al, 1990, cited in Limerick and Heywood, 1992: 5).

This predilection to select male mentees presents problems for women. Ragins and McFarlin (1990) examined the data from one hundred and eighty one proteges to compare their perceptions of mentoring in cross gender and same gender relationships. They concluded that same sex acquaintances are most effective for mentoring relationships because people usually groom for leadership those with whom they enjoy an 'ingroup' relationship. Sampson (1987A) in a study conducted with teachers reported that senior officers, most of which were male, were more likely to encourage males rather than females to apply for promotion. Therefore the tendency of male mentors to form relationships with male proteges and the assumption that the 'presence and visibility of a same-sex role model will result in positive vocational decisions by younger people to imitate the role model' (McDonald, 1993: 46) disadvantages women and their opportunity for promotion.

The difficulties for women seeking a mentor are twofold. There is a lack of access to women in mentoring positions and there are problems associated with cross-gender mentoring relationships. Byrne (1989) in a study of Australian academic professors stated that males were not mentoring women because of the possibility of sexual harassment charges. Johnsrud suggested another problem with mentoring by citing several writers who are cautioning women to the risks of becoming involved in mentor relationships because they may be 'hierarchical, dependent and exploitive' (cited in Moore and Twombly, 1990: 58).

Richey, et al (1990) in their study of mentor relationships among women suggested that organisations should encourage mentor and peer relationships as a strategy for enhancing career success as it appears more congruent with feminine values of equity, reciprocity and co-operation and has benefits not only for the protege, but also for the mentors and the organisations in which they operate. Arnold and Davidson's (1990) research further asserts that mentors experience increased job satisfaction, increased peer recognition and potential career advancement of their own. Apart from mentors and network systems being available, women also have to be confident in their own abilities to actively seek out such networks and subsequently pursue promotional opportunities.

#### **2.6.5 Passive Self Concept**

The self concept and esteem that girls and women develop is limited by early social conditioning from home, school and the media and then further

limited by the lack of available educational and training opportunities (Randell, 1993). Randell (1993) cites a recent survey conducted by the Department of Employment, Education and Training (1992) with year eleven students in Canberra. The results clearly demonstrated gender-differentiated attitudes towards careers. The survey reported that:

more than twice as many boys as girls said that salary was a great importance in choosing a career. Similarly, twice as many boys thought promotion opportunities were important in career choice. In selecting a career, girls rated factors such as sense of achievement, job satisfaction and working with people far more highly than money or status (cited in Randell, 1993: 5).

Some research suggests that women 'are less inclined than men to see themselves as competent in the public areas of educational leadership' (Randell, 1993: 5). Sampson's (1987A) study of Australian teachers found that women lacked confidence in their management capabilities and that this was related to a lack of opportunity for administrative and organisational experience during their early years of teaching. Chapman (1986) suggested that women tend to underestimate their worth and suitability for senior administrative positions and usually attribute their success to circumstances or the contributions of others. Randell (1990) asserts that giving women opportunities to broaden their experience including management experience will boost self confidence and ultimately increase their application for promotional positions.

## 2.7 Career Strategies

Career success in the future presents the same challenge to both males and females. Morgan (1988) states that:

in the past managerial competence went hand in hand with the possession of specific skills and abilities, it now seems to involve much more. Increasingly, it rests in the development of attitudes, values and 'mindsets', that allow managers to confront, understand and deal with a wide range of forces within and outside their organisations (cited in Vilkinas and Cartan, 1993: 33).

Limerick and Cunnington imply that the successful leaders of the future will be individuals who take personal responsibility for their career advancement and develop a mindset of:

autonomy and empowerment, of competition and collaboration, of the fierce expression of individual competence and excellence, together with the need to recognise the competencies of others and to combine with them in alliances and partnerships (1993: 15).

When examining the career paths of successful managers it is possible to distinguish individual career strategies ranging from those who have devised a deliberate career path to those who have drifted from one position to another. Weiner and Powney (1991) in their study exploring the experiences of women and black and/or ethnic minority men in educational institutions in the United Kingdom, identified four characteristic career strategies that were used or experienced by educational managers. These career strategies listed below are grouped into four broad categories. These are the:

- (i) deliberate;
- (ii) drifter;
- (iii) opportunist; and
- (iv) irrepressible careerist (Weiner and Powney, 1991).

The deliberate careerists are those who have taken control of their career planning, considered mid to long term strategies and used their present position and opportunities to forward their career position. They retain ownership of their career and identify a range of possible career choices including sideways moves (Grant, 1989). The deliberate careerist believes that he/she has taken deliberate steps designed to take them onwards in their career (Weiner and Powney, 1991).

The career drifter 'is organisation led: the employee allows the organisation to structure her or his career' (Weiner and Powney, 1991: 29). Career drifters apply only when promotional opportunities occur, they do not seek power but work hard and wait modestly for recognition of their efforts (Grant, 1989). Woo (1985) states that women seem uncomfortable when openly seeking power and therefore most women may fit into this career planning category.

The opportunist is the careerist who 'seizes whatever job opportunities are feasible and attractive at the time' (Weiner and Powney, 1991: 30). This strategy applies particularly to people who find it difficult to make long-term career predictions but make a career from 'a series of unorthodox, accidental connections and experiences' (Weiner and Powney, 1991: 30). This career strategy is said to

be particularly common to women as they are forced to make geographical moves to follow their spouse or partner (Weiner and Powney, 1991).

The irrepressible careerist 'uses disadvantage and obstacles as a spur to be overcome, reinforcing determination rather than diminishing it' (Weiner and Powney, 1991: 30). Career aspirants in this category would tend to go into small businesses preferably of their own where 'they are not constrained by the rules and prejudices of an organisation' (Weiner and Powney, 1991: 30).

Weiner and Powney's (1991) study identified these four broad categories of career strategies that are used or experienced by educational managers. They pointed out very clearly however, that individuals do not necessarily fit neatly into one category but rather move between the categories at different phases of their lives.

## **2.8 Summary**

In summarising a wide range of the literature concerning women and management, it is obvious that gender is more than a physiological or socialised characteristic of the individual person. It is a complex element of our environment which significantly influences men's and women's interactions with others, and the life and career options and plans available to both sexes (Cook, 1993).

In the previous sections of this chapter distinctions have not been drawn between different researchers who have developed their works from various theoretical bases, in different countries, at different times, in a variety of organisational contexts. Many of the authors do not make explicit their particular perspective, but engage in approaches, methodologies, analyses and discourses that are often markedly different from one another and even at variance.

The aim of this thesis does not warrant a preoccupation with these theoretical distinctions but the major dimensions of some of the most significant emerging perspectives are worth noting.

There is not a universally accepted categorisation of the major fields and there are differences within fields, for example, there are varieties of perspectives adopted by feminist researchers, as there are by management researchers. The major works that are relevant to this study however, have been derived from fields that can be briefly overviewed as:

- (i) managerial and business;
- (ii) structuralism;
- (iii) post modernism; and
- (iv) feminism.

Although there is a great deal of diversity within the categories, there are particular links between the four.

(i) Managerialism derives principally from organisational theories that pertain traditionally to private enterprise but in recent years increasingly to public organisations, and values 'conceptions of efficiency, effectiveness, equity and excellence' as the most important elements of management (Crump, 1993: 79). The inception of the management and organisational fields of analysis began with the work of Frederick Taylor who was concerned mainly with:

the management issues of productivity and control - how to control the activities of workers more efficiently so as to achieve greater productivity (cited in Mills and Murgatroyd, 1991: 4).

Abercrombie (1984) suggested that this view of organisations looked to leaders and managers as those who have power and control over their employees and to an elite group of people with specific talents and abilities. Proponents of managerialist models of organisations would argue that this is also the most effective way to begin to manage educational institutions. However, King (1991) asserts that this approach is not appropriate for public sector management and suggests that if changes in the New South Wales Department of Education go ahead, there could be 'severe unintended consequences as a result of the planned managerial change in the culture of educational leadership in New South Wales' (cited in Crump, 1993: 80).

The applicability of managerialism for the private world and its usefulness to public sector management is a matter of continuing debate that appears to be shifting towards its adoption (Bates, 1992). Limerick and Cunningham's (1993)



work referred to in this literature review aligns well with the theories of managerialism.

(ii) Structuralism derives strongly from psychological roots and structural functionalist sociology. As a field of study it has the longest history in the social sciences and focuses upon the structural context of organisational effectiveness, therefore having close links with managerialism. However, this dimension of organisational analysis focuses on concerns within social science rather than in business, for example, it would be more concerned with:

- the effect of technology upon organisational structure; and
- the impact of environmental and contextual factors; for example the origin and history, size, ownership and control, technology, location, charter and interdependence in relation to other organisations (cited in Mills and Murgatroyd, 1991: 5).

Ashley and Van de Ven (1983) assert that essentially the focus of the structuralist perspective is:

not on individuals, but on the structural properties of the context within which action unfolds, and individual behaviour is seen as determined by and reacting to structural constraints (cited in Mills and Murgatroyd, 1991: 5).

The research and future directions for organisations suggested by Naisbitt and Aburdene (1990) are clearly from a structuralists' perspective.

(iii) Post modernists suggest that leaders of today are challenged to work towards genuine social progress. Starratt suggests that:

the postmodern leader should know that, given the bounded rationality of individuals and even of whole institutions, discussion, dialogue and soliciting divergent points of view is the only way to approach the better solution to problems ... [it will require the leaders'] best moral efforts (1993: 109).

The leadership studies of Giroux (1988) mentioned in this literature review asserted that leaders of today needed to move beyond the discriminatory boundaries of age, race and gender and move towards the acceptance and valuing of the individual and their contributions towards the betterment of society.

This dimension is an emerging context of great diversity, and the distinctive contribution of women in this future becomes more promising than within the managerialist and structuralist dimensions preoccupied with power and male paradigms.

(iv) Feminism is a doctrine suggesting that women are 'systematically disadvantaged in modern society and advocating equal opportunities for men and women' (Abercrombie et al, 1984: 89). As a field it covers a range of perspectives that are committed to the fundamental alteration of the role of women in society and to achieving equality in education, work and in the home (Bullock et al, 1988).

It is the work within this field of authors such as: Shakeshaft (1989, 1987); Sampson (1989, 1987); Randell (1993, 1990); and Weiner and Powney (1991) that have been the major driving force and influence in the development of this study.

The literature search revealed many factors that significantly influence the promotional opportunities of women and categorised these at three levels: the socio-cultural level; the organisational level; and the personal level. Within these categories seven specific factors were identified. In summary these were:

- negative male attitudes towards women as leaders;
- the homogenous nature of organisations;
- career and family conflicts;
- interrupted careers for child rearing;
- reduced mobility due to spouses' career;
- the lack of available role models and mentors; and
- womens' passive self concept.

Also identified in this chapter were career strategies that women as educational managers were likely to use or experience. These career strategies were grouped into four categories. These were the: deliberate; drifter; opportunist; and irrepressible careerists (Weiner and Powney, 1991: 28).

Having considered generally the literature on the gendered context of women's lives and work environments, Chapter Three will focus specifically on

women in educational management within the organisational context of the  
Queensland Department of Education.

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## **CHAPTER THREE: ORGANISATIONAL CONTEXT**

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### **3.1 The Representation of Women in the Department of Education, Queensland**

To examine career opportunities for a particular group, it is important to place them in their specific context (Evetts, 1990; Dex, 1985). Therefore to examine the teaching careers of the women interviewed in this study a detailed analysis of the structural context of the education system within which they work is necessary. Also the contextual factors or opportunity structure that has existed and currently exists in the Queensland Education Department must be clarified, because the characteristics of the structure of this education system determine the range and types of opportunities available to the interviewees, and thus largely sets the boundaries within which these female teachers operate. This chapter will briefly outline the factors which have influenced the opportunity structures for women in the Queensland Education Department in both historical and contemporary contexts.

### **3.2 An Historical Perspective**

Women's representation in the teaching force in Queensland has been in a state of flux since the 1860's. External factors such as wars and economic

conditions have influenced the level of female representation in teaching. Unlike other western countries such as the United States where men clearly dominated teaching in the last century, women in Australia have always played a key role in staffing educational institutions as teachers (McDonald, 1993). Clarke's statistical analysis of the Queensland teaching force shows that by 1875 about fifty one per cent of the colony's teaching force were female (1985: 5). There was a rapid increase in representation after World War One (1918-1920), when the percentage rose above sixty per cent as women filled the positions that could not be filled by the number of men available (Clarke, 1985: 23). However, this level of representation did not last long.

There was a gradual decline in numbers from the twenties through to the nineteen forties. The return of soldiers from World War One to their prewar positions and the growing effect of the Great depression in the interwar years had a significant impact on the decrease in female representation. Clarke expresses the view that public opinion of the time was that 'women who were working should relinquish their positions and return to their home responsibilities' (1985: 26). World War Two had only a brief but positive impact on the numbers of women in teaching with numbers increasing in the 1940 to 1945 period, but decreasing sharply in 1946 with the return of the soldiers (Clarke, 1985). With minor variations, the number of women in the profession has been steadily increasing since that time. By 1969 women had once again become a majority of the teaching force (the previous peak being in 1933) with the percentage gradually reaching over sixty per cent again in the 1980's (Clarke, 1985: 39). These

statistics are represented graphically in Figure 3.1. The statistics indicate that women now represent over sixty four per cent of the teachers currently employed by the Queensland Department of Education (Statistical Data, Oct, 1993).

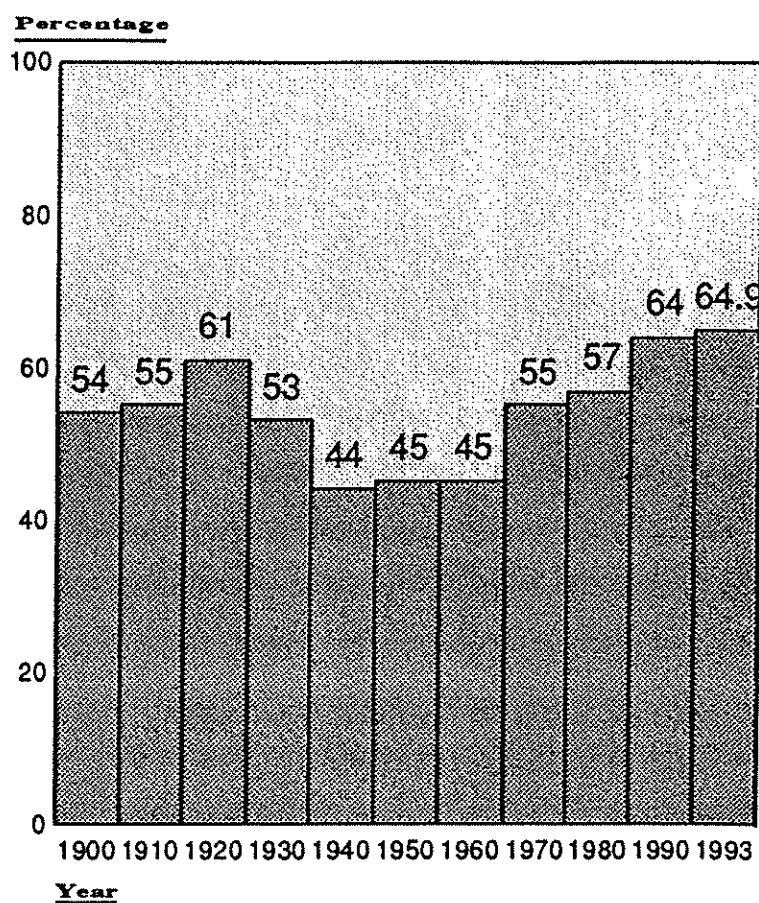
Although statistics suggest that women have been afforded increasing job prospects the possibility of a career for female teachers remained dismal. Many factors impacted on women, particularly societal attitudes towards women and careers. The underlying principle in society seemed to be that, 'women were not to be placed in a position of authority over men' (Clarke, 1985: 43). Female teachers in the past, generally accepted that male teachers should be 'in charge' and this situation was reinforced by the fact that seniority was tied to the rates of pay and the female rate in all categories was lower than the male rate. Thus, barriers to women's promotional opportunities were already in place.

Another factor influencing the teaching careers of women was that Departmental policies had previously stated that positions of principal for female teachers were limited to one-teacher schools, girls and infant schools and certain special schools. However, the Department broke from tradition in 1968 by appointing a female as deputy principal of a high school.<sup>5</sup> From here on anti-discriminatory policies dealing with promotion were incorporated into general Queensland teachers union policies and the phasing in of equal pay between 1968

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<sup>5</sup> In 1968, Dorothy Camp was appointed Deputy Principal of a high school with a mixed staff (Clarke, 1985: 44).

**FIGURE 3.1**  
PERCENTAGE OF FEMALE TEACHERS IN THE  
QUEENSLAND TEACHING SERVICE, 1900-1993



Sources: - Years 1900-1980: (Clarke, E, 1985: 5, 10, 15);  
- Years 1990-1993: (Department of Education, Oct, 1993).



and 1971 eliminated a major obstacle to female teachers being promoted to posts of responsibility. The Minister for Education at this time Mr Alan Fletcher stated that 'suitably qualified women applicants were eligible for appointments to any position in the teaching service' (Queensland Parliamentary Debates, 1967-68, cited in Clarke, 1985: 44). However, present statistics show that in the area of educational management women make up only twenty three per cent of principals in Australian schools (Chapman, 1986) and in Queensland less than one per cent of female teachers are state school principals (Clarke, 1985: 78).

In 1988-89 in the Queensland Department of Education, 2979 appointments were made, 2325 (seventy eight per cent) of which were women. In 1992, 64.9 per cent of the total teaching force and 66.4 per cent of the public servants working in the Department of Education were women. Teaching provides the biggest single employment opportunity in Queensland for women with tertiary qualifications (Limerick, 1991). However, these high percentages are not reflected in the ranks of senior officers. For example, in 1990 out of the one hundred and forty two Band one, two and three officers,<sup>6</sup> only twelve were women (8.5 per cent) and all of these women were at the lowest Band three level. Even though the number of female principals has increased, the 1990 statistics show only two hundred and nineteen female principals, (nineteen per cent) against one thousand one hundred and thirty three male principals (Departmental Annual Reports, cited in Limerick, 1991: 25). Although these figures are relatively well known, the Department in the past has not been particularly sensitive to the issue of the under-representation of women in these positions.

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<sup>6</sup> A Band level represents a classified position, with Band One being the most senior rank within the Department.

### 3.3 Factors Influencing Promotion

Early in 1990 the Equal Employment Opportunity Committee<sup>7</sup> recognised that appraisal procedures, particularly promotional opportunities presented to women, were an area of obvious concern and that recommendations for action should be an integral part of the Departments' *Corporate Plan*<sup>8</sup> (Department of Education, 1992). However, the impetus of these recommendations is recent and there are still a number of factors in existence that significantly influence the career opportunities available to women. For example, negative attitudes towards women as leaders, lack of mobility due to the career opportunities of the spouse, family and domestic responsibilities, and a lack of administrative experience opportunities.

The structure of the Education Department has in the past closely followed the industrial hierarchical model of career with strict guidelines including seniority, length of service and country service as necessary for progression up the ladder (Limerick, 1991). Hierarchical structures in turn, are fundamentally political power structures and almost invariably assume a culture associated with male power relationships, valuing those aspects of leadership which are traditionally and stereotypically valued by men (Parkyn, 1988). This organisational culture has affected women's attitudes towards leadership roles in schools (Parkyn, 1988) and unless this 'male culture' within the Department changes, women may not care to move into positions of educational leadership (Limerick, 1991).

Another structural barrier presented to women is the issue of mobility. The demands of providing access to quality education for children in remote areas of

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<sup>7</sup> This committee was comprised of representatives from the Education Department, the community and union representatives. The committee was established to reveal reasons why there is an under-representation of women in senior management positions and provide recommendations for action on this issue.

<sup>8</sup> The Departments' *Corporate Plan 1993-1997* is a key document to assist in developing high quality education. The key areas discussed are student learning and teaching; social justice; education and the economy; national curriculum frameworks; management of change; devolution; and accountability.

Queensland has resulted in the evolution of a system that is perceived to reward those who are prepared to travel around the state. The consequence of the promotional ladder that exists on mobility discriminates against women, who because of family commitments and spouses' careers, may not be able to leave their home base (Limerick, 1991).

Apart from structural factors, there are a number of complex social and personal factors that prevent women from attaining formal positions of leadership (Morrison, et al, 1987). Research conducted with the top eleven females and males in the Queensland Education Department highlighted the notion that women don't receive the same kinds of social messages that men receive, where leadership positions are concerned (Limerick, 1991). Societal expectations of both females and males are clearly expressed. Males are encouraged to succeed and dominate, whereas females' prime responsibilities are considered to be with family matters (David, 1980). Sampson (1987B) revealed in her research that personal commitment to families meant that women didn't wish to cope with extra career demands and saw their own aspirations as conflicting with their partners' careers. Also, there is the belief that women's commitment to teaching in the classroom leads to a lack of administrative experience (Limerick, 1991). In addition, given that mentoring relationships are considered critical to the career success of women, (McKeen and Burke, 1989) the lack of available role models, mentors and networking practices poses difficulty for women seeking promotional opportunities (Noe, 1988). Thus, many promotional inequities are still apparent within this Department and until recently there has been little overt commitment to challenging the inequitable participation of women in senior management positions. Clarke, in his historical account of female teachers in senior management positions in Queensland state schools argues that even though:

the Queensland Department of Education progressively removed major barriers to women's promotions, the proportion of women promoted to senior positions continued to decline into the 1980's (1985: 45).

Clarke also argues that the Department was painting a contradictory picture regarding the representation of women as the apparent policies were not achieving a significant increase in the number of women in educational management. He states that:

there were only two female principals of high schools yet many more were qualified for this position and were applying for these positions (Clarke, 1985: 45).

In the last nine years in particular there has been official recognition of the need to address the representation of women in education, and two specific policy documents have arisen out of this awareness. These are, *The Federal Sex Discrimination Act* 1984; and *The Affirmative Action (Equal Employment Opportunity for Women) Act*, 1986. However, Prunty cautiously observes that:

assuming that a just and equitable policy statement is produced in the policy process [is] in itself no assurance that material change will occur (1985: 138).

Several other policy documents have been produced recently, for example, *The Wiltshire Report* (1993), yet this report and others neglect to include the issue of girls and women in education as a separate group requiring special interest. Thus, the assumption that policy writing committees in Queensland have not recognised the importance of the special needs of women as a disadvantaged group in society.

### 3.4 The Current Situation

Numerous policy documents at the national level have identified the issue of inequitable opportunities for women, with specific reference to the under-representation of women in educational management as a major concern. One of the first reports, *Girls, School and Society* published in 1975 officially recognised the need to evaluate the position of girls and women in the Australian education system. This document noted as one of its conclusions that 'women were comparatively absent from positions of high administrative responsibility in schools' (cited in Nicoll, 1992: 34). Following this the Commonwealth Schools Commission (CSC) released a report in 1984 entitled *Girls and Tomorrow: The Challenge for Schools in 1984*, which proposed a national policy for the education of girls. This report also recommended that steps needed to be taken to 'feminise school hierarchies and management' to ensure the equal participation of men and women in decision making. (CSC, 1984, cited in Nicoll, 1992: 34). Despite these national initiatives, the Queensland State Government had done little toward the issue of gender equity until three years ago.

The issue of women in education was finally recognised in 1990 when a discussion paper entitled *The Future Organisation of Educational Services for Students* proposed that it was necessary to make 'a major change to the way officers, principals and associate administrators are selected and appointed' (Department of Education, 1990: 98). The *Focus on Schools (1990)* document continued by stating that this process was deemed necessary because:

relatively few women have gained promotion to senior positions in the department - very few into senior principals' positions and none into band two (the very senior) Departmental positions - despite the fact that almost seventy per cent of teachers are females. While the present selection and promotion system is not entirely responsible for this situation, it has at least contributed to it (Department of Education, 1990: 99).

This document also proposed that 'school-based, classified education officers should be appointed for agreed periods of time and then required to seek reappointment' (1990: 99). One of the key purposes for the restructuring of the promotional system proposed in the *Focus on Schools* document was to 'ensure that the very best leaders are selected for Queensland state schools' (Department of Education, 1990: 100).

The Minister for Education in 1990, Mr Paul Braddy, stated that the Queensland education system would be restructured to give women a better chance at promotion to senior positions such as principal (The Practising Administrator, 1990). Then emerged Limerick's report in 1991 that reported on *Career Opportunities for Teachers in the Queensland Department of Education with special reference to the under-representation of women in senior management positions*. This report was to establish for the Department:

a process for analysing and reporting on career paths in the Department of Education with specific reference to comparative employment trends for males and females (Limerick, 1991: 2).

This report further aimed at revealing:

reasons why there is an under-representation of women in senior management positions both in the school and public service sectors of the Queensland Department of Education (Limerick, 1991: 2).

Although the documents mentioned do consider the issues impacting on women's working lives, there seems to be a reluctance by the Queensland Government to acknowledge girls and women as a disadvantaged group. This avoidance of the gender issue is particularly obvious in their policy entitled *Equality of Opportunity for Girls and Boys* (1981) and then in Limerick's (1991) study where the aim was to examine the career paths of both men and women. Nicoll suggests that this resistance to recognise women and girls as a distinct group seems to:

couch the problem in the guise of a broader, non-political, all inclusive focus, which may be interpreted as being less intimidating and challenging to the male paradigm of education in Queensland (1992: 43).

Despite this lack of distinction between the sexes, there have been many policy initiatives particularly in the last three years to promote equitable promotional opportunities for both men and women. Factors that dominated meritorious promotion in the past were length of teaching time or seniority, country service and mobility. These factors explicitly discriminated against women and are now considered totally inappropriate. The Queensland

Department of Education released a paper entitled *Promotional Appraisalment Procedures* which stated that:

the revised appraisalment procedures highlight leadership as the major basis on which applicants should be considered for promotion (1990: 1).

In the study conducted by Limerick, a senior executive within the Queensland Education Department suggested that promotional merit be based on:

- demonstrated performance and potential;
- qualifications - academic and training and the suitability of those qualifications (that is, they should be appropriate to the particular position); and
- experience - not seniority, but the range of experience (1991:55).

Thus, the Queensland Education Department has recognised the concept of leadership as an important quality for school administrators in two recent documents. The first document entitled *Leaders and their Learning*, recognises that educational leadership should be central to the performance of a school administrator (Department of Employment, Education and Training, 1993). Another policy statement released as *The Professional Development Framework for Principalship* clearly identifies the leadership role of the school principal. It states that:

all principals within the Queensland Department of Education have leadership functions ... within the school itself key elements of this priority include creating and articulating a shared vision, team building, managing change, establishing participative decision-making processes, devising mechanisms for curriculum development, enhancing teaching and learning, and creating and maintaining a supportive learning environment (Department of Education, 1993: 2).



This document is aligned with the Public Sector Management Commission's identification of key *Executive Competencies* where leadership is identified as one of the most important characteristics of a good manager (Department of Education, 1992). This document states that an effective corporate leader will:

- ... build a successful corporate team;
- ... manage the impact of current and likely change; and
- ... contribute to the development of a shared vision for the organisation and communicate a clear strategic direction (Department of Education, 1992: 1-2).

Recent documents published by the State Education Department indicate that current promotional opportunities are truly based on merit and capability and therefore should not discriminate against minority groups. The newness of these policies however, means that the impact of these initiatives on the representation of women in educational management in Queensland remains to be seen.

### **3.5 Summary**

The literature and statistics reviewed clearly indicate that although the participation of women as teachers in the Queensland Education Department has increased, they are still not proportionally represented in positions of educational management. This chapter mentioned that due to the recency of the policy documents that have been introduced in Queensland, there has been little observable increase in the participation of women in senior management positions as yet.

However, the Queensland Department of Education has a continuing obligation to consider the reasons for the under-representation of women in formal positions of leadership, the factors which influence the advancement of women within this organisation and to further the process of Departmental policy proposals to allow equal career opportunities for disadvantaged groups, particularly for women. The challenge facing the Department is to be committed to providing equal employment opportunities and to select the best possible leaders for their schools to meet the increasing challenges facing education in the future.

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## **CHAPTER FOUR: METHODOLOGY**

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This chapter explains the research framework adopted for this study which developed out of the concepts and research literature reviewed in Chapters Two and Three. The aim was to gather detailed information from a sample group of women, to examine their perceptions of the extent to which gender-related factors influence their promotional opportunities within the Queensland Department of Education. Many of the reported studies in Chapter Two had been based on surveys or were general in nature and it seemed that a closer examination of individual experiences was warranted in order to gain indepth insights and perceptions into the factors that women perceive are influencing their career opportunities.

### **4.1 Research Methods**

Research in educational management has been described as more complicated than research in most other branches of social science as it is concerned with so many different units of analysis, in so many different situations (Knapp, 1982). Therefore, it is imperative that the research methods adopted during research are appropriate for the purpose of the study. As the purpose of this study was to gain comprehensive detailed data, qualitative research methods were adopted. The aim was to obtain through questioning, data that reflected

individuals' own perceptions of how they see the world and allow the researcher to enter into another person's perspective (Tesch, 1990).

Qualitative research however, 'is not the dominant one [research methodology] in the history of educational research' (Seidman, 1991: 6). Although qualitative research has gained increasing credibility in the last twenty years, professional organisations and professional journals in education are often dominated by those who have a predilection for quantitative research (Seidman, 1991). Quantitative researchers such as Todorov (1984) are concerned that the process of interviewing can be exploitive and that it turns subjects into words so that they can be appropriated for the benefit of the researcher (cited in Seidman, 1991: 7). Proponents of qualitative research methods (Gage, 1989; Popkowitz, 1984) would however refute this and 'decry the way quantitative research turns human beings into numbers' (Seidman, 1991: 7). Therefore the choice of research method is ideally determined by what the researcher is aiming to learn.

Qualitative methods have largely grown out of the approaches of anthropology and sociology and have been used increasingly by those dealing with the human dimension of life, such as educationalists (Guba, 1978). Qualitative research also places people in a specific context. It allows the participants' point of view to emerge and the researcher to become familiar with the culture and life of the people or group under investigation (Miles and Huberman, 1984).

In qualitative research, data collection and analysis often run concurrently and findings are often far more convincing and interesting than more abstract statistical conclusions (Smith, 1983). According to Miles and Huberman (1984) qualitative data can provide a source of well-grounded, rich, descriptive data from which fruitful explanations can be derived. Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggest that the strength of the qualitative study that aims to explore a problem, or describe a setting, a process, or a social group will be its validity. They propose that the indepth description of the complexities of interactions will be so embedded in the data derived from the setting, that it cannot help but be valid (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). Since a wide range of knowledge, beliefs, values, attitudes and perceptions could be expected from this research, it was considered essential that the data gathering method chosen for this study should allow sufficient freedom and flexibility for the respondents to pursue tangents of thought in whatever direction they considered appropriate. The process decided upon to collect data was through an indepth interview. This technique is often used in qualitative research to obtain information (Marshall and Rossman, 1989) and is considered especially beneficial when the researcher seeks to understand the perceptions of the respondents (Patton, 1980).

Interviewing is regarded as 'a powerful way to gain insight into educational issues' (Seidman, 1991: 7). In the interview situation, one person solicits the information in a form that is pre-determined but the outcomes are not, and the interviewee talks freely about his/her own experiences in response to the planned

form of questioning. Marshall and Rossman suggest that a fundamental assumption to qualitative research is that:

the participants' perspective on the social phenomenon of interest should unfold as the participant views it, not as the researcher views it (1989: 82).

One of the advantages of the interviewing method is that it is a useful way to get large amounts of data quickly and allows for immediate follow-up questions (Marshall and Rossman, 1989). Tuckman (1972) suggests that by providing access to an individual's beliefs and perceptions, the interview serves a threefold purpose. It allows the researcher to:

- (i) ascertain what a person likes or dislikes (values and preferences) and what a person thinks (attitudes and beliefs);
- (ii) test hypotheses or to support new ones and to act as an explanatory device to help identify variables and relationships; and
- (iii) to follow up unexpected results, to validate other methods, or to go deeper into the motives of the respondents and their reasons for responding as they do.

There are four kinds of interview which may be used specifically as research tools. These are the:

- (i) structured interview;

- (ii) unstructured interview;
- (iii) non-directive interview; and
- (iv) focussed interview.

The structured interview is one in which the content and procedures are organised in advance. Kerlinger (1970) noted that in a structured interview the content, sequence and questions in the interview are controlled by the interviewer. Therefore a structured interview is seen as a closed situation. In contrast the unstructured interview is regarded as an open situation which gives greater flexibility and freedom in the gaining of information. Even more flexible is the non-directive interview which allows greater freedom for those being interviewed to express their feelings as fully and as spontaneously as they like. The focussed interview is directed towards the subjective experiences of the persons who have been exposed to the situation. The distinctive feature of the focussed interview is the prior analysis by the researcher of the situation in which the subjects have been involved. Hence the focussed interview was chosen as the data gathering tool for this aspect of the study. The advantages of this procedure have been recorded by Merton and Kendall who state that:

fore-knowledge of the situation obviously reduces the task facing the investigator. Equipped in advance with a content analysis, the interviewer can readily distinguish the objective facts of the case from the subjective definitions of the situation. The interviewer thus becomes alert to the entire field of selective response (cited in McDonald, 1993).

The focussed interview schedule with open ended items was chosen because of the advantages it offers. It allows the interviewer to:

- (i) be flexible;
- (ii) probe and clear up any misunderstandings or gain further information;
- (iii) test the limits of the respondent's knowledge; and
- (iv) make a truer assessment of what the respondent really believes (cited in McDonald, 1993).

The interview technique does however have limitations and weaknesses. First, interviews involve personal interaction, therefore the co-operation of the interviewees is essential. Second, the interviewees may not always be willing to share all the information that is needed and may not always be truthful. Third, the researcher must be careful not to interject personal biases (Marshall and Rossman, 1989). Some sources of bias are: the characteristics of the interviewer; the characteristics of the respondent; and the substantive content of the questions. More specifically, possible sources of bias include the:

- (i) attitudes and opinions of the interviewer;
- (ii) tendency of the interviewer to see the respondent in his or her own image;
- (iii) tendency of the interviewer to seek answers that support pre-conceived notions;



- (iv) misperceptions on the part of the interviewer of what the respondent says; and
- (v) misunderstandings on the part of the respondent of what was being asked (Marshall and Rossman, 1989).

Race, religion, social class and age, in certain contexts are also potential sources of bias. Bias can be reduced by the researcher being aware of the potential sources of bias and by matching an interviewer's characteristics with those of the people who are being interviewed. Weiner and Powney in their study of women and black and/or ethnic minority men in educational institutions in the United Kingdom, decided that to reduce bias 'the Afro-Caribbean researchers, all of whom were female should interview all the non-white informants' (1991: 6).

In summary, the researcher used aspects of two possible methods of qualitative research in the collection and analysis of data. These were:

- (i) indepth, semi-structured, focussed interviews - in which the five women in the sample group were the interviewees; and
- (ii) unobtrusive measures - that is, the review of pre-existing literature, which is the subject of Chapter Two.

## 4.2 Research Design

From the review of literature and through consultation with female colleagues working in positions of educational management an interview schedule was designed (see Appendix 2). The researcher met for one and a half hours with two female deputy principals, and discussed the types of factors that influence the promotional opportunities of women and what interview questions may best extract perceptions of these factors from the respondents. The researcher focussed the interview questions in three key areas. The interviewees were to consider the factors that have significantly influenced their:

- (i) past promotional opportunities;
- (ii) perceptions of their current role; and
- (iii) their future career aspirations.

The researcher originally planned to interview women who held Executive Director and Director positions in the Head Office of the Queensland Department of Education. This intention however, was fraught with obstacles. After approaching several sections within the Education Department the researcher was finally directed to the Department of Equity who were most interested in the nature of this research project. The gentleman representing this Department suggested names of females who occupied senior management positions who may be interested in participating. Upon making contact with two of these women they alerted the researcher to the requirement that the research proposal needed to

be formally approved by the Director General before it could proceed. This application for approval was to be forwarded to the 'Freedom of Information' section of the Department and could take up to three months to be processed and then may still not be approved. This time delay would prove to be a major setback as the researcher was planning to complete the study within twelve months.

The researcher also wished to obtain statistical data from personnel records detailing information on personal characteristics of females in classified positions within the Education Department. This information however, is not readily available, even though the compiling of personnel records was one of the main recommendations for this Department in Limerick's study of career opportunities for teachers in 1991. Although information could be compiled for this study through the 'Freedom of Information' section it was not a simple process. The request had to be lodged as a written application detailing precisely what data was required and if the request was considered too time consuming for the human resource personnel then the information could not be compiled and the thirty dollar application fee for each request would be forfeited. Thus, the protracted and unpredictable Departmental bureaucratic procedures forced a modification of the original research design.

The researcher decided to seek out female career aspirants in middle management positions within Queensland state secondary schools and explore the factors which they perceived had influenced their promotional opportunities within this Department. For ease of access, all interviewees were selected from large

Brisbane metropolitan schools. Initially, the sample group was to consist of ten women. However, the researcher decided to reduce this number to five and take a more indepth approach to the study. By doing this the researcher believed that more meaningful, experiential data could be obtained from the interviewing process. The importance of findings from a small sample study such as this, lies in the identification of individual life experiences and distinctive perceptions, rather than a brief collection of more superficial issues from a larger number of sources in a more limited time frame.

#### **4.3 The Context of the Study**

##### *Perceptions of five female heads' of department in metropolitan schools in Queensland*

An examination of teachers in the Queensland education system only, allowed for more intensive analysis of the perceptions from the interviewees. Concentration on one state education system was deliberate, as some other differences existed between the various Australian states and territories. There were differences in the organisation and structure of the school systems in question and differences in promotional procedures, all of which would have a bearing on the career patterns of women. In addition, teachers in the Queensland Education System were selected because of accessibility. Finally, as the researcher was an employee, she was familiar with the organisational structure of this Department, and better able to probe matters of detail.

#### **4.4 The Sample Group**

In choosing the sample group, the researcher used her own network of colleagues to identify five female teachers who currently occupied a head of department position in a large Brisbane state secondary school. The researcher had a personal knowledge of three of the interviewees and the other two women were introduced through mutual colleagues. Selecting women that were known to the researcher followed Maclean's (1989) suggestion that a major problem with undertaking a study of career patterns and promotion, was that although the area was of interest to a large number of people, it was also one which was rarely openly discussed outside of intimate friendships, and was usually spoken about in the most general or impersonal terms. He suggested that many people seemed unable to talk about their work careers, except under exceptional circumstances and said that perhaps this was related to the notion of modesty, in that individuals did not want to acknowledge publicly the self interest that was implied by anyone who pursued promotion. Maclean (1989) asserted also that because the career path of an individual was a sensitive topic, few studies had been conducted to date that had collected reliable and full data about this area.

The researcher decided that by undertaking this study with women who were known to her, it would allow for more open discussion. It was thought that the interviewees would in fact feel more comfortable in disclosing detailed information about their careers, than if they had been respondents who were completely unknown to the researcher, and were tentative about the implications

of disclosure or motives of the researcher. Throughout the interviewing procedure a schedule was used to objectify interactions without formalising excessively (see Appendix 2).

The women selected for the sample group managed departments of varying sizes. The smallest curriculum department was made up of five other staff members, while one of the interviewees managed a staff of twenty-five. A detailed individual profile describing the personal characteristics of each of the interviewees will be presented as biographical data at the beginning of Chapter Five.

#### **4.5 Procedures for Gathering Data**

##### *Biographical Data (See Appendix 2)*

Before the interview began the interviewees were asked a series of informal questions in order to ascertain information about their personal background. For example, their: age; marital status; number of children; economic circumstances; and academic qualifications. This biographical data enabled the researcher to gain more detailed information about the personal background of each interviewee with a view to considering this data in the analysis. These individual profiles are presented at the beginning of Chapter Five.

### *Individual Interviews*

After initial contact with each of the interviewees through a letter which described the research study (see Appendix 1), the researcher phoned each of the respondents to arrange a convenient interview time. These interviews were all arranged for either an afternoon following the school day or in the evening.

### *Conduct of Interviews*

The primary means of gathering data for this study involved indepth, semi-structured, focussed interviews with the individual respondents. The reason the interviews were semi-structured in format was that it was the intention of the researcher to eliminate as much bias as possible by designing an interview schedule (see Appendix 2). The researcher was aware that following an interview schedule would not automatically eliminate bias. However, it was thought that following a schedule would ensure that the interviews remained focussed and that certain key areas were covered. However, the interviewees were told that they were free to raise and discuss any other issues which they regarded as relevant.

### *Interview Schedule (See Appendix 2)*

A series of questions comprised the interview schedule. These questions were divided into three categories probing the interviewees': career histories; current positions; and future career aspirations. The questions formed the basis of

the interview but did not constrain the more detailed follow-up inquiry which gave the interviewer the opportunity to gain more detailed descriptions of the situations and experiences described by the respondents.

### *Number of Interviews*

Each of the respondents were required for two interviews. First an individual, face-to-face interview; and secondly a follow-up phone discussion.

### *Post Interview Phone Discussion*

After the interviewees were sent an edited transcript containing the interview data being considered for use, the interviewer contacted each of them for a discussion of this content. All of the interviewees spoke over the phone about any quotes they felt needed expansion and elaboration. Mainly the respondents were concerned with ensuring that the context of their comments was not misinterpreted. Two of the interviewees returned the edited transcripts with written elaboration of some of their points as they considered this necessary to more fully explain some of the situations they had described.

### *Location of Interviews*

All of the interviews were conducted on an individual basis in the homes of the respondents, on the assumption that this was the most convenient and relaxed



environment for each individual to be interviewed in. All interviewees were alone, relatively undisturbed and after initial nervousness, settled into responding to the series of interview questions.

### *Length of Interviews*

The individual interview times ranged from one hour to two and a half hours. The shortest interview time may have been due to the fact that the respondent was not feeling well at the time, which may have led her to hurry or give less detailed responses. The longest interview time could be attributed to the fact that the interviewee seemed very comfortable in disclosing detailed information about her career path because of her personal knowledge of the interviewer. The post-interview telephone conversations ranged from ten minutes to thirty-five minutes.

### *Recording of Data*

At the beginning of each of the interviews the respondents were asked if they would mind if the interviews were audio-taped. None of the interviewees objected to the idea, so a small dictaphone was used to record each of the interviews. This audio-taping left the researcher free to concentrate on the format of the interview and ensured accurate transcription of the data. At no time did the interviewer feel that this method of recording the data was inhibiting the responses given by the interviewees.

#### **4.6 Procedures for Analysing Data**

After the interviews were transcribed, the researcher analysed the data to identify the major points the interviewees had suggested were factors that significantly influenced their promotional opportunities in education. These factors were then placed into categories. This categorisation process was done for each individual, so similarities and distinctive contributions could be identified. This interview data is presented without interpretation in Chapter Five, using the divisions according to the devised interview schedule. These categories considered the:

- (i) career history;
- (ii) current position; and
- (iii) future career aspirations of the interviewees.

In the analyses of the data the researcher sought to identify key themes recurring throughout the transcripts. Common factors were identified and these were divided under three main headings. These categories covered factors at the socio-cultural level, the organisational level and the personal level. However, these categories were not independent of one another and had many links and overlaps. The analysis and discussion of all of these factors is the basis of Chapter Six.

## **4.7 Summary**

This chapter has explained the research design and procedures adopted for the gathering and analysis of data for this study. The research was of a qualitative nature and the researcher used an indepth, semi-structured focussed interview as the main tool for gathering data. The data from these interviews was transcribed and key elements were identified. The data collected is presented without interpretation in Chapter Five and then analysed and discussed in Chapter Six.

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## CHAPTER FIVE: PRESENTATION OF DATA

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This chapter is divided into two sections. Firstly it presents biographical data by describing the personal and professional characteristics of the five female heads' of department, who comprised the sample group for this study. The second section of the chapter presents the interview data. This data details the gender-related issues that these five women perceived had influenced their career advancement in education. In particular, the interviewees were asked to talk about these issues within three main categories:

- (1) their career history;
- (2) their current position; and
- (3) their future career aspirations.

An individual profile was compiled on each of the interviewees, as it was considered necessary to include personal background details to provide the researcher with as much indepth information about the interviewees as possible. In order to compile the individual profiles describing each individuals' personal and professional characteristics, the women were asked a series of questions before beginning the taped interviews that were guided by an interview schedule (see Appendix 2). The individual profile descriptions are numbered one to five and fictitious names have been used to ensure the anonymity of the interviewees.

## **5.1 Biographical Data**

### **PROFILE ONE - Karen**

The first interviewee was a woman of thirty three who was living in a long-term defacto relationship. She didn't have any children at present, but hadn't ruled them out of the future. The couple lived in an inner city suburb and seemed to be constantly in the process of renovating their spacious home. Karen and her partner's lifestyle appeared very comfortable and centred around a warm, homely atmosphere designed for lots of entertaining. Karen said that she 'didn't promote for the money', but considered it 'important to have money for a comfortable lifestyle'. Karen had a Diploma of Teaching and a Diploma of Arts. She said that when studying for her Diploma of Arts qualification, 'art teachers didn't need a degree to be a head of department, but I decided it was necessary to pursue promotion'. Karen said she did most of her further studies in short courses, for example computer graphics, which were mostly for her own personal development and learning, or in an area she could use in her teaching. She said, 'I guess I study firstly for learning for myself and secondly to focus on things that can be taught at school'.

Karen's zest for learning and teaching was overwhelming. She said that:

of all the areas I've gone to workshops on, the thing that fascinates me most is learning and how it happens and why it happens. I always encourage other staff to learn, through giving them information and having discussions. I guess, though without saying it, I still always

believe that we're all there for the kids first and foremost ... to try to improve the situation so that their learning can be better.

Karen's teaching career began in the country in the south-west of Queensland before she was transferred to Brisbane. Karen had applied three times previously for promotion to a head of department position and moved to her current position on her fourth attempt. Although her second and third appraisements were successful, there were no Brisbane positions available and for personal reasons she 'wasn't prepared to go bush'. Karen had been in her current position for three and a half years as the head of a visual arts department comprised of five other staff members.

## **PROFILE TWO - Rochelle**

The second interviewee Rochelle, was thirty two and recently married. She spoke several times throughout the interview of her and her husband's plans to have children in the near future and the possible impact that would have on her career plans (since the interview Rochelle has fallen pregnant with her first child). Rochelle and her husband who was also a teacher, lived in a very neat, stylishly renovated, spacious home and described their economic circumstances as comfortable. Rochelle had a Bachelor of Arts degree with a double major in government studies and in her career was originally 'heading in a totally different direction in my life'. However, with a Graduate Diploma in Education, she moved into teaching and was continuing her studies in this field by completing a Bachelor of Educational Studies and being currently enrolled in a Master of

Education degree in literacy. She expressed concern about her choice of specialisation for her future career options and said that:

I'm a little bit sorry about this as I think the leadership component sounds more interesting. The literacy is more related to work, but maybe too much. The leadership may be more beneficial down the track ... I'll need more expertise in management.

Rochelle also spent her first years of teaching in the country and in her third year back in a large Brisbane school decided to apply for a promotion to a head of department position. Rochelle was successful on her first application and had been in her current position as the head of an english department for five years. She managed a very large department comprised of twenty five staff members. Rochelle said that in her first year as the head of this department the school administration offered that they employ a second person to be a dual head of department, as the school was entitled to this with an enrolment of over 1400 students. However, she had mixed reactions to this idea. Rochelle said:

I went home and thought about it and I thought, wouldn't it be great to have someone else, and then I thought, maybe it wouldn't be ... to have someone with completely different ways. So I went back and said I'll stay, but I want some concessions like the timetable, and they've stuck to that.

Rochelle was very uncertain as to what future career options were available for her. She was not interested in moving higher into school administration as a deputy principal as she believed that the position was 'full of timetabling and trivial and meaningless tasks'. She suggested that the fact that her husband was

a teacher employed by the Department was a distinct advantage as she could possibly pursue a principalship position in the country. Rochelle also said she liked the security that came from permanent employment with the State Government and saw this as an important reason to stay with the Education Department. Since falling pregnant, Rochelle was unsure as to what her future career choices would be but suggested that her family would always be the most important element of her life and that if she couldn't do both things well, then one would have to give.

### **PROFILE THREE - Olga**

Olga was aged fifty and a married mother of two adult children. Olga's family lived in quite a unique situation where their home was located on a university campus. Olga's husband was the Dean of a Residential College at a university in Brisbane. However, this meant that the whole family were involved in the life of the tertiary students living on campus because of the intimacy of their home's location with that of the residential college. With both Olga and her husband in full-time employment it appeared to be an incredibly busy but fruitful lifestyle.

Olga and her family led a very comfortable lifestyle and she said that promotion for monetary gain was not really an influencing factor, although 'it is nice to have two wages' as 'the kids get a lot spent on them'. One thing obvious



about all members of this family was their warm, generous and benevolent natures.

Olga's highest qualification was a Bachelor of Education and she said that she completed it 'purely because I thought it was time all teachers had a degree.' She said she had no intentions of any further tertiary study because of the difficulty of combining this with her already eventful lifestyle. Olga was the head of an all-female commerce department and had been in her current position in a large Brisbane school for five years.

#### **PROFILE FOUR - Brenda**

Brenda's career path had endured some interesting changes. She was originally from South Africa and emigrated with her husband and children to Australia thirteen years ago. Brenda taught previously in Zimbabwe for one year, but had to resign when she married. She then worked in a science research station and resumed her teaching career after fourteen years away from the profession, when she arrived in Australia.

Brenda described her family's economic circumstances as good, which was obvious in the comfortable home and lifestyle that her husband and three adolescent children enjoyed. Brenda described her family existence as a real team effort and said 'we're all helping together'.

Brenda was forty six years of age and applied for her promotion to a head of department position in 1991. Her first application was successful and she had been in her current position for two years. Brenda had a bachelors degree in science and was dual head of a science department, which was very male dominated. The other head of department was a male and out of the twenty-two staff members in this department only four were female.

#### **PROFILE FIVE - Kate**

Kate was thirty one years of age and lived a very comfortable lifestyle with her husband in their newly renovated home in an inner city suburb. The openness and amicability of this couple was evident in all they did. In January this year, Kate gave birth to their first child. She originally applied for twelve months leave from her head of department position but had recently extended this for a further three school terms. She said that she initially thought she'd have the baby, place him in childcare and be back at school within the year. However, since being at home with the baby, her opinion had changed. She said that:

I think if you're going to have a child you should be with them ... we [my husband and I] were saying how important it is that one of us is with him and that if I feel that I want to be with him rather than pursuing a career, that's well and good.

Kate began her teaching career in Brisbane and was then transferred to two different regions, both within a two hundred kilometre radius of Brisbane. She taught for four and a half years, a relatively short time before she successfully

applied for a position as a head of department. Kate was then transferred to a large Brisbane school, where she had been the head of a performing arts department for the last two years. This department consisted of eleven staff members, which Kate suggested was quite a large department to manage considering the extra-curricular demands placed on teachers in this area of expertise.

Kate had a Bachelor of Education degree and was using her period of leave for child-rearing to also advance her academic qualifications. She was somehow juggling the responsibilities of a new born baby with being a full-time student. Kate was currently studying her Master of Education degree in the area of leadership as she felt that to progress in the field of educational administration she needed some sort of management qualification.

### **5.1.1 Summary**

In comparing the five interviewees' personal backgrounds there were obvious similarities and differences. In summary, all of the women were fifty years of age and under. All of the women were married except for one interviewee (Karen, profile one) who lived in a defacto relationship and also had no children. The respondent in profile two (Rochelle), although at present had no children, was expecting a child in the new year. All of the respondents regarded their economic circumstances as 'comfortable' and 'good'. Two of the respondents were

presently involved in post-graduate Masters study (Rochelle and Kate) and all five had degree level qualifications.

## **5.2 Interview Data**

The following section summarises the data transcribed from the interviews and is organised according to the categorical format of the interview schedule (see Appendix 2). These three categories considered the career history, current position, and future career aspirations of each of the interviewees. However, it should be noted that there is a strong relationship between all three categories, reflecting the way in which the interviewees linked past and future, or past and present, when elaborating their perceptions.

### **5.2.1 Career History**

When considering the career history of an individual the main concern was with their motives and reasons for seeking promotion and the factors that they perceived had influenced their promotional opportunities. The following were the main reasons that were given by the interviewees regarding why they sought promotion. They are not listed in any order of relative importance.

### *Reasons for Seeking Promotion*

All of the interviewees applied for promotion after receiving encouragement from colleagues who were generally staff, both male and female in administrative positions. Olga (profile three) was the only interviewee to mention the role of her spouse in encouraging her to seek promotion.

For Rochelle (profile two) it seemed that promotion was a logical step to take if she was to achieve the types of goals she had set for herself when she first began teaching. She said that:

I think from the very first year I was teaching I felt that being a head of department was the job I'd really like ... I think I like the organisational aspects of the job ... and I didn't ever see any reason why I shouldn't get a job like that.

Two of the teachers' motivations for seeking promotion came from a realisation that they were already performing the role of a head of department but that this level of competence had not been officially recognised. Olga (profile three) said:

I went for promotion ... because I was working with a male head of department and I suddenly realised I was doing his job, and I was the one that all the other staff came to for advice on my area, however, I was never given senior classes or jobs.

Kate (profile five) also felt that she had the necessary experience to apply for promotion. She described her situation by saying that:

I felt I had co-ordinated a music department since my second year of teaching and because of that I felt that I was doing a lot of work that could have been done by a head of department and wasn't being paid for it.

One teacher sought to establish new professional challenges as she was feeling bored with her current position. Olga (profile three) said that:

I was getting a bit tired of just the teaching role ... I'd been teaching the same subjects for many years, so I needed a change.

Two of the interviewees commented that the extra income associated with promotion was nice but that it was definitely not a major motivating factor in seeking promotion.

For all the interviewees the main goal and motivation which guided their career behaviour was job satisfaction. This was seen as being achieved by doing their very best as teachers to further the education of the students.

### *Factors Influencing Promotion*

The interviewees were asked to suggest factors that they perceived had either hindered their promotional opportunities or had contributed to their past promotional success within the Queensland Education Department.

When asked if they had encountered any gender related factors that had influenced their career paths, four of the women commented that they did see that

their gender was a factor that had influenced their past promotional opportunities. Rochelle (profile two) predicted that she had been slightly aware of this influence in the past but felt that this factor was about to significantly impact upon her own career choices. She said that:

I'm at that stage where I want to have children and I think that will end up being the thing that eventually makes or breaks me in terms of ... 'can I do both jobs well?' ... I think that's why men are able to achieve anything because even though they're married with children, they're basically unattached.

Olga's disenchantment with the Department of Education and their treatment of women teachers' careers in the past was obvious in several of her statements. She said that:

as soon as I got married, I was only temporary anyway ... but back then, there wasn't any feeling of women having careers. The tone of everything at the time was women were second class citizens, more or less, and you had to be single to have a career.

Olga also commented that her seven year break for child rearing and family commitments, definitely had a significant influence on her past career choices. She said that:

in those days, you had to have a break - you couldn't have a full-time career and have children at the same time ... it was not just a break in teaching though, but a break in superannuation as well. I'm sure women have suffered from that in my age group.

Olga said that she had chosen not to seek promotion until after her children were grown up because:

on the negative side, the fact that you are mother, wife, as well as teacher, as well as housewife and are carrying out four roles is difficult. A person can only do so much. So I guess I was happy enough to go along in that normal teacher role for that many years because I felt I had enough on my plate.

Karen (profile one) had also observed how some women placed their careers 'on hold', to cope with family responsibilities. She talked of:

people like Lorraine who have girls at university and then go for promotion. Some women are now coming back to the profession or just staying as a teacher until they've got their emotional side of their family life under control and then they go for promotion, which I think is wonderful provided they haven't burnt out by then.

All five of the interviewees made particular mention of the negative attitudes experienced from male colleagues, particularly those in administrative positions.

Kate (profile five) talked of a colleague she had worked with and said that:

He thought I was a young up-start and that sort of routine and I feel it was a situation where I was a young female ... had I been a male and maybe around his age, he wouldn't have had a problem ... I think some males work that way, they want women to bow down to them and I'm not like that.

Olga (profile three) made some observations about male administrators she had worked with and said that:



women are generally working with men as their principals and there's very few of them who can offer equal opportunities to the females on their staff. They will use the women's abilities, but they won't offer equal opportunities ... to me, it always boils down to the fact that the males up there don't want to be taken over by the females down here.

Karen (profile one) suggested that there was an arrogance amongst male administrators that affected women's promotional opportunities. She said that:

I still think a lot of male administrators are sexist. I think a lot of them don't value women as highly. They don't value their opinions as much. I think that it's pretty much 'jobs for the boys' and 'the boys get together' kind of thing and they make the decisions. I'm sure that there's still that kind of arrogance in the male administrators, that I don't think is there very often in females.

Brenda (profile four) who was the head of a science department put her experiences of negative male attitudes down to being a minority in a male dominated field. She said that:

I think in the science line, it has often been more male dominant and sometimes you do get a bit of negative flack there because you're a female.

Another of the interviewees, Rochelle (profile two) acknowledged the existence of negative attitudes, but suggested that the discrimination women experience in educational management was minimal compared to other fields of work. She described some of her experiences working both within the Education Department and in another sphere of work. She said:

When I first went into the school, as a head of department, I was twenty-seven then and the principal was always speaking about football to the men who would come into the room. I was standing there, to the side totally out of it. It was the first time that I've ever felt 'female' - like I've always felt that I was a teacher or whatever, and yet this femaleness was really evident. About a month later ... the male Deputy at the time said, 'Are you going to put your name in for promotion? ... You may as well, you're a skirt and that's what they want.' That weekend I came home and cried because I didn't think I'd be able to cope with that school.

Rochelle (profile two) described another distressing incident where she felt discriminated against because of her gender. She said that:

particular promotion positions were coming up and they had to interview all the people who were interested. The male principal said to me, 'of course I'll understand that because you're getting married you won't want to take the position on'. That made me really wild because he wouldn't say that to a groom.

During a vacation and before becoming a teacher, Rochelle (profile two) worked as a research assistant in a politician's office with a view to changing careers. From this experience working outside of the Education Department she stated that she had experienced even greater discrimination outside of education and explained that:

I think because we're working in, and it sounds really elitist and I don't mean to be but because we're mixing with educated men, we don't get the full force of sexism that women in other fields do, where women are definitely not considered to be equals. In my particular situation, I was employed for my academic qualifications ... he (the politician) wanted me because I had the government and economics background ... but because I was female, I was expected to have all these additional qualities such as be able to make coffee right, ... take suits to the dry cleaners ... yes, and I had to get his wife a birthday card ... We talk of impediments to our careers in education but it's absolutely nothing compared with the other situations that women are working in. [Therefore] I decided not to swap careers.

Karen (profile one) suggested however, that with 'more women infiltrating the front' she perceived that negative attitudes and 'male sexism is breaking down'.

Three of the interviewees specifically mentioned that a factor that significantly influenced the career advancement of women was that women did not see themselves as competent leaders. Karen (profile one) stated that social attitudes suggested that women lacked the motivation and ability required for effective leadership, thus promoting women's lack of self confidence in performing such roles. She suggested that to counteract this influence other female colleagues and the Education Department needed to seriously address this factor. She said that:

most women don't believe they're as good as they are and that's a societal thing ... I don't know how anyone can help the individual woman on staff ... they need things that'll improve their self-esteem. It's hard because the women that need it most don't identify themselves as needing it and therefore, wouldn't attend a workshop ... Ideally you'd have to get women before they've had families and preferably before they've married. You would have to help their self-esteem, then show them how good they are and what they're capable of.

Brenda (profile four) said that a lack of confidence in her own abilities meant she didn't apply for promotion until others encouraged her. She recalled her own experience by saying that:

I don't think I was ever assertive enough. I didn't step forward and take credit for what I did. A lot of the things I did when going for promotion, I did because I assumed everybody else was doing them ... it was only when people started pointing out to me that not everybody does do that that I went for promotion ... I think I probably didn't value myself and what I was doing enough and it took other people to point it out to me. I think the major impediment was in my own mind.

Brenda (profile four) commented however, that she was aware of a change in her own self confidence and described a situation where she had proved it. She said:

someone had said to me that I got the job because I was female and I said, 'No, I got it because I was the best one there'.

Olga (profile three) referred to the situation when the Education Department first began appointing subject masters (now termed heads' of department). She said that:

the men got appointed first and probably because they were the only ones who had the confidence to apply anyway. Most of us women would have been a bit of a subservient lot and didn't bother to apply. Then of course, later on we would have realised that we had the ability to do it anyhow.

All five interviewees said that one of the main reasons for their successful promotion to a head of department position was because they had been encouraged by either male and female mentors, all of whom were already in administrative positions such as deputy principals and principals. Brenda (profile four) commented on the importance of supportive colleagues and the benefits of peer networking by saying that:

I think I was successful because I had very active support, particularly from the acting principal. He was the one who encouraged me all the time. I also went to a seminar run by a women's support group which consisted of a group of women educators who tried to encourage other women to go for promotion.

Olga (profile three) commented that without the encouragement of others she would never have considered applying for promotion. She said:

I don't see myself as an ambitious person and I think the only reason I did apply for promotion was because I was encouraged by others.

Three of the interviewees said they had received no assistance and often negative feedback from males in the position to give assistance, for example the male deputies and principals. Karen (profile one) found females more encouraging in her experiences and said that:

probably the main contributing factor to my successful application would have been Narelle the Principal, because she, herself was very organised and logical and she could step you through everything you needed to do as a head of department. She actually showed structures that you could set up, ... she made herself available far more than any male administrator I have ever worked with ... I certainly see Narelle as a mentor. It was kind of like learning from the master. Just watching her and what she did was enough to help you do it ... I think a role model is really important.

Kate (profile five) also believed that female role models were imperative to career advancement. She said that:

there were a couple of women that I held in high esteem and I suppose I wanted to be like them so I modelled myself on them ... they guided me on the promotional trail.

Rochelle (profile two) commented that her very first subject master was 'an excellent female role model' and that she was inspired to be like her.

Brenda (profile four) described her differing experiences. In the male dominated field of science, Brenda said she had found many male mentors who had been very helpful in her career advancement. She commented that:

I applied to promote because of the encouragement of three people in particular, all three were males. I also worked pretty closely with the senior mistress who then became the deputy principal ... I would say that she was a role model as she encouraged me and always said that I should go further. Those three fellows I worked with however, were definitely the catalysts.

One of the interviewees suggested that restructuring within the Education Department at the time she was seeking promotion enhanced her promotional opportunities. Olga (profile three) said that:

there was a big expansion happening that next year and there were a few positions in the city and there hadn't been many in the city before. So I guess a few more openings had come up and I figured that if I was going to get one, I was going to get one then.

Being regarded as a competent teacher was mentioned by three of the interviewees as an important factor influencing promotional success. However, all of these women were very modest when talking of their skills and competencies in relation to promotion. Rochelle (profile two) said that I suppose one the reasons I was promoted was because 'I was good at my job I guess'. Kate (profile five) also spoke of this career contingency factor and said that:

I think I'm a fairly strong teacher and I've been used to demonstrate to lots of people. I've been asked to talk to teachers before they come into the Education Department and also to students that are just graduating.

Kate (profile five) and Karen (profile one) were the only two to mention that they felt that involvement in extra curricular activities heavily influenced promotional opportunities and that this involvement was particularly difficult for women with family commitments. They suggested that their particular curriculum areas of performing arts and visual arts, respectively, placed high expectations on the classroom teacher to be involved in extra curricular activities. Kate (profile five) attributed her past promotional success to her heavy involvement in extra curricular activities in the school and community. She said:

I think in music and any area of the performing arts you're judged on your extra curricular involvement. I spent lots and lots of hours not only in performing arts but in other aspects of the theatre and the school. For example, I coached hockey teams and I was a house mistress, so I was really involved with the students after school. I've had a very high profile in all schools that I've been at and I think we're judged on that.

Although all of the interviewees had a degree level qualification, only one of them mentioned this as an advantage when seeking promotion. Karen (profile one) said that:

I believe the more qualifications you have after your name certainly makes a difference.

Rochelle (profile two) seemed quite cynical about the importance that the Department of Education placed on academic qualifications in selection criteria for promotion. She stated that:

I don't think the Department values academic success at all.

All the interviewees said that their promotional opportunities had been restricted due to their desire to stay in Brisbane for family and personal reasons. Rochelle (profile two) said that when she applied for a promotion she was only prepared to accept a position in Brisbane, or on the North or South Coasts. She commented:

that was another reason that I knew I had to be top of the promotional bag, to get a job in Brisbane. To go back to the country wasn't what I wanted.

Kate (profile five) described her restricted mobility by stating that:

I couldn't move. My husband has his own business, we couldn't start anything new. I doubt we could have what we have here, anywhere else ... It's true that a lot of men can't leave either, but I think it's harder for women because quite often their partners are very established in their careers as well. Because of this I don't think I'm really a movable type of person anymore.

All of the women in this study had encountered mobility as a factor affecting their promotional paths in the past. Karen (profile one) said she placed a lot of emphasis on her personal relationship and therefore chose to be immobile. She said that:

I could have promoted earlier but I wasn't prepared to go country. I was living with Leonard, it was like a defacto relationship and so I wasn't prepared to move.



Brenda (profile four) said that moving countries had severely hindered her career advancement because when she arrived in Australia she had been out of the teaching profession for fourteen years. She commented that this was:

a strange situation ... [as] it seems that many people my age have progressed further ... whereas when I came to Australia, I had to start again from scratch.

Brenda also commented that after moving from South Africa her family had settled in Brisbane and she wasn't prepared to relocate again. So she waited until she definitely knew that there was a head of department position available in Brisbane and then applied for promotion. She said that:

previously if you went for promotion you could have been sent anywhere and that didn't suit my circumstances. Whereas this particular time you could nominate regions ... Actually the Brisbane position could have been a very strong reason why I applied, because there were only four positions advertised and only one was in Brisbane so I went for that.

Rochelle (profile two) suggested that the fact that her husband was also a teacher employed by the Queensland Education Department was a distinct advantage, as his career was mobile and more able to align with her own career opportunities. She said that this factor considerably lessened the influence of geographical immobility on her career. She speculated that:

If I was married to someone who wasn't a teacher, obviously I would be more limited. I would have to stay as a head of department or go for a deputy's position that I didn't really want or otherwise he would have to give up his job. Only because he's a teacher it's a possibility that I can move to another location.

Olga (profile three) related the opportunity for administrative experience to gender and stated that women did not seem to get the same opportunities as men to act in management positions. Olga had observed that:

women are not given the opportunity to prove themselves in higher positions, so how can their curriculum vitae show that they've been tested out and proven themselves worthy? I know other females in head of department positions are getting worked up over this because ... like the lack of openings in schools, the lack of opportunities given to females, are just handed to males on a plate. Like the times when there's the opportunity for a head of department to stand-in in the administration when one of them is away on leave ... nine times out of ten, that opening is given to a male instead of a female.

Two of the women strongly perceived the current education system as male dominated and suggested that this system clearly discriminated against women and favoured male applicants for promotional positions. Olga (profile three) said that:

you should be accepted in positions for what you can do, not for what you look like or whether you are male or female. But that isn't happening at the moment!

She went on to say that:

if you're not one that is favoured by the administration team, then you're not going to get the opportunities for promotion.

Kate (profile five) said that the present structures were obviously male controlled and dominated. She quite adamantly stated that:

I don't want to work with males who can't cope working with females. Everywhere I've seen male principals or deputies who have a Science/Maths background and consequently have a theory that they're number one and that they're superior ... I don't think they expect us [women] to have any intellectual backing anywhere ... As a female member of administration, ... I think it's really difficult to work in the Education Department.

Finally, two of the interviewees commented on the importance of 'working hard' and 'doing the job well'. Brenda (profile four) said that:

a lot of the things I did as a normal part of teaching, I did because I assumed everybody else was doing them. I worked hard and I was conscientious, but I assumed that everybody did that.

Rochelle (profile two) attributed the main reason for her successful promotion to head of department position to her sheer hard work. She said:

I worked day and night for months in order to prepare for the inspection. I didn't leave a stone unturned. I truly didn't have a social life for ages. I'd become obsessive about work. I didn't leave anything to chance.

### **5.2.2 Current Position**

The interviewees were asked about their current role as a head of department in their school. They were asked to comment on the aspects of the position they had found most interesting and most difficult or challenging, and whether they believed their gender influenced the way they performed their role.

Karen (profile one) in her current position as the head of an art department recognised the importance of the arts in the school curriculum and often felt as though she needed to defend the value of their inclusion in the school curriculum. She said that:

I feel the arts are undervalued and as they're predominantly female oriented subjects, in some ways I feel women are undervalued for what they do.

Kate (profile five) as the head of a performing arts department had also found herself defending not only the value of her department, but also her own credibility. She felt that:

music, drama and dance are not perceived as part of the academic subjects at school. I don't know whether it's because I was a female or because I was a part of the performing arts, but quite often you were looked down upon.

Kate (profile five) recalled her experiences as a younger teacher and said that males seemed to regard themselves as 'superior', therefore creating an environment where 'women felt inferior' and less confident in their own talents and abilities. She suggested that this 'attitude of superiority' seemed to falsely persuade staff into believing that 'males were more credible in management roles'. She said that:

when I was at E state high, there was a male performing arts head of department and I think he was taken a lot more seriously ... he therefore enabled the subject to be taken more seriously.

Brenda (profile four) however, who had always worked in the male dominated area of science did not find any problem in working mainly with men. She said that she thought there was more of a balance in a department when there was a mixture of the sexes. However, Brenda commented that being female did influence the way other staff members perceived her role. She said that:

I think it's complicated ... and quite difficult when there are two of you in charge of the Department ... and the other one's male. It takes time to establish yourself, but you also have to prove yourself, but you'd have to do that whether you were male or female. ... but I noticed last year, particularly with the teachers who had been there before, that they tended to refer always to the male and bypass me. I also noticed that often the more social type things become my responsibility ... and that if there's an unruly boy the male head of department deals with him.

In relation to gender differences in management style, only two of the interviewees made a point of saying that they believed that women managed and led their departments differently to men. Kate (profile five) said that:

I feel that women really operate a lot differently to men particularly in the way they communicate with other staff. I think women are more open.

Karen (profile one) suggested that:

I think a lot more women are people-people. There are a lot of men who are happy just to interact with paper and computers all day. I think women are more emotive and they like to bounce ideas off people not off paper.

When commenting on their current role as a head of department, all five of the interviewees articulated elements of their own leadership styles. Kate (profile

five) described her leadership style as 'working on a friendship basis'. She said that:

I've always thought it was very important to get along with people in other departments. I think that is one of my strengths, that I've always got to know other people and valued their friendships.

Brenda (profile four) said that the most interesting and enjoyable element of her current position came from working with people. She said:

I really like the people side of things because I enjoy interacting with the students and the teachers.

Karen (profile one) reinforced this notion by stating that:

I believe you get the most reward in your job from coping with people.

Yet Karen (profile one) also found the people aspect of her current position the most challenging. She said:

I hate conflict that arises as part of the job ... I think I spend too much of my life solving other people's problems.

Rochelle (profile two) also commented that working with staff conflicts, was the most difficult aspect of her current position. She said that at times she 'finds it very challenging to be as diplomatic as possible'. However, she would still rate working with staff and students as the most enjoyable aspect of her role.

Olga (profile three) said that she perceived one of the major dimensions of her current role to be the successful management of the personnel in her Department. Olga commented on her own management style and said that:

I delegate responsibilities to staff as far as the curriculum is concerned. I also make them responsible for certain equipment in rooms. In general that works very well as everyone has areas of responsibility. I think the staff themselves have to be responsible and accountable.

Olga (profile three) commented that her Department worked very efficiently and effectively in this manner and concluded that:

I am happy with the fact that I work well with my staff and they work well with me.

The interviewees also mentioned that they considered the opportunity to assist other women in their career advancement as an important component of their current role as a head of department. Karen (profile one) said that:

being a role model is challenging ... I also encourage staff to learn through giving them information and having discussions ... You need confident women as role models at the school level. In a school, it's important to empower new, young, single women.

Kate (profile five) also saw this as one of the major dimensions of her role as a head of department. She said that:

it is extremely important to be a role model and look after younger teachers.

Brenda (profile four) working in the traditionally male-dominated area of science saw the importance of her presence not only for the staff but also for the female students. She said that:

because there are only four female science teachers ... I think being a role model to the girls in science and coaching the girls to do subjects such as physics, is very important.

### **5.2.3 Future Career Aspirations**

In this section of the interview the heads' of department were asked to comment on their future career aspirations and to identify any factors that they perceived were influencing their promotional advancement opportunities within the Queensland Department of Education. The interviewees suggested many factors that were preventing them from being promoted further within this Department. These factors are listed below.

Four of the interviewees expressed dissatisfaction with the career paths they saw as currently available within the Education Department. They suggested that all promotional paths ahead of them seemed to centre around administrative duties that took them further and further away from classroom contact with students and other staff, a move in which four of the women were not interested. Olga (profile three) said that for her there were no appealing positions to which to be promoted after the head of department position. She said that career advancement was particularly difficult for women because:



I think a lot of females would like to maintain that contact with the students and promoting takes them further away from that role ... It seems to be a bit of a difficulty in that there's no other structure in place where there can be another promotional path that does perhaps give you more of a teaching role.

Olga did go on to say that although there were lots of voluntary positions, mostly as year masters in pastoral care roles in the schools, these positions were not officially recognised by the Department and therefore provided no extra income. She recognised however, that the newly created Advanced Skill Teacher (AST) positions did give teachers 'the opportunity to take on some form of leadership role and there is a monetary reward there'.

Rochelle (profile two) after an experience as an acting deputy principal commented that:

the job that I did was the supervisions ... It's really time consuming and it's meaningless to everyone at school. I think that's just demoralising as a whole - I'd rather be doing something else. The one thing I really think is different for men and women in promotional situations is that women really look at the job and think about the quality of the job and of life, and whether that job is really worth it. I think men see it as another step and they don't really worry about it, they just take that step.

Karen (profile one) believed that if females were given the opportunity to act in administrative positions, it was usually a 'token gesture'. She told of her recent experience as an acting deputy principal for two weeks. She believed that because the rest of the administrative team were male, the main reason she was asked to step into the position was because she was female. She commented very cynically on the credibility of her role by saying that:

I think I remember reading somewhere ... that there had to be at least one female or male in any administration ... Anyway, they have to have a female because they've got three men and none of them are going to hand tampons out.

Karen (profile one) stated also that it was interesting that most women seemed to perceive administrative roles as taking them away from student contact. However, this was not her perception. Karen said that in her role as an acting deputy principal she felt as though she had lost some of her well developed rapport with the students, but said that she spent every day involved in student contact and had very little, in school time for administrative tasks. She suggested that most peoples' perceptions of administrators were based on male role models, who she suggested were more detached from the students. Karen said that when she worked at a state high school with Narelle and Helen, two female administrators, they knew every child in the school's name and were always involved in direct student contact. Karen also said that from her past experiences, male administrators contact with students tended to be of a disciplinary nature, whereas females engaged in more encouragement and praise of student behaviour.

Olga (profile three) said that the restructuring taking place in the Department at present with the combining of curriculum areas in schools, would ultimately mean that some head of department positions would be made redundant. Olga suggested that this uncertainty had left her dubious as to what her future career options would be. With this restructuring occurring while Kate was on leave from the Department, she was quite concerned about what her future career prospects would be and whether she would be able to return to her former position or even

whether there would be a head of department position available for her in Brisbane. Brenda (profile four) however, saw this restructuring as a challenge. She said that she believed that the jobs available after the restructuring would be granted on merit and she felt comfortable with that.

Olga (profile three) believed that to fully examine the selection processes for promotion within the Department, this examination needed to start at the top. She suggested that women were not given equal opportunities right from the beginning of the process, in that selection panels for promotion tended to favour male applicants. Olga didn't elaborate on this point with any examples, however stressed that she believed that in all situations 'male applicants were favoured for positions of promotion'. Rochelle's (profile two) view point challenged this by saying that she believed the selection panels were chosen to mirror different sections of society. She said that she believed that the Department made 'sincere attempts to ensure that women aren't discriminated against'.

The issue of age discrimination when applying for promotion was mentioned by only one interviewee. Olga (profile three) suggested that generally:

females going for promotional jobs are a bit older then the general male going for them because of hold ups in their careers to get to that stage, family commitments and things like that.

Karen (profile one) and Kate (profile five) mentioned that they perceived that the higher their academic qualifications, the better their future promotional

opportunities would be. Two of the interviewees (Rochelle and Kate) were currently enrolled in a master of education degree. Although Rochelle (profile two) believed that the Education Department did not 'value academic success', she said she saw her masters studies as 'a way into other positions' outside of the Department. Karen (profile one) preferred to extend her professional development by enrolling in workshops and short-term courses, as she said she enjoyed the more 'practical, hands-on work'. Brenda (profile four) said that at the moment she was not interested in any formal study, because:

I have plenty to keep me busy with my family and my job. I can see quite often that people who do study have to take short cuts with their job and I think it impinges on that.

On the subject of geographical mobility, all of the interviewees recognised that as they become more settled in their personal lives, they were becoming more and more unable to move to assume a promotional position. Brenda (profile four) said that not being able to move away from Brisbane did limit her future career options, but said that it would also depend on how badly she wanted the job. She said that:

I don't think you can project how you'll feel about particular things in advance. I think with any major decision you weigh up the pros and cons ... and then you make an informed decision.

Kate (profile five) said that she was unable to transfer away from Brisbane because her husband's business was firmly established in this region. Rochelle (profile two) said that even though she would be reluctant to leave Brisbane, she

was fortunate that her husband was also an employee of the Education Department and could therefore transfer with her to another location.

Two of the interviewees commented that the further they moved into administration, the more negative male attitudes they believed they would encounter. Karen (profile one) said that from her experiences in administration, 'I don't think women are treated equitably'. She suggested that males did not value the contributions of women managers and considered their inclusion in administrative teams as a 'token gesture'. Kate (profile five) talked of her past experiences and stated very clearly that in her future career:

I don't want to work with males who can't cope with working with females. I think the whole Education Department is being run by those sort of men, so I don't want to be involved.

All of the interviewees made mention of how their family commitments had influenced their past and future career plans. Kate (profile five) who had just had a child, made particular mention of how the value she placed on her family life had significantly influenced her future career aspirations. She said of her future now:

I've just had a baby and I think it's really important to be with them. I thought that I would have a child and be back at school and the baby would be in child care. I don't know, maybe I'd be happy to just be a regular teacher again. I don't want to be stressed like I have been, where you're spending two or three nights a week and possibly one day on the weekend at work. I don't think that's right. I think if you're going to have a child, you should be with them ... I don't feel there's any pressure for me to be at home looking after this child, but there's something inside me telling me that that's a good thing. I value it.

Rochelle (profile two) who since the interview had become pregnant with her first child, suggested that because women had to physically bear children, this factor would always influence the career choices of women. She commented that:

the fact is that the woman physically, has to have the child and has to take time off. You can't just have a baby and go back to work, whereas if the man has a child on Friday, he can go back to work on Monday and absolutely nothing has changed about his physical being. I think it will always be something that will affect women's careers. It's inevitable in the physical sense, you just can't have a baby on the weekend and keep going with your job, can you? Whether you are the prime-carer for them after they are born is irrelevant for a little while, but the fact that you've had that child and born it, is certainly going to affect you for at least a year or so.

Karen (profile one) who didn't yet have any children of her own, spoke about observations she had made on the effects family responsibilities had had on some female staff members in her Department. She observed that:

children are large barriers to women when promoting. They are big users of their minds and of their emotions which drains them of time, emotions and brainpower, which are their main resources. I'm sure kids are incredibly stressful to a family, particularly to the mother. Once they've got all that stress and you say to them, 'Could you just stay back and do a workshop?' or 'Could you just read this book?', then they'd not have time to do it and would feel guilty...Yes, I believe children are huge barriers to women's careers.

Karen (profile one) also commented that apart from family responsibilities having a significant impact on a woman's current situation, it also affected her career goals and aspirations for the future. She made observations about a colleagues' career and family choices and speculated about her own future by saying that:

if I was to have a child, it would make a lot of difference. There are a lot of success cases around like Elizabeth who had her second child and is coping with being a deputy. It's certainly possible, but it's at what price? She's at school until seven o'clock most nights and she's there by seven thirty in the morning so she's spending twelve and a half hours at work. It makes me wonder whether I would want to do it.

Two of the interviewees made particular mention of the fact that employees in the Department, particularly women were not really made aware of all the possible career paths available. Brenda (profile four) talked of her future career options and said that:

I'd probably go higher into administration but there must be other paths. I suppose if I investigated it I would probably then see alternative career paths.

Karen (profile one) when considering her future career stated clearly that:

it's tough, because future career options aren't very visible. When you look at the Education Department it's hard to know what levels are above what we see in schools.

Two of the women interviewed, recognised that to pursue the career of their choice may mean a reduction in income. Kate (profile five) was very interested in policy writing but said that changing her career would mean 'starting at the bottom'. Karen (profile one) suggested that moving into private industry may also mean a loss of income. She said that:

I might have to take a pay cut to advance in my own career, so it's very difficult to advance because in someways it's like going backwards.

All of the interviewees, apart from Kate (profile five) said that they had not seriously considered, nor had applied for any further promotional positions within the Department as yet, as they were very content with their current positions. Olga (profile three) said that because she was quite content with her career achievements to this point she had no real desire to advance any further within the school system. She said she was definitely not interested in a deputy principal's position as she saw the role as taking her further away from contact with students which she enjoyed. Karen (profile one) talked of her future career plans and said that:

because I'm not in any way discontent with what I do ... it doesn't lead me to desire other things. But, if I saw something that I thought sounded great, I would probably go for it.

Karen gave the impression that she enjoyed her current position very much, however, she commented that out of interest she had always looked around at the available jobs. She said she almost applied for a position as an education officer at the Queensland Art Gallery. In terms of Karen's future career, she saw her promotional options with the Queensland Education Department as limited. She perceived that promotional positions would bring with them lots of bureaucracy, 'administration and paper work' and would take her further away from working with people, an element of her current role she so obviously enjoyed.

In consideration of future career aspirations, Brenda (profile four) said that she was quite content with her current position as a head of department, however



said that if she decided to go further, she would be interested in moving higher into administration. She explained though that:

for the moment, I'm happily occupied with what I'm doing but I may well decide to go further later. It [promotion] doesn't interest me at the moment because I have plenty to keep me busy with my family and my current job.

Kate (profile five) stated however, that whether females do or do not desire career advancement should not be the issue. The important element in the career aspirations of women is that 'they have equal opportunities to achieve them'.

### 5.3 Summary

The aim of this study was to ascertain female heads' of department perceptions of the factors that significantly influenced their promotional opportunities within their profession. The purpose of this chapter has been to present these perceptions regarding the interviewees' career histories; their current positions; and their future career aspirations within the Education Department of Queensland.

The career path chosen by an individual teacher appeared to depend very much on the values of the teacher concerned and her motives for becoming a teacher. All of the interviewees said that they had become teachers for the interpersonal aspects of the job and expressed the view that they wished there were more career pathways which kept them directly involved in student-teacher

contact in the classroom. Four of the women suggested that the administrative, non-teaching positions in schools didn't generally interest them as they saw these positions as involving less people and student interaction. The profile four interviewee (Brenda) was the only one to suggest that she would be interested in moving higher into school administration.

Common to four of the interviewees was that they all commenced their careers as classroom teachers. Rochelle (profile two) however, had a government and economics degree background and initially followed this area by working in a politician's office, before deciding on a career in teaching. She said that she was 'heading in a totally different career direction' but then decided she would enjoy the organisational and people aspects of teaching and set about acquiring the appropriate qualifications to move into this profession.

All five of the interviewees had achieved the same level of success in terms of their position within the Education Department. However, the women had had very different experiences in their efforts to attain these promotional positions and were motivated for different reasons. The major difference between the interviewees when it came to promotion, was the length of time over which they sought promotion. Both Olga (profile three) and Brenda (profile four) sought promotion upon re-entering the profession after a career break for child-rearing, whereas the other three interviewees all attained their current position before they married or had any children.

Despite a lack of visible career paths for the future, all of the interviewees expressed that they were not currently looking for, or considering applying for promotion as they were reasonably content with their current position as a head of department.

Chapter Six will analyse the data presented in this chapter and discuss the key factors that the interviewees perceived as influencing their promotional opportunities in education.

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## CHAPTER SIX: DATA ANALYSIS

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The purpose of this chapter is to analyse the responses from the five interviewees on their perceptions of the factors that have had significant influence on their promotional opportunities within the Queensland Education Department. The main factors identified will be divided under three main headings, as used in the literature review, as these seemed to be broad enough to be able to capture the major dimensions of all the views expressed. However, it must be noted that none of these categories are mutually exclusive and that many of the factors identified have overlaps that link closely with two or all of the categories. These categories are the:

- (1) socio-cultural level;
- (2) organisational level; and
- (3) personal level.

Within these three main themes the researcher identified common elements which all women in this study perceived as factors that had significantly influenced their career advancement in educational management. Some of these factors related closely to those in the literature review, but others developed different emphases that warranted consideration in the data analysis process. The first section of this chapter will elaborate on the three themes identified above by

analysing the experiences that the five women teachers described during their interviews. The second section looks at the career strategies used or experienced by the women in this study, as it was interesting to examine how these particular women had devised tactics to overcome career obstacles that they had encountered.

## **6.1 The Socio-Cultural Level**

This study has reaffirmed the perception that social and cultural attitudes significantly influence the career advancement of women. As was indicated in the literature in Acker's (1983) work, it appeared that societal attitudes in relation to gender, considered that certain traditional roles were appropriate for each of the sexes. This enculturation into traditional gendered roles has blurred the sensitive examination of the experiences and needs of individuals, many of whom are pressured to structure their careers around preconceptions of an appropriate role rather than construct individuality through personally meaningful career choices. It emerged from this study that these five women perceived that society projected certain messages to women that were controlled by the dominant, male culture. One of the messages received by the respondents in this study was that women in educational management could expect to experience occupational discrimination, particularly in the attitudes and behaviours of males in positions of seniority.

### **6.1.1 Negative Attitudes From Males**

Four of the five interviewees commented that negative attitudes within society particularly those received from males, reinforced the discrimination that women in management positions experienced. All of the interviewees apart from Brenda (profile four) who worked in the male dominated field of science, described situations that they identified as arising from the negative attitudes of male colleagues, particularly those in administrative positions. Karen, Rochelle, Olga and Kate agreed that these attitudes discouraged women from assuming roles of leadership. The resentment and discontent with these negative attitudes was evident in many of the comments from these four interviewees.

These four women believed that male-oriented values dominated management and that these values reinforced females' positions of inferiority. These four respondents gave examples of personal experiences that substantiated this perception. Kate (profile five) said that 'males want women to bow down to them'. Olga (profile three) had made observations about male administrators she had worked with and said that the males liked to keep females 'down there' and that 'very few of them offer equal opportunities to females on staff'. Karen (profile one) talked of her experiences and said that most male administrators she had worked with were 'sexist', in that she perceived that they did not 'value women and their opinions' very highly. She said that they tended to regard comments from women as invaluable and inferior. Karen attributed these attitudes to their assumptions of superiority and the 'arrogance of the boys'.

Rochelle (profile two), who had worked as a research assistant before beginning teaching, acknowledged the existence of negative attitudes but said that compared with her experience working outside of education, the discrimination women experienced in educational management was not as direct or consistent. She suggested that 'because we're mixing with educated men, we don't get the full force of sexism that women in other fields do'. The extent and form of this difference could clearly be an area that warrants future research. However, Rochelle was not suggesting that there was no discrimination in education, as she had experienced it first hand herself on a number of occasions.

Rochelle (profile two) described in her interview two distressing incidents where she had felt discriminated against because of her gender. First, she explained that when she had considered applying for a promotional position she was disgusted when her male principal responded by saying 'you should [apply]; what they want is a skirt!' On another occasion she commented that another male principal had said to her when discussing a particular promotional opportunity, 'I'll understand that because you're getting married, you won't want to take the position on'. In the post-interview phone discussion Rochelle said that she was appalled by this same principals' attitude in yet another incident. She said that at her school there was a deputy principal's position open for application yet he had said, 'I assume that because you're pregnant you won't be interested in the position'. Rochelle (profile two) elaborated that she probably was not interested in applying for the position, but that decision should have been her own and the principal should not have imposed his own assumptions onto her decision.

However, Rochelle's common reaction to these attitudes was to remove herself from the situation and afterwards become angry and upset with the incident. She said on one occasion 'I went home that afternoon and cried and cried and wondered whether I could stay at that school', rather than making that male aware of her reaction and the consequences of his comments. The frustration of being uncertain of how to react to such sexism was clearly reflected in her emotions.

The fifth interviewees' perceptions were different. When discussing the influence of negative male attitudes, (on the career paths of women) Brenda (profile four), who had always worked mostly with males in the field of science, said that she had not encountered evidence of sexism influencing her own career opportunities. Brenda said that her gender may have affected the way some males related to her and how they perceived her role in her current position, but she had not experienced obvious negative male attitudes as a factor that had significantly influenced her access to promotional opportunities. In the post-interview phone discussion, Brenda herself commented that she found this perception an unusual one for a woman and attributed it to two factors. First, that she grew up in the 'male-dominated society of South Africa' and second, that she had 'become used to working mainly with men' in the male-dominated field of science. Brenda suggested that maybe because she had been constantly surrounded with male dominance she accepted such attitudes and had worked to overcome them. However, this perception raised the question that some women, particularly those working in areas that are over-represented with males, have perhaps become



anaesthetised to discriminatory attitudes and have been prepared to overlook them as 'normal' attitudes of the workplace.

Although the other respondents did not mention this, Karen (profile one) strongly perceived that with 'more women infiltrating the front' and becoming 'visible' in management positions, negative attitudes from males may be forced to break down. However, she acknowledged that in reality, this factor was still evident as a significant obstacle to the career advancement of women in education.

#### **6.1.2 Traditional Societal Expectations**

It was clear from the perceptions of all of the interviewees that they believed that women were disadvantaged in their careers because of their gender. Olga (profile three) indirectly pointed toward what might be the most fundamental societal issue by stating that the traditional societal expectations placed on women were to perform the range of primary roles of 'mother, wife and house-wife'. The difficulty for women in attempting to combine all of these roles with a career, emerged as a vitally important perspective of the women in this study. Olga (profile three) stated that, in her perception, 'you have to be single to have a career'. Brenda (profile four) described (from her own experience) and Karen (profile one) had observed that it was virtually impossible to successfully combine a woman's work and home life, and that basically the career ended in second place and had to be placed 'on hold' in order to cope with the demands of

domestic and family responsibilities. Karen (profile one) made mention of a colleague who was combining motherhood with being a deputy principal and commented, 'it's at what price?' She said that this particular woman was at school for 'twelve and a half hours a day' and therefore in Karen's opinion, was not doing justice to the time she had available to spend with her young children.

Rochelle (profile two) suggested that the difficulty in combining a career and home life for a married man was not so difficult, as usually the career of the wife altered to accommodate that of her husband. Rochelle stated that men remained 'basically unattached' to their families in order to enhance their career advancement opportunities. Rochelle's perception suggested that men really had a token role in domestic duties of the home and responsibilities for child-care, and that these duties would become primarily the responsibility of the woman even if she too was working.

### **6.1.3 Are Things Changing?**

The perceptions of the group of women in this study clearly indicated that traditional societal expectations that denoted that women should be 'nurturers' primarily involved in child-rearing and domestic duties, were still evident as factors that had indirectly influenced their promotional opportunities. Findings from this study suggested that women would 'feel guilty' if they were not performing their home duties as well as working, or alternately they would put their careers 'on hold' because of the difficulty in combining the two (Karen,

profile one). It also appeared that men have taken many social preconceptions into organisations where their expressed attitudes are clearly discriminatory, and the extent of this discrimination remains at an apparently high level.

## **6.2 The Organisational Level**

The literature reviewed in Chapter Two emphasised that promotional structures within organisations were significant obstacles to the participation of women in educational management (Tancred-Sheriff, 1988; Shakeshaft, 1987; Morgan, 1986). Randell (1993) asserted that the organisational structures of most educational institutions did not encourage women to see themselves in positions of leadership. With respect to the perceptions of the women in this study, similar conclusions have emerged.

### **6.2.1 Lack of Knowledge of and Access to Desirable Career Paths**

The strongest factor to emerge from this study at the organisational level, was that all of the respondents perceived that they had insufficient knowledge of the available career paths within the Queensland Education Department, particularly those paths that interested women. All five of the interviewees expressed uncertainty and dissatisfaction with their future career options. They suggested that the only promotional path available in this Department appeared to be to move higher into administration, a move which four of the women, that is with the exception of Brenda (profile four), did not find very appealing. Rochelle

(profile two), after an experience as an acting deputy principal commented that the tasks required of this position seemed quite 'demoralising' and 'meaningless'. The other three respondents were also more interested in staying 'involved in classroom teaching' rather than moving into administration. They suggested that there should be more promotional positions available that allowed women to remain directly involved in this teaching role. Olga (profile three) acknowledged that there were many pastoral care roles within schools which maintained this student contact. However, although these brought a small reduction in the hours of teaching, there was no added remuneration. Olga also suggested that the creation of the advanced skill teacher (AST) positions was a 'step in the right direction' in establishing promotional positions that appealed to women, but that 'there wasn't much available beyond that'.

#### **6.2.2 Lack of Opportunities for Management Training and Experience**

The comments from all the interviewees in this study matched Sampson's (1987A) findings which suggested that in educational institutions men were more likely to be given administrative and organisational tasks. The perceptions of the respondents indicated that women in Queensland state secondary schools were not given the same opportunities as their male counterparts to act in positions of management. Olga (profile three) suggested that women were rarely given the opportunity to undertake 'positions of added responsibility' and that most opportunities to act in a position of leadership were 'handed to males on a plate'. Kate (profile five) said that from her experiences, women did desire career

advancement in management and suggested that organisations needed to have promotional structures in place that allowed women equal opportunities to access management and training experiences. This was clearly stated in the full knowledge of attempts to advance opportunities in recent years, most of which were believed to have had limited influence.

Brenda (profile four) perceived that the restructuring of curriculum areas occurring within schools (at present) might prove to be a favourable opportunity for women. She suggested that because some positions would become redundant and current heads' of department would have to reapply for the available positions, the selection processes may become more equitable. She believed that because promotional positions would be awarded 'on merit' it would allow for a fairer and more equitable selection process.

### **6.2.3 The Token Inclusion of Women**

Even though only one of the women in this study mentioned this issue, the researcher felt it was an important point to be made as the respondent obviously felt very strongly about the influence of this factor. Karen (profile one) believed that if a female was given the opportunity to act in an administrative position, it was usually a 'token gesture'. Karen said that she had experienced this herself when she was asked to act in a deputy principals' role for two weeks. She said that she did not feel 'equally valued' as a member of the administration team and that basically she was selected because they needed someone to 'hand out the

tampons'. It was obvious in Karen's (profile one) comments that she was very cynical about the intentions and commitment of the Education Department and male members of administration, to increasing the participation of women in educational management. In Karen's experience she perceived that women were selected as members of management teams to reflect superficially, notions of equal opportunity but that in reality, women were not 'equally valued' or 'taken seriously in their roles'.

The influence of a lack of female mentors, and time away from teaching for child-rearing, were suggested by all five women as factors that had significantly influenced their promotional opportunities. These factors had overlaps with the categories at both the organisational and personal levels. However, the researcher decided to examine these two factors within their organisational context as they needed to be urgently addressed structurally, in order to offer more direct assistance to women who were feeling constrained by these factors.

#### **6.2.4 The Lack of Female Mentors**

A number of researchers have identified the lack of visible role models and lack of access to mentor relationships as significant in the limited promotional success achieved by women (Limerick and Heywood, 1992). Limerick's (1991) study in the Queensland Education Department recognised the importance of mentorship as a determinant of and influence on successful achievement of promotional positions within educational management.

All of the five respondents in this study identified a key role model who had had a significant influence on their career advancement. Some of these role models were male, but most were female. Four of the interviewees said that they had experienced no assistance and often received negative feedback from males, when those men were in a position to give assistance. These same four respondents' perceptions that male mentors seemed less accessible or less willing to assist, aligned with researchers who argued that male teachers received assistance more often than did their female counterparts. However, Brenda's (profile four) experiences were to the contrary. She said that working in the male dominated field of science, she had found many male mentors who had been very helpful in her career advancement. Brenda commented that she had applied for promotion only after 'the encouragement of three people in particular, all three were males'. However, the common perception that emerged was that many women felt disadvantaged because there were a lot less females in educational management who were in the position to act as mentors. From an organisational perspective, this factor needs to be addressed. Suggested structural and organisational initiatives to enhance women's access to female mentors are addressed more specifically in Chapter Seven.

Two of the interviewees recognised the positive influence that having a female role model and mentor had had on their career advancement and suggested that acting as a mentor for other female career aspirants was an important element of their current position. Karen (profile one) said that she considered it very important to be supportive and to encourage other women in their career

development. Kate (profile five) said that she perceived that one of the major dimensions of her current role as a head of department was to 'be a role model [for] younger teachers'.

#### **6.2.5 Time Out For Children**

Rochelle (profile two) stated that child-rearing was something that would always influence the careers of women. She suggested metaphorically that 'men can have a baby on the weekend and be back at work on Monday', but because women have to physically bear the child, their work lives will always be more disrupted than those of men. Although this is a 'fact of life', the Education Department needs to address structurally the implications of leave for women who are child-rearing, because of the consistently negative impact that this absence can have on their career advancement. Suggested forms of action are addressed in Chapter Seven.

The perceptions and comments from the three women in this study with children (Olga, Brenda and Kate), suggested that they felt that their commitment to their families was not valued by the Department. They felt that administrators, particularly males seemed to regard time away from work due to family responsibilities as unrelated to being an educationalist, rather than contributing to the experience. Taking leave from the Department had meant losing time and traditionally valued workforce experience, towards pursuing positions of promotion. Leave from the Department for child-rearing purposes had



significantly hindered the career advancement of two of the respondents in this study.

Both Olga (profile three) and Brenda (profile four) explained that their careers had been placed 'on hold' in that they did not apply for promotion to a head of department position until after they had a break for child-rearing and had re-entered the teaching profession. However, Kate's (profile five) situation was different. Kate had been a head of department for two years before leaving to have a child. This situation aligned with the conclusions from Limerick's (1991) study that suggested that more young women were achieving promotional success before starting a family. This research area warrants further research. The ages at which women are taking leave for child-rearing purposes is an important issue. The Department may need re-examination to ensure that the career advancement of women is not hindered due to this factor.

The perceptions of the five women interviewed in this study suggested that the present promotional structures in the Queensland Department of Education did not accommodate the gender related factors that significantly influenced the careers of their female teacher employees. The perceptions of these women indicated that further structural changes were imperative if equitable opportunities for women in educational management were to be achieved.

### 6.3 The Personal Level

There are many factors in the personal life of a woman that make it difficult for her to pursue a career. The literature reviewed in Chapter Two revealed that the career choices of women were significantly influenced by their personal commitment to family, parental and domestic responsibilities (Fitzgerald and Betz, 1983). This commitment to the roles of 'wife, housewife and mother' (Olga, profile three) has overlaps with the factors suggested at the societal level. However, apart from traditional societal role expectations all of the women in this study said that they felt personally responsible for child-rearing and the domestic duties of the home. They felt that they had to adapt their working lives to meet the needs of their families and that this adaptation had been a major deterrent in their pursuit of a career.

The experiences that the five women described indicated that the main personal factors hindering their career advancement fell into three categories. These factors were their:

- commitment to the roles of wife, house-wife and mother;
- reduced mobility due to following their spouse's career; and
- passive self-concept and lack of confidence in their own talents and abilities.

### **6.3.1 Commitment to the Roles of Wife, Housewife and Mother**

It emerged from the perceptions of the women in this study that they valued very highly the time they spent with their families, particularly their children. For the three women married with children (Olga, Brenda and Kate) it appeared that they had successfully managed to work out ways to cope with their family and work responsibilities, as they had achieved management positions in their workplace. These career strategies are discussed in Section 6.4 under Weiner and Powney's (1991) system of career strategy classification. For Olga and Brenda their strategy was to place their careers 'on hold' and not seek promotion until much later in life, when they returned to the profession. Olga (profile three) said that most female teachers she knew had experienced a similar predicament and had not applied for positions of promotion until after their children were school age. Olga and Brenda both suggested that there were serious implications that stemmed from this situation.

They had felt that when they re-entered the profession they were past the age of achieving successful promotion and therefore did not bother to apply for management positions in schools. It was only after the encouragement of others that they considered applying. The important issue that arose from this, was that even though the women in this study suggested that time devoted to family responsibilities was a personal factor, this situation needs to be urgently addressed by the Department. Karen (profile one) suggested that support networks needed to be established to encourage women re-entering the profession later in life, to

value their time spent involved in family responsibilities and to continue to actively seek out promotional positions.

All of the interviewees commented that one of the reasons for not applying for any further promotional positions was that they realised that their domestic duties would not decrease and that extra work commitments would erode even further into time spent with their families. Kate (profile five) said that she valued time with her child so much that when she returns after leave, she might be happy to be a classroom teacher again, so she doesn't have to deal with the extra commitments related to the role of a head of department. Brenda (profile four) said that the main reason she was not interested in further promotion was because 'I have plenty to keep me busy with my family'. The common perception of all the women indicated that they felt that their commitment to their families significantly influenced their career opportunities and that this undertaking was not valued and considered in the promotional structures that existed within the Queensland Department of Education.

### **6.3.2 Reduced Mobility Due to Spouse's Career**

One of the factors raised in previously reported research as having significantly influenced the career advancement of women was their restricted ability to move in pursuit of promotional positions (Randell, 1990). Literature had also suggested that women usually moved with their husbands' promotional opportunities rather than vice versa (Sampson, 1987A; Marland, 1983).

Limerick's (1991) study of teachers in the Queensland Education Department revealed that school inspectors considered that:

the most unanimous and significant characteristic for promotional success ... was mobility, which could over-ride ability on most occasions (1991: 85).

Even though all of the interviewees commented that their reduced mobility was a factor that had hindered their career advancement, they all stated that they had independently made the decision to be immobile. However, this decision was heavily influenced by their commitment to their spouse and family responsibilities. Brenda (profile four) said that moving to Australia to follow her husbands' career had slowed her own career advancement. She said that she felt that many other women her age had 'achieved more in their careers' and that 'when I came to Australia I had to start again from scratch'. However, when considering the factor of geographical mobility for her future career plans, Brenda commented that moving to accept a promotional position would depend on how badly she wanted the job and that she would 'weigh up her options, should the opportunity arise'.

Kate (profile five) described her own situation and explained that because her husband was so well established in his business she doubted that he would be able to re-establish somewhere else without a substantial loss of time and money. Therefore, Kate saw her decision to be immobile as the most appropriate choice for their current situation. Karen (profile one) said that her immobility meant that

she had been promoted much later than she could have, had she been willing to move around the State. She said that her application for promotion was approved twice, however, due to her commitment to her partner Leonard she was not willing to accept a position outside of Brisbane. Therefore Karen did not move to her current position until her third successful application.

Rochelle (profile two) suggested that in relation to this factor of mobility she felt advantaged because her husband was also a teacher employed by the Queensland Education Department. Therefore, she believed that he was more able to align his career with her career advancement opportunities.

For all the women in this study it appeared that their commitment to their family and spouse relationships had acted in many ways to delay and restrict the promotional opportunities that they were able to pursue. They all suggested that when considering a promotional opportunity they had always placed the needs and situation of their families first, before considering their own personal gains.

### **6.3.3 Passive Self-Concept**

The five women in this study seemed reasonably confident in their own abilities and this could be attributed to the fact that they had already achieved a certain level of recognised success within their workplace. However, they suggested that from their experiences with other female colleagues, they believed that women in general tended to under-estimate their worth and were less inclined

than men to see themselves as competent in the area of educational leadership. They suggested that this lack of confidence subsequently discouraged women from pursuing career opportunities.

Karen (profile one) was particularly passionate about the influence of this factor and said that women did not value their talents and abilities highly enough. She stated that social attitudes were to blame as they tended to stereotype women as lacking the motivation and ability required for effective leadership and therefore reinforced their lack of self confidence to apply for such positions. Karen (profile one) perceived that this was a major factor influencing the career advancement of women and suggested that other female colleagues and the Education Department needed to seriously address this barrier. She suggested that the Department needed to run programs for women to 'improve their self-esteem' and to show them 'what they're capable of'.

Olga (profile three) referred to the situation when the Education Department first began appointing subject masters and said that she believed that one of the main reasons so many males were appointed was because 'they were the only ones who had the confidence to apply' and that many of the women would have doubted their capability for such a position and therefore not applied.

Brenda (profile four) commented that a lack of confidence in her own abilities meant that she did not apply for promotion until others encouraged her. However, Brenda (profile four) believed that this characteristic of passivity was

becoming less evident. She observed that women today seemed to have 'improved confidence' in their talents and abilities. She said that she was even aware of the increase in her own assertiveness and self confidence. All of the interviewees suggested that an increased presence and visibility of successful women administrators who were accessible as role models and mentors, was a factor that would significantly enhance the confidence of women.

#### **6.4 Career Strategies**

In understanding the factors influencing the promotional opportunities of women it was useful to examine the career strategies that the women in this study had used in their attempts to achieve promotional success.

In Weiner and Powney's (1991) research discussed in Chapter Two, there emerged four broad categories of career strategies that were either used or experienced by educational managers. Even from a small group of five women it was quite obvious that they had different characteristics and therefore it was difficult to categorise the women (in this study), as they did not fit neatly into one category, but rather moved between the categories throughout their careers. It was also important to note that because of their changing family circumstances the interviewees moved from one strategy to another to suit different phases of their lives. Therefore, the five women have been categorised according to the characteristics that were most common to their career planning strategies in gaining their current head of department position.



Rochelle (profile two) was identified as a deliberate careerist. She appeared to be someone who had taken control and ownership of her career planning. She had identified a range of possible career paths, including sideways moves outside of the Department and appeared to have considered mid and long-term strategies to advance her career position.

The career drifter was an employee who often allowed the organisation to structure her or his career. Olga (profile three) was identified as the career drifter as she appeared to be someone who had not made direct career plans, yet had responded to opportunities as they presented themselves. She (was seen as someone who) worked hard at her job, yet did not openly seek power. However, if the opportunity for a position of leadership had arisen she would have welcomed it and responded.

Both Brenda (profile four) and Kate (profile five) were identified as career opportunists. These individuals would usually seize whatever job opportunities were attractive or feasible at the time. This type of career strategy was particularly relevant to individuals who because of domestic commitments found it difficult to make long-term career predictions. This characteristic was particularly true of Kate's (profile five) situation, where she was unsure what her next career move would be, because of her desire to devote a lot of her time to child rearing.

Another characteristic pertinent to the career opportunist was that often their careers were adapted to meet geographical moves and to follow their spouse's

career. This element seemed to be characteristic of Brenda's (profile four) career pattern as she moved to Australia from South Africa and felt like her career had to 'start all over again'.

The fourth category was that of the irrepressible careerist. Karen's (profile one) early experiences certainly fitted well into this category. Karen seemed to use any disadvantages as an incentive to work even harder. Any obstacles that were presented to her, seemed to only increase her determination to succeed rather than diminish it. She described her experiences when applying for promotion by stating that:

when I was at E state school, I went three times for appraisal. The first time I was not recommended and that was just like being kicked in the teeth basically ... I swore black and blue that I'd never go for promotion again ... but I did ... After I'd been shown what I needed to do, I felt more comfortable with it.

## **6.5 Summary**

The goal of this Chapter was to arrive at an analysis which reflected and explained the factors that influenced the past career paths and future career aspirations of five female heads' of department. When examining the promotional opportunities for women in the Queensland Education Department it was obvious that in general, women were in a subordinate position to men. Therefore, it was the task of the analyses in this Chapter, to examine the multiple factors that were influencing and maintaining this subordination.

The researcher identified factors that had been experienced by the women in this study, at three levels: the socio-cultural level; the organisational level; and the personal level. Within this framework there were many factors common to all respondents. The women in this study stated that:

#### *The Socio-Cultural Level*

- negative attitudes, particularly from males, discriminated against women and discouraged women from assuming roles of leadership;
- women felt victimised because of the traditional societal expectations placed upon them to fulfil the roles of wife, mother and housewife;

#### *The Organisational Level*

- female teachers working in this Department felt that there was insufficient knowledge of the available career paths, and that there were a lack of desirable career paths for women in education, particularly for those who wished to remain directly involved in classroom teaching;
- male teachers in schools were more often given opportunities for management training and experience;
- women felt that they were not 'equally valued' or 'taken seriously' as members of administrative teams;

- because there were fewer visible and accessible female mentors, women experienced less encouragement for career advancement than men;
- the career advancement of women was significantly hindered by their career breaks for child rearing;

### *The Personal Level*

- the career choices of women were influenced by their commitment to family and domestic responsibilities;
- women's geographical mobility was restricted due to their spouse's career opportunities; and
- women lacked confidence in their own talents and abilities and did not apply for positions of promotion until receiving encouragement from others.

This study indicated that even though societal attitudes and expectations, and factors that impacted upon the personal lives of women both significantly influenced the career advancement of women, the most salient influence for four of the women was the perceived discriminatory promotional structures that existed within the Education Department. However, for Brenda (profile four) it appeared that she had not experienced discriminatory organisational factors to the same extent as the other interviewees. It seemed that personal factors, such as her commitment to family and domestic responsibilities, moving to Australia to

accommodate her husbands' career, and a lack of self confidence had all significantly deterred her career advancement.

It was difficult to separate all the factors into exclusive categories as many of them had overlaps with two or all of the categories. However, it was useful to have examined the factors that influenced the career advancement of the women in this study at three levels, because it allowed for a functional examination of the data. From this detailed examination the researcher was able to identify the pertinent issues that had arisen from this study. These issues formed the basis of the courses of action and future research directions that are suggested in Chapter Seven.

The final section of this Chapter analysed the career strategies that had been used by the five women in this study. The interviewees were categorised according to Weiner and Powney's (1991) system of career strategy classification, and in accordance with the strategies they had predominately used to gain their current position as a head of department. This kind of classification seemed to have some merit in distinguishing between different individuals and their individual career choices.

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## CHAPTER SEVEN: CONCLUSION

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The intention of this study was to examine the factors that might significantly influence the promotional opportunities for women in educational management, through the perceptions of five women in head of department positions within the Queensland Department of Education. It was predominately a study of those women's careers and their perceptions of them.

The usefulness of this study comes from the recognition that the existing body of research did not explain adequately the factors influencing the representation of women in educational management. Therefore, this study examined the existing research, collected new data, and from this formulated new research questions in an attempt to explain further the factors that had significantly influenced the career advancement opportunities of these five women and perhaps others, in the Queensland Education Department.

The purpose of this chapter is first to summarise the main findings of this study. Secondly, key issues that have arisen from this research are identified and finally, future actions and research directions that could work to enhance women's access to positions of management in education are suggested.

## 7.1 Summary of the Main Findings

Emerging from this study were many factors that the women perceived had influenced their promotional opportunities. The following were believed to be significant:

### *The Socio-Cultural Level:*

- overt discrimination due to negative male attitudes towards women as leaders;
- women felt victimised because of traditional social expectations that implied that they should fulfil the primary responsibilities for the home and family;

### *The Organisational Level:*

- insufficient knowledge about career options available, and few appealing career paths for women, particularly for those who wished to remain in the classroom teaching role;
- a lack of opportunity for female teachers to gain management training and experience;

- a lack of visible and accessible female mentors to encourage female career aspirants to assume roles of leadership;
- career breaks for child-rearing which deterred the career advancement of women;

*The Personal Level:*

- the personal commitment of women to attempt to successfully combine the roles of wife, mother, housewife and career aspirant;
- geographical immobility - an inability to move between different regions in the state, due to womens' commitment to their spouses' career and to maintaining family stability; and
- women's lack of confidence in their own talents and capabilities.

It was obvious from this study that there were many gender related factors that significantly influenced the career opportunities of women, with the most salient being at the structural/organisational level. All five interviewees said that they felt that new promotional structures urgently needed to be implemented in the Queensland Education Department in an effort to provide female career aspirants with conspicuous, non-discriminatory selection processes.



## **7.2 Issues Arising from this Study**

The perceptions of the women in this study seemed to suggest that the Department of Education needed to understand how social, organisational and personal expectations, privileges, responsibilities, attitudes and behaviours had cumulatively led to the discriminatory outcomes of job segregation, salary differences, sexual harassment and restricted promotional opportunities for women. It is far too ambitious to suggest that from such a small sample group, the researcher can propose changes that will negate or even decrease the occurrence of all elements of discrimination according to gender. However, the researcher felt that it was necessary and relevant to identify the dilemmas associated with women and educational management, in an attempt to suggest future actions and directions that may bring changes to women's access to positions of leadership within the Queensland Department of Education.

## **7.3 The Importance of this Research**

This study grew from a concern about the reasons for the disproportionate representation of women in educational management in Queensland. The findings from this study suggested that because these inequities were so entrenched, positive, overt action was necessary if gender equality was to be achieved in the workplace. In the context of this study, equal opportunities for women in educational management in Queensland means that:

- there should be a sustainable increase in the number of women in positions of management; and
- this increase should be the result of changes in policies and Departmental restructuring that allows women to continue to follow family and child-rearing commitments without a corresponding loss in career opportunities.

To achieve a sustainable increase in the participation of women in educational management, there are initiatives that can be implemented at three levels:

- in schools;
- at the organisational level; and
- personal initiatives.

### *School Initiatives*

All of the interviewees referred to negative attitudes from society, in particular males, as a major factor influencing the career advancement of women. The researcher suggests that such attitudes could be altered through education and improved understanding of the situation. Schools could play a very important role

in promoting attitudinal changes that value the contributions of women within the Queensland Education Department and society at large. Schools could offer educational programs for teachers, parents and students on issues relating to sexual discrimination, sexism, gender and sex-role stereotyping, to familiarise members of society with such terms and their subsequent influence on societal attitudes. Administrative teams and teachers could take an active role by ensuring that the roles and duties that were allocated to teachers, parents and students in schools were not stereotyped according to gender. This improved awareness of gender issues would work towards building a culture where the skills and contributions of women were valued by all members of society.

### *Organisational Initiatives*

To improve promotional opportunities for women in the Queensland Department of Education, this organisation should immediately address the following issues:

- introduce promotional structures that recognise the value of the individual employee. Thereby, recognising the extra domestic and family commitments in the lives of women and accommodating these by implementing more flexible work options, such as job sharing and part-time work, that still have associated career advancement opportunities;

- consider employees (usually women) who have family responsibilities by introducing work-related childcare facilities;
- examine the administrative practices in schools to ensure that both male and female staff members are valued equally and that one gender does not dominate the other;
- examine the selection criteria for promotion to ensure that it applies equally to males and females;
- ensure that all personnel involved in the promotion selection processes are clearly informed of all the principles of gender equity;
- explore the career paths available in this Department to consider further promotional opportunities which maintain classroom teaching practice; and
- establish formal mentoring networks that enable access to female mentors who are in the position to offer career advancement assistance to women.

### *Personal Initiatives*

With organisations beginning to recognise and value the diverse experiences that women bring to management, the researcher suggests that it is imperative that women capitalise on opportunities that are offered to them in the workplace by:

- actively seeking a mentor relationship in order to gain encouragement and support for further career advancement;
- seeking out professional development courses and inservice programs which offer management training and experience;
- displaying confidence in one's own leadership abilities and using talents and skills to competently perform all given tasks; and
- communicating with their spouses about the sharing of parenting, family and domestic responsibilities.

### **7.3 Future Research Suggestions**

The findings presented in this study referred to the societal, organisational and personal factors that had influenced the career advancement of five women. In view of this, generalisations that extend beyond this group cannot be assumed. However, the factors influencing career advancement raised in this study could

certainly be explored with other populations of school teachers or other occupational groups.

Since this study examined women who had already achieved successful promotion, it would be interesting to explore the perceptions of women teachers who had not yet applied for promotion, to explore the reasons as to why they were keen to seek future promotion or why they were not interested in advancing at all.

It would also be most fruitful to conduct a similar study to this one, but exploring the career perceptions of women teachers in other State and Territory education systems in Australia. In doing this, it would be possible to determine the factors that influenced promotion which were directly related to the promotional structures that existed within the State or Territory Department in which the teacher was employed.

Another interesting opportunity for future research would be to conduct a study with males on the factors that they perceived as influencing promotional opportunities for women. Men seem unaware of the significance of their attitudes and behaviours on the career advancement of women. Brenda (profile four) commented that she had thought a lot about mens' perceptions of factors that influenced promotional opportunities for women and said that she believed that men thought that equal opportunity legislation 'had gone too far'. She perceived that male attitudes were perhaps becoming even more trenchant as they were

resenting what they saw as the 'token inclusion' of minority groups, particularly women in management teams. Brenda's comments suggested that men believed that women were now an advantaged rather than a disadvantaged group when it came to career advancement opportunities. In view of the qualitative and quantitative evidence to the contrary, this belief system nevertheless raises serious issues for the career advancement of women.

Finally, the researcher believed it would be very interesting to engage in a longitudinal study, following the career paths of the five female teachers identified in this study. To determine if they had enacted their future career predictions and how they achieved them, and if they hadn't, what were the factors that hindered their career advancement. Also to determine satisfactions and dissatisfactions with their occupations and to explore further their use of career strategies in achieving promotional success.

The suggestions for further research outlined above are a few of the possibilities available. However, it was obvious from the reviewed literature that the study of career patterns and factors influencing promotion was a rich area of research that provided important insights into the individual, the organisation and society as a whole.

## **7.4 Summary**

This chapter summarised the main findings of the study and identified the pertinent issues that had arisen out of this research. The issues suggested by the interviewees reinforced that there was an urgent need for the Queensland Department of Education to actively address the gender related factors that were hindering the advancement of women into educational management.

The researcher suggested that in order to achieve a sustainable increase in the number of women in positions of management, there would need to be changes in policies and promotional structures within the Education Department. These changes would need to allow women to continue to fulfil their family and child-rearing commitments without a corresponding loss in career opportunities. To achieve this, it was suggested that initiatives needed to be implemented at three levels: in schools; at the organisational level; and personal initiatives.

Finally, this concluding chapter offered future research directions that extended directly from this study, that would provide rich and fruitful data to add to this dynamic field of research.



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## APPENDICES

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## *Appendix 1*

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### LETTER OF INTRODUCTION

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#### **Appendix 1: Women and the challenge of leadership: Letter of Introduction.**

Mt Gravatt Residence  
GRIFFITH UNIVERSITY  
NATHAN QLD 4111  
Phone - 875 5729  
16 August 1993

Dear ,

Under the guidance of my supervisor, Professor Paul Thomas, I am currently researching the issues involving women and leadership as part of my thesis project to complete my Master of Education degree at Queensland University of Technology. My specific interest is in women's perceptions of obstacles that make it difficult for them to attain formal positions of leadership within the Queensland Education Department.

I have randomly selected a sample group of 5 women to participate in this research project, all of whom have varying academic qualifications and experience, but the commonality being that all are currently employed as Heads of Department by the Queensland Education Department.

I sincerely request that you take part in this research project as I am hoping that the findings will yield information on the promotional barriers that do exist in an attempt to explain the low representation of women in senior management positions within this organisation.

It is estimated that there will be one interview which will require approximately one hour to complete. All interviews will be anonymous and based on research of literature on the issues involved.

I would be most grateful for your co-operation and involvement in this project. I will contact you by phone later this week to discuss this venture with you.

Thanking you in anticipation.

Yours sincerely,

(Ms Anne Delaney)

## Appendix 2

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### INTERVIEW SCHEDULES

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#### Appendix 2: Women and the challenge of Leadership: Individual Interview Schedule.

1. Preamble:

Thank you for agreeing to be interviewed. I would like to make it perfectly clear from the outset that your comments throughout this interview will be treated in the strictest confidence. When the data collected has been transcribed, no individual or school will be identifiable. All the published information in the research report will be anonymous.

2. Explanation Regarding 'Women and Leadership' Project:

As I indicated in the letter when inviting you to be involved in this project, the aim of this study is to gain an insight into the barriers that women perceive are hindering their promotional opportunities within the Queensland Education Department. The purpose of conducting interviews is to obtain more detailed information than is possible through a questionnaire or survey.

Do you have any questions you would like to ask about the research project? (If so, answer these).

In the interests of improved accuracy, would you mind if I tape recorded the interview? I assure you that your comments made will be treated in the strictest confidence.

3. Questions:

The Individual Profile - Personal Characteristics

(a) AGE

(b) MARITAL STATUS

- Currently Married
- Unmarried (includes single, divorced, separated, defacto)

(c) CHILDREN

- Have you had a career break to have children?
- Do you believe that this break affected your career development?
- Have you found child responsibilities a major influence on your career progression? Give examples.

(d) How would you describe your ECONOMIC CIRCUMSTANCES and have they been a factor in your returning to work and seeking promotion?

(e) What is your highest ACADEMIC QUALIFICATION?

- Did you attain this qualification before seeking promotion?
- Why/Why not?
- Do you have any qualifications specifically in EDUCATIONAL ADMINISTRATION, LEADERSHIP OR MANAGEMENT STUDIES?
- Are you CURRENTLY STUDYING? If so, why this particular course?

4. Career History:

How long have you been a HEAD OF DEPARTMENT?

- For what reasons did you apply to promote to a H.O.D?
- Did you get this position on your first application? If not, why do you think your previous applications were unsuccessful and how many times did you apply before you were successful?
- Why do you think your application was successful this time?
- Have you always been at this school?
- If not, how many other schools?
- What were the reasons for moving?
- Did you apply for promotional positions when you moved?
- Why do you think you were successful/unsuccessful?

- What are the main reasons you have sought promotion?
- How important is gaining promotion to you? Why?
- Have your motivation changed over the years within this Department? Why?
- Thinking back over the years what would you say have been the main gender related factors that you have encountered that have influenced your career path?
- Give examples.
- What are the main factors, in your view, that generally favour promotion at present, in the Queensland Education Department?
- Why do you think these factors are important?

5. Current Position:

- What do you see as the major dimensions of the role of a HEAD OF DEPARTMENT?
- What areas are you most involved in?
- What areas are you most interested in?
- What are the most satisfying aspects of the work associated with your current position? Explain why you feel this.
- What areas, do you find most difficult or challenging?
- Because of your gender, does this influence your role in any way? Give examples.

6. Future Career Aspirations:

- Have you applied to promote to any higher positions within this Department?
- What positions and how many times have you applied?
- How successful have your applications been?
- Do you intend to advance to a higher position sometime in the future?

- How significant will gender-related factors be in your decision?
- What, in your opinion, are the personal and professional characteristics of the most promoted teachers in the Queensland Education system?
- How satisfied are you with the way in which the promotions system operates?
- What changes, if any, would you like to see in the promotions system and procedures adopted?
- What things do you think would make it easier for you to attain promotional positions within this department?
- Try to distinguish between:
  - . DOMESTIC/FAMILY INITIATIVES
  - . PERSONAL INITIATIVES
  - . ORGANISATIONAL/STRUCTURAL INITIATIVES
- Give examples.

#### 7. Conclusion:

Are there any comments you would like to make which are relevant to this study? If so please feel free to make them.

Thank you very much for your time and interest in being interviewed.

(N.B. Interviews were semi-structured in format and so the questions listed above are those covered with all interviewees. In addition, each interview also covered various other facets of careers and promotional opportunities in teaching, depending upon the particular interests and responses made by individual interviewees.)

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