SEX-TYPED:

THE IMPACT OF CHANGES IN THE POLYTECHNIC
ENVIRONMENT ON
WOMEN OFFICE SYSTEMS LECTURERS

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Abstract

Over the past two decades there has been a good deal of "official" accounting of organisational change and the restructuring of post-compulsory education in New Zealand. Some key players in the administration of the educational reforms have given accounts of these changes. However, this research raises a different set of voices. My study gives accounts of change, different from the official accounts, based on the experiences of office systems lecturers teaching in the polytechnic sector during the 1990s.

By the late 1980s the rate of change in polytechnics had begun to accelerate within the context of general political upheaval and the policies of the "new right". Throughout the same period, computer technology advanced at an unprecedented rate having a profound effect on the polytechnic environment and especially upon women teaching in office systems. This research measures the effect of "reforms" that reshaped the polytechnic environment, particularly in the 1990s, in terms of their impact on the experience of office systems lecturers involved. It offers an interpretation of how these women made sense of these changes to the institution in which they worked.

My thesis utilises feminist perspectives to demonstrate that women teaching in office systems departments are both subject to, and draw upon a number of gendered and classed discursive fields to make sense of the changes in their workplace. These discursive fields are identified in the research as "working class", "maternal" and "professional". This thesis concludes with reflections about positive opportunities, and some constraints, for office systems women, sex-typed within the identified discursive fields, shaping and making accessible "new" subject positions in the polytechnic of the 21st century.

In memoriam
Kathleen Ann Boothroyd
9 January, 1943-1 July, 2002

Acknowledgements

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Introduction:
different sets of voices

Subjectivity is used to refer to the conscious and unconscious thoughts and emotions of the individual, her sense of herself and her ways of understanding her relation to the world (Weedon, 1987, p. 33).

Some women who teach "secretarial" subjects in the polytechnic environment describe themselves as "office systems ladies" or "typing tutors", illustrating how subjectivity is influenced by multiple and competing discourses in their gendered workplace. The aim of this research is to explore the accounts of office systems lecturers in terms of their experiences of being "secretarial teachers" prior to and following the "reforms" - that is the education reforms that reshaped polytechnic education, particularly in the 1990s.

My voice as author in this thesis is interpretative, critical and partial (Haraway, 1988). My sense of self has been shaped by my experience as an office systems lecturer (and an office systems "lady") for nearly 20 years. During this time I have encountered the polytechnic as an institution in my everyday life, and shared similar experiences to those of the women interviewed in this study. I have had firsthand experience of a lack of recognition of women's ways of thinking and talking (Belenkey, Clinchy, Goldberger & Tarule, 1986). In the past I have experienced the polytechnic as hierarchical and silencing and "a discourse not intended for her" (Lewis & Simon, 1986, p. 1). There have been times when I have

been described as "a square peg in a round hole" and as a result I have felt grateful just to have my job.

Over the past two decades there has been a great deal of "official" accounting of organisational change and the restructuring of post-compulsory education in New Zealand. The successes, or otherwise, of policies of the "new right"[1] which have seen polytechnic training move from something believed to be good and desirable, and everybody's due, to a contestable commodity that can be bought and sold, have been well documented (Dougherty, 1999; Olssen & Morris-Matthews, 1997). Some key players in the administration of the education reforms and the resultant organisational change have given accounts of these changes (Butterworth & Butterworth, 1998). However, this research raises a different set of voices. My study gives voice to different accounts of organisational change; accounts based on the experiences of office systems lecturers during this period of change.

By the late 1980s the rate of change in polytechnics had begun to accelerate within the context of general political upheaval and the policies of the new right. During the 1990s change in the polytechnic sector intensified. Throughout the same period, computer technology advanced at an unprecedented rate having a profound effect on the polytechnic environment and especially upon women in office systems.

There have been notable changes in education resulting from structural reform. In the past two decades the New Zealand "education experiment" has attracted world-wide attention (Butterworth & Butterworth, 1998). Much of this attention has been focused on assessing the outcomes of reforms arising from the Picot (1988, Department of Education), Meade (1988, New Zealand Early Childhood Care and Education Working Group), Hawke(1989, Department of Education) and Todd (1994, Ministry of Education) Reports as well as Lockwood Smith's[2] vision of a seamless education system. Similarly, it is claimed that the concept of a New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA) is much more ambitious and

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[1] The 'new right' is defined here as the neo-liberal platform of social and economic policy based on notions of a reduced role of the state, a venerated individual, and a "free" marketplace.
[2] Lockwood Smith appointed Minister of Education in the 1990 National Government.

sophisticated than anywhere else in the world (Butterworth & Butterworth; 1998; Codd, 1997; Dougherty, 1999). Some of the most dramatic changes have been in the post-compulsory polytechnic sector[3] where the numbers of students, and the diversity of courses offered have burgeoned, and where ever increasing emphasis is placed on academic reputations and aggressive marketing to attract students (Dougherty, 1999).

The architects of educational reform through the 1990s ensured that records of the outcomes of their actions would be kept. Key players contributed to a history of the period which was commissioned in June 1996 and prepared by the Historical Branch of the Department of Internal Affairs (see Butterworth & Butterworth, 1998). Information for this history was gathered from interviews with all the Ministers of Education since 1984, and two Associate Ministers. All the relevant chief executive officers and the chairpersons of the three main task forces - Picot, Hawke and Meade - made submissions. Information was sought from representatives of the New Zealand Educational Institute, the New Zealand Post Primary Teachers' Association, the Secondary Principals' Association; The New Zealand Treasury, and the State Services Commission. These submissions were all represented in this official record.

In general, polytechnics responded enthusiastically to the new opportunities that have emerged since the reforms (Butterworth & Butterworth, 1998; Dougherty, 1999). This enthusiastic response has been linked to growth in student numbers and a proliferation of new courses in the polytechnic sector. It is relatively easy to measure the success of the reforms in terms of proximity of the results to the designers' aims in this way. However, this thesis undertakes the more difficult job of measuring the effect of reforms in terms of their impact on the experience of office systems lecturers involved, and offering an interpretation of how these women made sense of these changes to the institutions in which they worked.

In this thesis, I utilise feminist perspectives to demonstrate that women teaching in office systems departments are both subject to, and draw upon a number of discourses to make

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3   Includes providers of tertiary education known as polytechnics, institutes of technology, technical institutions or community
          colleges under the Education Amendment Act, 1990.

sense of the changes in their workplace. I identify these discourses and demonstrate how they operate as linguistic resources for the women to account for their working lives, both in terms of how they became typing tutors and their subsequent experience of the educational reforms of the 1990s.

In giving voice to friends and colleagues it is my hope that this study will be of use in a practical sense to all women in office systems departments, administration staff, lecturers and students, and that we will continue to share our experiences as we continue to make sense of our experiences, and of ourselves, in the gendered workplace.

Structure of the thesis

Chapter one provides an outline of the history and growth of polytechnics in New Zealand. Organisational changes are identified as a backdrop to the experiences of office systems women working within the polytechnic environment.

Chapter two begins with an overview of feminist literature in the areas of "women and work". Key themes within this literature that relate to the present study are the distinctions between women's "private" and "public" worlds and the shaping of a discourse which assumes women's "natural" role within the home. Literature which focuses on women and secretarial work, commercial training, and women and technology is then examined. This chapter concludes with an overview of perspectives from literature around organisational change in polytechnics.

Chapter three outlines the research methodology for the present study. I outline the research design and describe the data collection method and the steps I undertook to analyse the data through the lens of feminist poststructuralist theory. This chapter concludes with some biographical information about some of the participants in the study.

Chapter four introduces my empirical work and presents extracts from the interviews with office systems women. I identify particular discursive fields which I have called "working class", and "maternal" to illustrate how office systems women participating in this study use these to make sense of how they became office systems lecturers.

Chapter five is a continuation of my empirical work that identifies the multiple and competing discourses that office systems women draw upon to talk about their experience of the reforms. This chapter focuses on the "professional" discourses office systems lecturers utilise to make meaning of the changes that have occurred in their work environment over the past decade.

My thesis concludes with reflections about positive opportunities, and some constraints, for office systems women within the identified discourses, shaping and making accessible "new" subject positions. In this final section of my thesis I reflect on the process that brought it to fruition and the contribution made by the participants on the journey who nurtured it and me along the way.

Public perception of the nature and purpose of technical
education has helped determine its growth (Day, 1990)

Education has biases of class and privilege (Day, 1992, p. 68).

Introduction

In 1908 commercial courses were the most popular courses for both men and women in the technical sector of education. More than half the 2,000 students eligible for free places in technical classes took commercial instruction (Day, 1992, p. 72). After almost a century of change commercial courses are still popular, but they are neither free nor attended in significant numbers by men. This chapter opens with a brief history of the New Zealand polytechnic and its role in vocational training leading up to the past 20 years of unprecedented change. In the latter half of the chapter I trace the history of commercial training through the last century before focusing on "secretarial" training in the polytechnic of today.

A century of change

During the 20th century, the public role of technical schools shifted from filling the gap between primary school and paid employment, to establishing themselves as degree-conferring polytechnics. Although polytechnics are part of a national system of education today, their roots lie in a series of local initiatives from the 1880s to provide technical instruction for those who were among the nine out of ten New Zealanders who went straight from primary school to work (Dougherty, 1999, pp. 13-14).

The first of the technical schools, the Wellington School of Design, was set up in 1886 and provided fee-paying adults with part-time technical courses. In a century of change the polytechnic environment has, in some ways, almost come full circle as in most cases, the students who attended the early technical schools paid for their tuition. Legislation in 1900 substantially increased the amount of government funding for technical education and allowed universities, secondary schools and later local authorities, as well as education boards and existing providers, to offer state-funded technical instruction. The universities and secondary schools were largely uninterested in offering technical instruction. 'They were more interested in providing the country with doctors and lawyers, than drain-layers and sawyers' (Dougherty, 1999, p. 16).

The early technical schools attracted students who were interested in education for both hobby and work. At the Wellington School of Design, for example, one class would be studying the master painters of Europe, while another would be learning the art of paper-hanging. When plumbers were required to be examined before becoming licensed they also attended the Wellington school. In 1904, William La Trobe suggested adding a day school to the Wellington School of Design for full-time students of plumbing and other trades and thus became responsible for the establishment of the first technical school in New Zealand.

La Trobe's idea was that the establishment would act as a preparatory school for those who were leaving primary school but were not yet ready to go on to a combination of daytime work and more advanced technical training at the school's evening classes. The day school would make use of buildings and equipment that would otherwise stand idle during the day,

and would provide employment for skilled instructors who might not be attracted to purely part-time evening work (Day, 1990).

The Auckland Technical School added a day technical school to their establishment in 1906 and by 1914 there were 16,602 students around the country attending evening courses and 1,800 students attending during the day (Dougherty, 1999, p. 18). Most were young people who would otherwise not have gone on to secondary school. There were slightly more females than males, mainly due to the large number of female students taking domestic and commercial courses - the latter reflecting the expansion of female white-collar work (Day, 1990, 1992).

At their outset the technical schools sought to fill the gap between primary schools and evening classes by offering basic technical training as a prerequisite to the more advanced studies at evening classes. The 1914 Education Act brought about a name change from "day technical school" to "technical high school". Dougherty (1999) and Day (1990, 1992) describe a process of change which began just before the First World War and which continued after it. The interesting observation these authors make is that unlike other types of educational institutions in New Zealand, which were copied from overseas, the technical high schools were a uniquely New Zealand institution.

Political decisions were largely responsible for a growth in technical education. In 1936, the newly elected Labour Government undertook reform to abolish the "proficiency examination". The proficiency examination meant that students unable to pass it had to stay at primary school until they turned fourteen. At the same time as this hurdle was removed the school-leaving age was raised to 15. As a result of these changes technical high schools experienced growth due to their greater suitability for those who had not gone beyond primary school, or who had left secondary school as soon as they turned fourteen. Growth in this area was also accentuated by the post-war baby boom and demand for more skilled workers for New Zealand's developing secondary industries.

A 1944 commission of inquiry into apprenticeships resulted in the Apprentices Amendment Act 1946 and the Apprentices Act 1948, which had great impact on technical education and by the late 1950s there were few trades that had not organised compulsory classes at technical high schools, from carpentry and coach-building, to radio servicing and refrigeration (Dougherty, 1999). This legislation was responsible for changing the nature of technical high schools, increasing the amount of vocational training, the numbers of part-time students and the amount of daytime tuition. Along with these changes, a review of qualifications took place. Overseas examinations were replaced in 1949 by those set by the New Zealand Trades Certification Board.

From the mid-1950s laboratory technicians and engineers began training in technical high schools. This particular growth in student numbers probably marks the beginning of demarcation between polytechnics and universities which is observable in both sectors today: the universities trained the technologists and the technical high schools trained the technicians (Day, 1992; Dougherty, 1999, p. 23).

The proper place for vocational training

Post-war, changes occurred in perception of the proper place for vocational training. The importance of education relating to the job a student was doing, or preparing to do, began to be seen as the role of a separate technical institute. These separate technical institutes would recruit most of their students after they had reached the school leaving age. The student would have a choice between staying at school or continuing at a technical institute.

Although a stand-alone national institution, the Technical Correspondence School[4] had existed since 1946 to offer courses to apprentices who lived in areas where attendance at a technical high school was not possible. The Technical Correspondence School was not joined by other technical institutes until 1960. In that year the Hutt Valley Memorial Technical College was converted into the Central Technical College[5] and secondary school

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4   Renamed the New Zealand Technical Correspondence Institute in 1963.
5   Renamed the Central Institute of Technology in 1963.

national course offered. Seddon Memorial Technical College remodelled its existing buildings, and in 1964 the renamed Auckland Technical Institute had its own principal and board of managers, and the high school section was moved to Western Springs retaining the name, Seddon Memorial Technical College (Day, 1990).

As similar splits between high schools and technical institutes happened around the country, each of the new technical institutions chose names for their establishments without any attempt at standardisation. Auckland, Christchurch and Hamilton opted for "technical institute", and Wellington and Otago for "polytechnic". The 1963 legislation[6] that gave the name to three institutions already established - the Auckland Technical Institute, the Wellington Polytechnic and the Central Institute of Technology - and provided for the setting up of the rest, used the term "technical institute", but without insisting on the adoption of the name (Dougherty, 1999, p. 28).

The new institutions followed the pattern of their parent technical high schools in their administration. Each of the technical institutes was given its own board of managers (soon renamed board of governors and later councils), which dealt directly with the Education Department. Significantly, capital, running costs and course approvals were gained through the Superintendent of Technical Education. Dougherty (1999) and Day (1990) describe the government funding system, at the time unique to the institutes: the total number of annual student hours of attendance, with a weighting in favour of more expensive courses. In other words, the more students, the more money the institution received. As Dougherty (1999) notes, it was a system that could easily result in growth being seen as an end in itself. More student hours meant an increase in status, funding and tutors.

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6   Education Amendment Act 1963.

Establishing polytechnics

Most significantly, during the 1960s technical institutes became firmly established as an important part of post compulsory tertiary education in New Zealand. By 1970 more than 30,000 students were enrolled at the two national and five regional institutes, which had a combined staff of nearly 1,000, and a total teaching load of about a third of that of the universities (Dougherty, 1999, p. 31). In Auckland the first purpose-designed technical institute opened in South Auckland in 1970 and was named Manukau Technical Institute. In West Auckland, Carrington Technical Institute opened its doors in 1976.

Outside the main centres, Tauranga, Rotorua, New Plymouth, Napier and Hastings, Wanganui, Palmerston North, Nelson and Invercargill lobbied for their own institutes, and during the 1960s and early 1970s, most were successful. Whilst the role of technical institutes was to change considerably over the following years, in the early days their primary function was to provide courses at sub-degree level. These courses covered the trades, a range of New Zealand Certificates, and commercial vocations - accounting, management, real estate and secretarial training (Willyams & Netherton, 1996, p. 11).

In 1986 Education Minister Russell Marshall attempted to bring about some uniformity in names. All but two institutions that did not already have "polytechnic" in their name agreed to adopt the term as the general name for the sector. The Auckland Technical Institute and the Central Institute of Technology did not change at this time. The Auckland Technical Institute later changed its name to the Auckland Institute of Technology - and then Auckland University of Technology after achieving that status in 1999. Carrington, Manukau, Hawke's Bay and Waiariki later dropped "polytechnic" from their title and became institutes of technology. Carrington changed its title radically to become the UNITEC Institute of Technology, Hawke's Bay became the Eastern Institute of Technology, Palmerston North the Manawatu Polytechnic, Parumoana the Whitireia Community Polytechnic, Petone the Hutt Valley Polytechnic, and South Canterbury the Aoraki Polytechnic. The Technical Correspondence Institute became The Open Polytechnic of New Zealand.

These name changes are a significant part of polytechnic history. Although they may appear to be only superficial this belies the substantial changes that took place in the courses which the institutions offered at this time. During the 1960s and into the 1970s the part-time courses were dominated by apprentices and technicians, and the full-time courses were mainly secretarial and business courses. In 1971 an inquiry into nursing training was undertaken by Dr Helen Carpenter, Director of the School of Nursing at the University of Toronto who recommended the establishment of a committee to make recommendations to Government. A decision was made by this committee to site nursing training in technical institutes (Day, 1990, p. 77). By 1986, 15 technical institutes were providing three-year comprehensive nursing courses, and the last hospital admitted its final intake for hospital-based nursing training. The growth of health-related courses and the acquisition of nursing training constituted significant developments. During the 1980s tourism and English as a second language courses were developing and traditional courses such as horticulture began to expand.

Also in the 1980s, technical education began to respond to social needs, and important developments in the training of the unemployed, Maori and women occurred (Day, 1990). Attempts to help women return to the paid workforce after raising children was a concern for polytechnics from the 1960s. In 1967 Wellington Polytechnic began special secretarial courses, and by the 1980s most institutes had followed suit. Importantly, most provided child-care facilities for students with pre-school age children. Women's advisory groups were also set up in some institutions, and in 1989 the Department of Education commissioned research into key factors that needed to be taken into consideration when developing education and training opportunities for women. It was reported that only a small minority of polytechnics at the time had a firmly established comprehensive programme designed to meet the needs of women who were at different stages in their progression towards paid work (Lynch, 1991, p. 49). The institutions themselves were all headed by men until 1985 when Rosemary Middleton was appointed the principal of Tairawhiti Community College (Day, 1990, p. 56).

This short history of technical education and the establishment of technical institutes clearly demonstrates that change in the polytechnic sector has always been present, rapid, and often dramatic. But the history of change up to the mid 1980s shows it was insignificant compared to what was in store for the next decade.

Autonomy for polytechnics

From their outset polytechnics were directed by the Department of Education. Until the Education Amendment Act of 1989 the Department controlled funding, numbers of teaching and non-teaching staff and their grades, building programmes, equipment allocation, conditions of service, grants for special purposes and course approvals. In 1989 the Department of Education was dissolved, and this control passed into the hands of individual institutes.

Concurrent with two Education Amendments Acts in 1989 and 1990 and the major policy changes of the Fourth Labour Government (1984-1990) came greatly increased autonomy for all polytechnics. They were given control over their own administration, budgets, courses and staffing, and judged on the "outputs" they achieved. Significantly, polytechnics were also given the right, for the first time, to grant degrees as well as diplomas, thus placing them in a position to compete with universities for their students. Clearly the polytechnics of the 1990s were headed off in a new direction (Willyams & Netherton, 1996).

Not all of the challenges to be met were anticipated by polytechnic staff. In 1993, the Chairman of the Waikato Polytechnic Council, D.J.M. Pearl recorded that the growth and complexity of courses could not have been predicted when the Waikato Technical Institute was opened (Tonkin-Covell, 1993, p. vii). In his history of Waikato Technical Institute celebrating that institution's silver jubilee Tonkin-Covell acknowledged that:

> Perhaps those who occupy the Polytechnic today have far
> greater difficulties to battle with now than those who started

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the Institute off. Whatever the case, the Institute then was vastly different from the Polytechnic now (Tonkin-Covell, 1993, p. 3).

The difficulties referred to began to make themselves felt amongst the 25 polytechnics and institutes of technology established at that time. Although changes were part of a sweeping reform of the education system in New Zealand, the polytechnic sector experienced their impact acutely.

There can be little argument that change was necessary. New Zealand in 1980 was facing high levels of unemployment and shortages of skilled workers, yet in 1988, almost as many suitable prospective new students were turned away from polytechnics as were accepted (Dougherty, 1999, p. 45). Clearly by 1990 there was a need for a more responsive polytechnic system. Delegating decision-making to the individual institutions, introducing a student-driven funding system, and simplifying the qualifications system were seen as the means of ensuring this (Haines, 1988, p. 3).

Reforming polytechnics

A working group was set up by Government in 1988 led by Gary Hawke. Submissions were called for, and the report this group produced was controversial. The Government published the parts of the report acceptable to it in the policy guideline called *Learning for Life* in February, 1989 (1989a, New Zealand Department of Education). After consideration of the report by working groups, a larger version, *Learning for Life Two*, (1989b, New Zealand Department of Education) published in August of the same year, resulted in legislative changes. Essentially the polytechnics gained autonomy and more discretion to manage resources. They also assumed increased accountability through charters, bulk funding and the right to generate private income.

Polytechnic principals became chief executives appointed by councils, employers of staff, and negotiators of staff pay and conditions. For some tutorial staff this meant 'a drawn out

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and acrimonious Award round' (Willyams, 1990, p. 22). In presenting his 1990 Principal's Annual Report, Robert Willyams, Principal of Manukau Technical Institute noted that this document would be the last to be presented in the same format. He said that future reports would meet the requirements of *Learning for Life* and Public Sector Accounting, and that he expected them to contain greater detail on financial matters and performance indicators.

Willyams concluded that the polytechnic system was at an exciting and challenging stage of development. Although, in his opinion, there were some real problems, he said he did not believe that any Council or Chief Executive Officer would want to return to the centralised system of the pre-1990s. But, Willyams was not entirely confident lecturing staff would agree:

> With the advent of major change in the Polytechnic sector it has to be expected that many staff have been apprehensive and it has been important to ensure that staff morale be maintained. In the new educational environment where many perceive economic philosophy to dominate educational standards there has been concern on the part of many staff for their future [...] (Willyams, 1993, p. 10).

In his *Development of Polytechnic System in New Zealand*, Willyams (1993) sets out a comprehensive description of the devolution of power held by the Department of Education to polytechnics. Polytechnics became bulk funded (based on a formula) and polytechnic councils had complete responsibility for expenditure. The only employee of council was the Chief Executive Officer who in turn was the employer of all polytechnic staff. Council became responsible for policy and the Chief Executive Officer for management and implementation of policy. Importantly, course approvals were now a decision of Council.

Willyams argued that these changes in polytechnic governance in the 1990s raised a number of issues. Willyams' first concern was that polytechnics were now under pressure to reduce tutor/student contact time and to make classes larger. In his opinion, this new system was more appropriate to the university than the polytechnic system. The new Ministry of Education was a much smaller organisation than the Department of Education and Willyams thought this would result in many tasks previously the responsibility of the

now defunct department (administrative systems for example) having to be absorbed by polytechnics without any significant increase in resources.

Willyams saw it as an issue that chief executive officers of Polytechnics now the legal employers of all staff would find that they were unskilled in this area and would need to employ industrial officers. Even though students were now being required to pay substantial fees for tuition, he feared that polytechnics would find that the rate of funding to them was being reduced in real terms. As the new Ministry of Education was acting mainly as an advisor this removed the former safety net. Willyams also thought it problematic that with government policy encouraging competition from private providers and universities becoming more aggressive in their marketing, polytechnics would have to carefully check quality of teaching and cost of courses and develop strong marketing strategies.

The withdrawal of finance from polytechnics for apprenticeship courses making it necessary for them to tender for courses in competition with private providers (including industry) for off-the-job training was a key concern. This gave rise to reservations about polytechnics becoming degree-conferring establishments, and in particular that this development might come at the expense of lower level courses (Willyams, 1993).

The other major change having an impact on the sector was that prior to 1990 education reform, polytechnics had been mainly responsible for assessing their own students. Under a new qualifications framework, all tertiary qualifications, including the trades and technician qualifications, were to be progressively replaced by national certificates, diplomas and degrees. These new qualifications were to be made up of unit standards, and secondary and tertiary students could study for these at more than one institution, or in their workplace. The significant change for polytechnics was that they could offer all of these qualifications, including degrees (1991, New Zealand Qualifications Authority).

The notion of "contestable" education hit the polytechnics hard. Not only was there a need to become "competitive", but there was also a need to defend existing courses. For example, the 15 polytechnics already involved in nursing education did not have much

choice in taking up the opportunity to offer a nursing degree. However, by 1997 almost 15,000 bachelors' and postgraduate students were enrolled in close to 100 different degree courses at New Zealand polytechnics[7].

Competition and the commodification of technical education was a two-edged sword for polytechnics in the 1990s. Polytechnics began to compete with universities for students, secondary schools could offer the same national qualifications as the polytechnics, and private training providers were able to tender for courses whose standards were set by industry training organisations. The tendency for private training providers and schools to focus on low-level programmes was encouraged by the Ministry of Education. It meant that responsive polytechnics needed to move to higher levels of education. The new provision for polytechnics, universities and schools to enrol private fee-paying students from overseas meant further competition amongst providers to lure another lucrative market to their particular environment.

Ironically, given nearly a century of dramatic change, the pattern of women's participation in polytechnics appears to be remarkably consistent. Barbara Day suggests two main reasons for this (Day, 1992, p. 68). Firstly, she notes that women have always tended to take courses according to their own and their parents' perceptions of where opportunities for women in the workforce lie. Secondly, she argues that those with positions of influence in the polytechnics have deliberately fostered courses for women in areas of typical women's work because they know such courses have an assured market. Day makes the further claim that technical education is inherently conservative because it reflects, rather than challenges, the gendered division of labour, and has therefore helped maintain the continuation of a workforce that is strongly differentiated by gender. Education has biases of class and privilege (Day, 1992, p. 68), and polytechnic education is particularly classed and gendered.

In 1881, the Minister of Education, Robert Stout, contacted grammar and high schools throughout the country to remind them that endowments and other public aid had been

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7 Figures taken from *Education Statistics*, 1998.

given to them to supply courses and training for careers to all classes and not to the professional classes only. Day's interpretation of this is that Stout's reminder acknowledged the occupational, and therefore the class bias of contemporary educational provision. Stout was assuming that elements of privilege pervaded educational provision beyond primary school (Day, 1992, p. 69).

Making her observation that in 1908 commercial courses were the most popular courses for both men and women, Day notes that students made an early selection of their courses according to where they believed the occupational opportunities lay (Day, 1992, p.72). Although there were opportunities for employment in farm labouring and as servants in large households, students obviously saw technical education as the key to a different type of work. For women likely to be employed in domestic labour, clerical training offered work of a different type. In the next section of this chapter I will briefly outline the history of secretarial training in the polytechnic.

Training for secretarial work

Commercial courses in the polytechnic today centre around business administration and computing. These courses represent a good deal of development from the mainly shorthand and typing training offered 100 years ago.

At the beginning of the 20th century, when the typewriter was considered new technology, young women began to find work as typists (Davies, 1982). Biological arguments were used to justify this occupation as particularly appropriate for women. The Director of the Auckland Technical School, George George, for example, said in 1912:

> A girl seems to be admirably adapted for that kind of work,
> and it is a class of work that does not require a tremendous
> amount of brains (cited in Day, 1992, p. 72).

Despite having a limited career path (women were expected to retire if they became pregnant) office work seemed to appeal to young women - or at least it had more appeal

than domestic service. Day cites figures indicating that by 1915 the ratio of girls to boys in commercial classes was two to one (ibid., p. 72).

In 1965 a Commission of Inquiry into Vocational Training highlighted the particular difficulties experienced by women in the workforce - unsympathetic attitudes by employers and inequitable rates of pay and conditions of service. This Commission recommended that courses specifically designed to help women returning to work should be offered by technical institutes. Wellington Polytechnic responded to this and began special secretarial courses for women returning to the workforce in 1967.

During this period the majority of women enrolling in polytechnics took traditional commercial or secretarial courses, the course which would lead to what was by now considered to be acceptable "woman's work". A full-time secretarial course for women with University Entrance began at Wellington Polytechnic in 1962. By 1965, the Auckland Technical Institute had eight secretarial streams, and these were over-subscribed. Wellington had four streams, with two for students with University Entrance, and Christchurch had five. Similar courses were available in five other centres (Day, 1992, p. 78).

From an historical perspective, the secretarial courses being offered in polytechnics were as popular as commercial courses had been in the technical high school. Students taking full-time secretarial courses qualified for bursaries after 1966 and the numbers of young women enrolling grew. Wellington Polytechnic ran courses for commercial teachers in schools. As Day (1992) observes, the courses offered at the technical institutes reproduced the gendered division of labour which characterised wider New Zealand society (ibid., p. 78).

While technical institutes offered a range of courses, women continually enrolled for training in areas traditionally seen as women's work. Day noted that:

> Despite more than a century of social, political and economic change, women are still indicating by their choice of programmes in polytechnics a marked reluctance to undertake work of a non-traditional nature. Little sustained effort is being made within polytechnics to target women and to make

alternative courses available. Courses targeted at retraining women returning to work tend to be in the field of secretarial studies or in social and community work (Day, 1992, p. 79).

As new polytechnics opened during the 1960s, some form of education covering secretarial skills was offered in almost all of them. From the 1970s, typing tutors (as they were known) taught a range of subjects including typing, shorthand, book-keeping, and commercial practice. Programmes included "liberal" studies, personal grooming, crafts, and hostessing skills. These tutors did not have specialist teaching areas and all taught the entire curriculum, including liberal studies.

Professional development at this time, for all new staff, and up until 1991, was mainly undertaken outside the polytechnic in the form of technical refresher leave. Tutors found jobs in industry updating their own office skills, or learning computer applications and came back to the classroom "refreshed" and knowledgeable about the modern workplace. Students were prepared for Pitman examinations, set and marked in England, as well as New Zealand Trade Certificates. At the end of a year of intensive training full-time students generally left with a local polytechnic certificate attesting to a year's successful study of secretarial skills which would most likely secure them an entry level position in an office.

In 1990 the first of a series of landmark meetings was held by representatives from 21 polytechnics. This event marked an important stage in the history of secretarial studies in New Zealand polytechnics. Forty one office skills tutors attended a national conference in Manawatu and signalled times were changing with their slogan "Office Systems: A Modular Approach".[8] I refer to this conference as a landmark event because office systems women were creating their own place to speak. I note here that this conference, and others since, have also been a place for me to speak.[9]

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8 References to the business of national meetings of office systems departments (who took the name National Business Administration Forum following the adoption of business administration and computing qualifications from the National Qualifications Framework) are taken from minutes kindly made available to me.

9 The word "I" comes into this section of my work frequently and it is acknowledged that much of the information which is recorded here is available due to my "insider" status and personal participation in the development of office systems education.

While "officially" marking autonomy for office systems lecturers, the Manawatu conference established a basis from which office systems lecturers could prove their mettle and build their credibility as a professional group. The name change from "tutors" to "lecturers" was adopted to signal credibility and professionalism at this time. Attendees affirmed their commitment to equity and autonomy and the growth and development of office systems courses in the tertiary sector (see appendix II, 1990, Manawatu Office Systems Conference Committee). Prior to this modular approach to course delivery all office systems students worked together in class at the same level and, for some, this level would have been inappropriate. Students' previous school training, or background in industry was overlooked. A secretarial course was defined - usually shorthand and typing with the balance made up of lesser subjects, and occasionally a limited number of options.

A key objective at the Manawatu conference was to discuss the qualification structure and consider proposals for an intermediate certificate to provide a qualification for office systems students. Following discussion participants confirmed a commitment to the development of a national qualification for office systems students and supported the formation of a national committee to develop proposals for its structure.

Minutes of the conference proceedings record reports from lecturers who had been trialling proposed modules for a year. Some of the issues arising from change discussed at this meeting included non-compulsory attendance in class by students, and course and tutor evaluations for every module taught. Whilst most of the departments who had undertaken the new system believed the process of modularisation lived up to expectations and should not be reversed, there was a common reporting of lack of adequate financial and staff resources, and a sense that office systems departments were "going it alone".

A greatly increased workload was also noted. Day to day planning required more time and resources than traditional course structure and no further staffing allowances had been made to meet this need. Modules required frequent re-runs of the marketing, counselling, enrolling, resources maintenance and timetabling procedures. Lecturing staff in departments which had changed their courses during the previous year noted that student

evaluations needed to be obtained every few weeks to ensure that not only the modular system itself was user-friendly, but that it continued to meet client[10] needs (see appendix IV, 1990, Manawatu Office Systems Conference Committee).

Minutes of this conference record that some representatives had begun to identify trends which they associated with the changing approach to teaching office systems courses. For example, the student base appeared to have altered from mostly full-time students to mostly part-time. This was taken to reflect modern market demands, and policies of the then government who were implementing radical reforms throughout the education sector. The implementation of shorter training programmes in office systems was discussed at this conference with a view to placing these alongside students' other work-related and personal commitments.

At this conference office systems staff were urged to identify *autonomy in their field* as an equity issue and to put it into their strategic plans. This was a response to concern expressed by some representatives about the autonomy of their departments and the recent integration of some of these into broader structures such as Business Studies Departments. Significantly, it was felt that office systems staff might lose a career path in such instances (see appendix VII, 1990, Manawatu Office Systems Conference Committee).

When representatives met again in 1992, assessment was the hot issue. Much discussion took place around this topic and the approval and accreditation that would be required from NZQA before individual polytechnics could teach the national certificates which they were committed to pursuing. Networks were set up between all the polytechnics teaching office systems - 24 out of 25 - and a development fund was set up to ensure that all systems would be in place to enable a national qualification to be taught (1991, Waiariki Office Systems Conference Committee).

Attendees at the third in the series of landmark conferences being described in this chapter heard a strong message from Dr Graham Logan, the Associate Director of Christchurch

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10   For many lecturers the description of students as 'clients' was a very significant change in ideology and represented a
        profound change in their identity as educators.

Polytechnic. In 1992 Dr Logan identified for these predominantly women educators, historical and economic perspectives of the change which they had begun to feel so keenly . He put education into a new perspective which had less to do with educational reform and more to do with information technology and pedagogy, and personal development (Logan, 1992).

Dr Logan told attendees at the conference that New Zealand's present system of education in schools and polytechnics had most of its features determined almost a century ago. In his view it developed around an early industrial model rapidly outliving its usefulness, both in education and in the industries that gave rise to it. Dr Logan went on to say that education had failed to keep pace with new learning requirements and that employers did not want to employ passive learners, but students who could solve problems, think creatively, and interact skilfully with individuals and groups. He shared his opinion that at the same time as change was required in teaching methods, an explosion was occurring in the sheer volume of information available.

By 1993, at the same time as office systems lecturers were absorbing these changes, the national committee became involved in a process that would result in lecturers blazing a trail for their polytechnic colleagues. The Ministry of Education signalled to them that the qualification which they had worked towards, the New Zealand Certificate in Office Systems, was required to expire by 1995 and to be replaced by a qualification owned by the New Zealand Qualifications Authority, not the polytechnics.

There was a feeling, reported in the minutes of conferences at this time, that hands were tied and that women in office systems had little choice but to concur with the direction being imposed on them[11] The existing qualification was on the way out, and "seamless education" was in. A decision was made which was to have momentous repercussions for office systems lecturing and administration staff: they would take up the National Qualifications Framework (NQF). Secretarial Departments were off on their own.

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[11] Cited in *Notes from NZCOS Conference Proceedings 5-8 April 1993.* In New Zealand Certificate in Office Systems Conference 5-8 April, 1993. Wellington: Wellington Polytechnic.

The narrow curriculum, prepared texts and resources, set and marked external examinations, and predictable workloads became a thing the past. Whilst lecturers were still adjusting to the modular approach and delivery of their "own" qualification, along came the unit standards: a unit of achievement defined by prescribed learning objectives and measured through achievement based assessments. Unit standards are the building blocks of the NQF. For office systems departments around the country no previous change matched the impact of the adoption of the unit standards - the drama they caused for all involved in their delivery was unprecedented.

The need for office systems lecturers to become conversant in the unit standards and the NQF led many, including some of the participants in this research, to question why they stayed in the job. Almost overnight the job changed to involving a huge amount of developmental work - writing course outlines, assessments, judgement and evidence statements, and undertaking moderation duties. Resources, including texts and workbooks, had to be written with only a few weeks' notice. A moderation process had to be set up and understood by all. Professional development, which had already undergone a shift from refresher leave in the workplace to learning software packages, underwent another change. Lecturers began studying at the higher levels required to teach diploma level subjects. However, the speeds and skills involved in shorthand and typing at diploma level were lower than those most office systems lecturers at the time had already achieved to pass trade certificates. Nevertheless, the new qualifications in business administration and computing registered on the NQF brought about the need to update qualifications. This change in the name on office systems qualifications resulted in further "professionalising" action.

Women in business administration and computing

Amid these changes at institutional and course delivery levels, office systems departments around the country were reviewing their names. At staff meetings I attended in the early 1990s some departments wanted to include the word "business" in their titles. This had met with resistance from other schools and departments within individual polytechnics in earlier times. When the NQF was adopted the sub-field for office systems subjects including

shorthand and typing (designated "text processing"), and word processing was set up as Business Administration and Computing. The national committee had fought hard to have the words "business administration" included on the qualifications included in this sub-field. Following their success it was difficult for individual polytechnic management to disallow the use of the words in the name of departments where these qualifications were being taught. The national committee adopted the name National Business Administration Forum (NBAF) at this time.

A feature of these times was the effort office systems lecturers put into working collectively. When departments were faced with the challenges of unit standards they were under-resourced in every way. Most women involved did not ask for help from their individual institutes to manage within these constraints and met the challenges from their own resources: as one participant in this research put it: 'we got the children to bed and then went around to each other's houses to sort it out'. My understanding, from talk with people who attended these meetings and from the minutes recorded by the national committee, is that the Ministry wanted to keep lower level office systems courses, delivered by the unit standards up to level four, in the schools. This was perceived by some to have been a gender issue, as well as a money issue.

The office systems staff in most polytechnics did not ask for support from their own hierarchy to retain their qualification, or for encouragement in their struggle to take the steps necessary for survival. I understand from interviews for this project and informal chats with colleagues, as well as my own experience at the time attending various networking meetings, that some office systems lecturers and departments felt coerced into the adoption of unit standards and threatened by the loss of their own qualification. They felt they had little choice but to take on delivery of something that was untried, contentious and denigrated by some. What they were required to do was an effect of a prevalent viewpoint, expressed by some lecturers, that assumed unit standards were "okay for the trades, but not suitable for areas where real educational importance or pedagogy was at stake".

From 1990 to the present day, office systems representatives have held national conferences every year. They have taken a professional approach to meeting both the policy edicts of Government and their stated commitments to equity and autonomy. Conference slogans since 1994 encapsulate the rigorous approach taken to fulfilling what was considered to be their professional duty: Wanganui hosted "Professionally Me" in 1994, and in 1995 Otago Polytechnic got straight to the point with their title "Creating our Future". In 1996 in Auckland the conference was called "Horizons and Beyond", in 1997 Greymouth considered "The World at Our Fingertips". In 1998 Waikato Polytechnic was "Surfing the Bridges", and in 1999 UCOL in Manawatu was making lecturers aware of "The Challenge of Innovation". When representatives met in Gisborne in the year 2000 they focused on "Networking into the 21st Century" and conference titles since that date have continued to emphasise the "professionalising" strategies of the NBAF.

Going it alone, picking up a greatly increased workload, taking on non-traditional expectations of professional development over and above learning about new technology and software packages, and bearing the full brunt of the NQF and unit standards, traces out a little of what has gone on for office systems lecturers of the last decade. Much has come about as a result: a diploma programme has been developed at level five on the NQF; lecturers have achieved professional development to degree level; office systems departments have become referral points as centres of excellence for other departments. Much is still in process.

Conclusion

The polytechnic sector of education in New Zealand continues to play a significant role in vocational training in New Zealand after more than a century of change. In this chapter, I have provided a brief history of the polytechnic and outlined some of the key developments and their impact on commercial training since 1908. In the next chapter, I review the

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literature I have drawn upon in my empirical work. In particular, I consider the literature relating to office technology, secretarial work and commercial training, and discuss the relevance of this literature for organisational changes affecting women who teach commercial subjects in the polytechnic today.

Chapter two:
women, work, and organisational change

Gender is fundamental to the way work is organized (Game & Pringle, 1983, p. 14).

The workplace is, after all, a setting for activity and an arena of interaction. And, just as individuals hold themselves accountable to gender ideals, occupations can also hold themselves accountable to normative conceptions of gender (Fenstermaker, West & Zimmerman, 2002, p. 37).

Introduction

In the previous chapter I outlined the history of technical education in New Zealand, and the development of "commercial education" in this context. In this chapter, I present a literature review that is in two sections. In section one, I review the literature concerning women and work. In section two, I review the literature concerning organisational change and educational reform in New Zealand in the 1990s.

In reviewing literature for the current study I have drawn upon the works of feminist writers on the topic of gendered concepts of work, and to focus on identifying ideas about "acceptable" work for women (May, 1992). "Office technology", "secretarial work" and "commercial training" are gendered. Although "work" has changed for women in the last

20 years, these fields of work remain dominated by women, and dominated by gendered ideas about what women workers can and should do.

The first section includes literature around work relating to woman's "natural role" within the home. Under the sub-heading, "feminist perspectives", I review literature which describes women's exploitation in the home. Literature examining the notion that "women's place is at the typewriter" is reviewed next. The first part of this chapter concludes with the literature reviewed with regard to the "perfect secretary" and her training.

The literature reviewed in the second section of this chapter describes organisational change since the education reforms of the 1990s in New Zealand. Literature around policies of the new right and their effect on the education sector are reviewed first. Secondly, I review literature which describes the impact of the reforms on polytechnics that sought "parity of esteem" with universities. The section concludes with a review of literature around individual achievement and rewards for personal, and professional development in establishments of higher learning.

Section one: private and public worlds

Feminists argue that women's lives are shaped by a private/public separation (Bradley, 1994; Davis 1994; Fenstermaker & West, 2002; James & Saville-Smith, 1994; Layder, 1994; May, 1992; Purvis, 1994; Sydie, 1988). Historically, women have been located within the private sector. This arrangement can be traced to the rise of capitalism and the bourgeois family. Natalie Zemon Davis (1994) writes about the historical separation of the private world of home from the public world of work and argues that women's historical experience of employment has been characterised by non-linearity and fragmentation (Davis, 1994, p. 129). The "private/public" dichotomy is a key motif in writing by feminists analysing the subordination of women in capitalist society.

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New Zealand feminists have argued that the notion of men and women occupying separate spheres did not capture the colonial experience of New Zealand women, most of whom were critically needed to contribute their labour to family incomes (Novitz, 1987). For example, in rural Pakeha families, where every able-bodied member of the household worked to transform bush into farmland, the labour of women was pivotal (Dalziel, 1977). Even in urban households largely dependent on wages earned outside the home, women worked to contribute money to the household income:

> Although only a minority of married women were officially in paid work, many women supplemented their husbands' wages by dressmaking, taking in washing, caring for other people's children or providing care and accommodation for boarders. Officially such workers would have been counted as simply 'housewives' (Novitz, 1987, p. 26).

In New Zealand, women's experience of the division between private and public worlds is affected by their class position, and by the earning capacity of the men with whom they live (Novitz, 1987). Bridging the gap between private and public worlds has involved post-war Pakeha women in conflict and compromise in terms of "acceptable and unacceptable work" (May, 1992).

May (1992) identifies that the single working "girl", idealised as the glamorous "career girl", held an ambivalent position post war:

> From the married woman as a sensible housewife to the single working 'girl' available for marriage, the media images of women as workers in the 1950s were confusing (May, 1992, p. 125).

The single working woman (located in the public world of paid work), portrayed an image of independence, competence and equality, but of the kind that would still find her a husband. Moreover, for many single women, having a career meant staying in a mundane job for the shortest possible length of time. While "careers for girls" was a popular catchphrase in schools and the media, careers were either gender specific or rationalised in the context of adding to a woman's worth in marriage (ibid.). For example, the following quote appeared in the *New Zealand Woman's Weekly* of 5 November, 1948:

> If a girl accountant gets married, she is far better equipped to
> budget her weekly expenses and to understand her husband's
> financial projects, and if the need arises has her job to fall back
> on (cited in May, 1992, p. 125).

It is important to note that participants in my research were growing up in the 1950s. Writing about public opinion during the 1950s, May (1992) revisits the view that women had a right to work even as wives, but their work was different from men's because they were not going to be breadwinners, and their work must allow them time and energy for their *real* work in marriage. All opinion along the spectrum, from cautious support to concern, acknowledged that a wife's paid work was secondary and temporary. Women would primarily be mothers and wives, but they would also move in and out of the workforce according to family needs (ibid., p. 126).

During the 1950s, the debate over women's work outside the home was being argued at two levels. Working mothers were judged harshly if they did not allow sufficient time and energy for their *real* work in marriage and this was deemed likely to place their marriage, if they had one, under threat. Work outside the home would put the emotional and moral well-being of the children in jeopardy (May, 1992, p. 125).

Feminist perspectives

Feminists have long critiqued the exploitation of women in the family and in the workplace. Early impetus came from Heidi Hartmann who expressed her views in *The Unhappy Marriage of Marxism and Feminism* (1981). Hartmann gives a materialist account explaining that women are subordinate to men inside and outside the family because of patriarchy and capitalism. She defines patriarchy as

> a set of social relations between men, which have a material
> base, and which, though hierarchical, establish or create
> interdependence and solidarity among men that enable them to
> dominate women (Hartmann, 1981, p. 14).

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Identifying factors that allow men to dominate women in ways that maximise their own personal and material gain from women's labour, Hartmann concludes that men's desire to control women is at least as strong as capitalism's desire to control workers. The important point she makes with relevance to my study, is that the material base of patriarchy rests in men's control over women's labour power.

Feminists writing about women's paid employment all question why women are disadvantaged compared to men, and compare the different sites of women's oppression and how this varies over time and between different social groups (Barrett, 1980, 1992; Hartmann, 1981; Millet, 1977; Mitchell, 1971, 1975; Walby, 1988, 1990). For example, in comparison with Hartmann, who separates patriarchy and capitalism at the material level, Mitchell (1975) locates capitalism in the economy, and patriarchy in 'the unconscious'.

Sylvia Walby's ideas have relevance to the current study (Walby, 1990). Walby focuses her attention on a system of patriarchy made up of six main structures: paid work, housework, sexuality, culture, violence and the state. Her main argument is that interrelationships between these create different forms of patriarchy (Walby, 1990, p. 16). Walby's analysis focuses on the structure of patriarchy, and its interconnectedness with different aspects of women's subordination.

Michele Barrett (1992) takes a different approach from the historical approaches that explain the social in structural and causal terms. Barrett is critical of Marxist feminist analysis and describes a shift from 'things to words' with the aim of dispensing with 'things' and valuing 'words' more (ibid., p. 201). This has implications for my research. Rather than analyse "patriarchy" as a structure, I have followed Barrett and focused on language, subjectivity, and meaning, as tools for my analysis (Weedon, 1987).

A common feature of many feminist analyses is the critique of assumptions made about the "natural differences" between the sexes, the different tasks to which women are suited, and the different values placed on these tasks (Moore, 1988; Sydie, 1988). Carole Pateman (1994) argues that belief in the natural 'subversiveness' of women is of extremely ancient

origin and is deeply embedded in our mythological and religious heritage' (p. 108). Her claim, similar to the one made by Barrett (1992) is that the association of women with nature is not "natural" at all, but determined by discourses (Pateman, 1994, p. 108).

The literature reviewed to this point focuses on the gendered nature of the private and public spheres. An effect of this is that women were considered to be assistants and 'helpmeets' to men (Bradley, 1994, p. 150). Bradley (1994) takes up the argument around how the public sphere (in which the paid workforce is situated) is associated with men. It becomes slightly different when women move into that male domain of paid work as Harriet Bradley illustrates: 'Many female work groups, including those in offices "bring home into the work place", both domesticating it by making boring more tolerable and by making the office a more pleasant, sociable, cosy place to be in, and also being domesticated by it' (Bradley, 1994, p. 155) . If women take on men on their own terms they are denying their femininity, which may diminish their private status as women; if they assert their femininity they risk being labelled as inferior and inadequate workers (ibid., p. 155).

Bradley's notion of bringing home into the work environment has implications for this study in terms of its relevance to the claim that teaching might be considered a traditionally female profession (Healy & Kraithman, 1996, p. 186). Furthermore women who enter the polytechnic culture dominated by classed and gendered assumptions of the nature of work and the "natural role" of women are presented with, at the least, a double-bind. In terms of my research, the domestic orientation identified by Bradley is embedded within office systems programmes and culture.

Woman's place is at the typewriter

Various writers have explored gender and technology in ways that are particularly valuable in the context of my research (Cockburn, 1983; Cockburn & Furst-Dilic, 1994; Cockburn & Ormrod, 1993; Hacker, 1990; Wajcman, 1994). Cockburn claims that technology

strengthens images of 'doing gender' (1983, p. 6). Polytechnics are obvious places for students and staff to come into contact with technology, and the widespread use of computer technology today is not a new phenomena. Cockburn (1983) explains that technology is not just a set of tools. She argues that technology is also a cultural product represented by the construction of men as strong, manually able and technologically endowed, and women as physically and technically incompetent. Technology is a medium of power (ibid.). The contribution made by Cockburn (1983) to the current project is that technical expertise and understanding are a means through which power is exercised, and dominant gendered power relations are maintained and perpetuated.

The resilience of the association between technology and manliness affects how women think about and experience technology. Various social practices foster and reproduce the cultural stereotype of women as technologically incapable, or even invisible in technical spheres (Cockburn, 1983; Hacker, 1990; Wajcman, 1994). These authors focus on computers as examples of new technology in a way that clarifies the social mechanisms through which a new technology becomes integrated into a masculine cultural system, and this approach gives insight into the impact this might have on women educators. The literature endorses the need for further investigation into how the rapid advances in technology affects the polytechnic environment in terms of differentiation between female and male users. For example, use of communications technology by all staff in the polytechnic had the effect of de-feminising keyboard skills rather than increasing the number of males taking office systems courses to learn touch-typing.

Wajcman (1994) points out that technology is not neutral, and technologies today, like people, are already "sex-typed" when they enter the workplace (Wajcman, 1994, p. 219). Davies wrote a book entitled, *A woman's place is at the typewriter* (1982); and later argued (1988) that the typewriter did not cause the employment of women in clerical work; women were drawn into the office because of the mushrooming demand for clerical labour occasioned by the expansion and consolidation of the capitalist economy at the end of the nineteenth century (Davies, 1988, p. 29). Davies argues in her analysis that typing fast and accurately are skills that take some time to develop and the implications of this helped

justify a division of labour within office work where some people did nothing but type all day. In her view this is how the work of typing came to be identified as "woman's work" (Davies, 1988, p. 30). She carries on this argument to claim that as a larger and larger percentage of female typists were employed, the typewriter was a facilitating factor in the employment of women in clerical work.

During the 1980s there was massive investment in information technologies affecting office workers. Women workers were enthusiastic about the introduction of new technologies into the office (Probert & Wilson, 1993 p. 1). According to Probert & Wilson (1993) and Webster (1996), women clerical workers saw new technology as making their jobs more interesting and substantially increasing their skills. Women office workers also expressed a strong interest in undergoing further training to develop their computer skills, even though it is widely recognised that such training would not lead to pay increases or promotion (Probert, 1992, p. 436).

In reviewing literature specifically relating to women doing office work in the public sphere, especially secretarial work, the recurring theme is that office technologies are inextricably intertwined with the gendered jobs they do. The women participating in the current study began teaching in office systems departments around the same time as office technology advanced to include the more widespread use of computers and word processing programmes. Their work experience, and the experience of many of their students, still centres around the use of "qwerty" keyboards. The literature surveyed here clearly illustrates that keyboards and associated office technology are not neutral. Technologies are always embedded in, and shaped by, social context.

The genderedness of office technology intersects with the gendered division of labour, and the occupations done by women who use technology within their daily working lives. The following quote emphasises the highly gendered nature of secretarial work.

> The perfect secretary should forget that she is a human being, and be the most efficient aid at all times and on all subjects ... She should respond to [her boss's] requirements exactly as a machine responds to the touch of lever or accelerator (Emily Post, 1945, cited in Kramarae, 1988, p. 1).

The perfect secretary

In her book *Secretaries Talk*, Rosemary Pringle (Pringle, 1988) locates the work of secretaries within the context of debates concerning sexuality and culture. Her study focuses on the day-to-day negotiation and production of power, and on the connections between domination, sexuality and pleasure in the workplace. Her analysis demonstrates that traditional work themes such as class, status and occupational prestige need to be placed in the context of wider patriarchal relations between home and workplace, consumption and production, and the private and public spheres.

Pringle (1988) argues that because ideas about what a secretary *is* are accepted as natural, these ideas are rarely articulated. She examines "the secretary" as a gendered category, taking meaning from its relation to another category - the boss. The traditional equation of secretary with woman or wife, and boss with man, is central to the establishment of normative versions of what a secretary is (Pringle, 1988, p. 132).

Challenges to the notion of the office wife and mother are taken up by Webster (1996), Probert & Wilson (1993), and Hochschild (1983). Webster, who qualified as a secretary herself at the end of the 1970s, says that her work as a secretary was underpinned by gender relations characteristic of the domestic sphere in which women perform a variety of roles from wife to mother (Webster, 1996, p. 130). The central argument Webster puts forward is that in the gendered office hierarchy, women's labour is underpinned by the roles which women play in society generally and by the expectations which are made of them to fulfil their roles as carers and servicers (ibid., p. 131).

Suzan Lewis (1991) juxtaposes the ideologies of motherhood with professional ideologies in an intriguing way which has relevance to my study. She argues that the terms "motherhood" and "employee" are socially constructed as polar opposites, that the counterposing of employment and motherhood constrains the choices acceptable to women and also shapes the identities available to them (Lewis, 1991, p. 10). From an early age,

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female subjectivity is shaped by ideologies of motherhood (Chodorow, 1978; Weedon, 1997).

It is almost impossible to imagine a man in most secretarial jobs, not simply because of the low status of the work, but because of the way secretarial work includes many wifely or motherly tasks, from making cups of tea to reminding men about what needs to be done that day (Probert & Wilson, 1993, p. 12). Hochschild (1983) discusses how the emotional labour that secretaries do contributes to the conscious and unconscious images of clerical work. Secretaries are required to handle other people's feelings and create a cheerful office that announces her company as 'friendly and dependable' and her boss as 'up-and-coming' in a way that particularly distinguishes her job (Hochschild, 1983, p. 11).

Secretarial training

The strong association of secretarial work with femininity and maternal duties has particular implications for educators training women to take up this role. According to Keep (1997), 'the "type-writer girl" of the 1880s could earn as much as a hundred dollars a month, and professes to regard this form of bread-winning as her natural destiny' (Keep, 1997, p. 2), but in the closing decades of the 19th century, the prospect of training women for a white collar workplace evoked fear and fascination.

> When the New York branch of the Young Women's Christian Association introduced the first courses in typewriting in 1881, it did so amidst a public outcry that female office workers would lower working wages and displace the men who had previously held such posts. More dramatically, women typists were felt in many quarters to presage the collapse of the family: lured away by the promises of an exciting life in business, they would abandon the sacred responsibilities of raising the new generation (Keep, 1997, p. 2).

Ideologies surrounding the entry of women into the paid workforce equally surround women assisting them in their preparation to do this in formal education settings. Teaching

is often perceived as the ideal job for women (Healy & Kraithman, 1996, p. 186). The perception is informed by the conventional wisdom that short hours, long holidays, job security, and career-breaks suit women. In short, teaching is seen as a job compatible with family responsibilities. Further, teaching is considered to be professional work which is rewarded with comparatively good pay (ibid., p. 186).

Pringle (1988) places teachers of secretarial studies in a different position from most school teachers: 'their subjects command little respect and, with the possible exception of shorthand, have no academic or technical status' (p. 132). She makes two important points about teachers of these subjects. The first is that their trade colleagues in the Colleges of Technical and Further Education (TAFE, the Australian equivalent of a New Zealand polytechnic) often regard them as not "real" teachers in the same way as secretaries are not regarded as "real" workers. The second is that their students will be judged less on their occupational skills than on their femininity, defined in terms of appearance, fashion awareness, clothes and taste (Pringle, 1988, p. 132).

The idea that office work is suitable work for a girl from a working class background in New Zealand is described by Alison Jones (1991, p. 35). She discusses how working class parents (defined by father's occupation) tend to value such things as obedience, neatness and respect. Working class jobs are subject to direct supervision and control, they are usually not highly complex and generally routine, emphasising that these jobs require the individual to conform to rules and procedures established by authority. According to Jones, conformity demanded by social relations of the workplace is imparted by working class parents to their children (Jones, 1991, p. 103).

Sue Middleton (1985) draws upon Bourdieu's notion of cultural capital to examine girls' school experiences of the 1960s. Middleton presents case studies about the schooling of girls illustrating how images of "academic" and "commercial" girls arose out of the practices of secondary school organisation during this period (Middleton, 1985, p. 84).

Literature reviewed in the first section of this chapter has focused on feminist perspectives of women's exploitation in the home and workplace. The second section of the chapter reviews literature which describes the policies of the new right and education reforms in New Zealand in the 1990s, and the impact of these reforms on polytechnics that sought "parity of esteem" with universities. This section concludes with a review of literature around individual achievement and rewards for personal and professional development in establishments of higher learning.

Section two: organisational change in the polytechnic

Some authors have argued that outside the compulsory sector, there have been notable "successes" resulting from New Zealand's structural reforms in education (Butterworth & Butterworth, 1998, p. 236). The most dramatic of these successes have been in the polytechnics where the number of students and the diversity of courses offered have burgeoned. According to Butterworth & Butterworth, the education reforms have suited them very well (ibid., p. 236). When *Learning for Life* was published in the late 1980s, the legislative changes that followed soon after were, for some people in the sector, akin to 'all the lights turn[ing] green together' (Butterworth & Butterworth, 1998, p. 11).

Throughout the 1990s change in the polytechnic sector intensified and became more far-reaching with every passing year. For this reason I have adopted a chronological approach to surveying literature which describes the impact of organisational change and its effects on the polytechnic environment. Although not able to offer empirical evidence on the effects of the changes, a collection of analyses, by and large critical of the educational policies was brought together in 1990 by Middleton, Codd and Jones (Middleton, Codd & Jones, 1990). In the main these studies identified and critically examined the assumptions, theories, and ideologies that had influenced or shaped the new policies, focusing particularly on tensions and contradictions within them.

The influence of new right (or neo-liberal) thinking on New Zealand educational policy is a central theme in many of the chapters in this collection. Hugh Lauder (1990) for example, explored the philosophies behind the new right revolution in New Zealand comparing new right theories with socialist perspectives on education and the funding of tertiary students (Lauder, 1990). Lauder predicted there might become reason for concern in the application of the loan scheme to polytechnic students because, traditionally, working class students have seen polytechnics as relatively "user-friendly". His concern was that this might be changed by the loan scheme, and thus polytechnics could become more a preserve of the middle class.

Gerald Grace (1990) demonstrated how the language of economics is used strategically by the New Zealand Treasury to construe education as a commodity rather than a public good (Grace, 1990). He put forward the view that the reforms, set in process by the fourth Labour Government elected in 1984, could result in the benefits of education being subject to individual capture rather than contributory to social or public good. Grace took the stand that the government's role in education was likely to be counter-productive to its declared commitments to greater social equality

Helen May (1990) examines the policy-makers' (Pakeha male) attitudes to early childhood care and education in her study of gendered attitudes towards educational workers (May, 1990). In her analysis, May claims that there has been a close association of early childhood with the role of women as mothers and a cultural perception of mothering as non-work which has inevitably meant low status for early childhood care and education and its workers and teachers (ibid., p. 97). May's analysis of the role of women in the private sphere and cultural perceptions of mothering also have implications for office systems lecturers in the polytechnic.

By the mid-1990s leading writers on education in New Zealand had begun to focus on the central developments resulting from educational policy and to have their views included in the on-going debate. Olssen & Morris-Matthews (1997) acknowledged the emergence of

"new times" and a changing context for education policy in a collection of literature examining emerging trends.

Many contributors to the Olssen & Matthews collection confirm the concerns expressed in the late 1980s (see Middleton, Codd & Jones, (Eds.), 1990). For example, Patrick Fitzsimons (1997) exposes a problematic relationship between government education policies which promote increased participation in tertiary education as a public good in terms of national economic prosperity, while at the same time explaining education as if a private good, and charging student fees accordingly (Fitzsimons, 1997, p. 108). Fitzsimons distinguishes between notions of public and private good with reference to concerns around the funding of education in a similar way to Grace (1990) and Boston (1990).

John Codd (Codd, 1997) describes changes in the framework for qualifications in the domain of higher education since the mid-1990s. He likens these changes carried out under the direction of the New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA) and as embodied in the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) to a 'quiet revolution'[12] (Codd, 1997, p. 130). In his analysis, Codd argues that understanding of the issues surrounding the current reforms in credentialling, assessment and qualifications requires consideration of the relationship between society, knowledge, and higher education. In Codd's view, the 'new language of learning' has a powerful effect on shaping higher education goals (ibid., p. 130).

Peter Roberts (Roberts, 1997) claims that, overall, the NQF rests on a narrow "technocratic" conception of learning, education and assessment. He questions whether a single framework, made up of unit standards, by which educational qualifications can be compared is the best solution to meet the demands of assessing the relative worth of particular qualifications. Roberts' argument centres around the different emphases between "vocational" education and "academic" education. Although he maintains there is a good deal of overlap between the two, Roberts argues that one approach relies on skills and the other on knowledge (Roberts, 1997, p. 71).

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12   This phrase was coined by political commentator Colin James and is the title of his book on the radical changes that occurred in the New Zealand economy during the mid-1980s. James: 1986.

As described in chapter two of this thesis, polytechnics which were previously tightly controlled, stood to gain greater autonomy and status as a result of the educational reforms of the 1990s. As one example of this, I now turn to the literature describing polytechnics' quest for parity of esteem with universities for their educational offering during this period (Dougherty, 1999, p. 57).

Academic reputations

In the climate of new right policies and "contestable" education, polytechnics and universities began to poach on each others' territory (Butterworth & Butterworth, 1998, p. 239). In doing so, the line between intellectual and non-intellectual skills became ever more blurred when polytechnics and universities competed (ibid., p. 239). The concern Butterworth & Butterworth argue is that by 'going upmarket' and positioning themselves as technological universities, polytechnics began moving out of trade training courses. Accordingly, an unfortunate outcome of this was the potential duplication of university type institutions and devaluating manual skills training (Butterworth & Butterworth, 1998, p. 239).

Dougherty (1999) examines the issue of polytechnics wanting to improve their status to become universities (Dougherty, 1999, p. 57). Even with the changes made in tertiary education from 1990, the polytechnics continued to suffer in the 'comparative status' stakes (ibid., p. 57). Initially, polytechnics evaluated their attempts to raise their image as a quest for parity of esteem (ibid., p. 57). However, during the 1990s some polytechnics responded by looking beyond this level of recognition of sameness. Wellington and Auckland now have universities that were formerly polytechnics. Clearly, polytechnics have evaluated their attempts to improve their status as a quest for parity of esteem. Funnell, Hall and Rosanowski (2000) take the view that between 1956 and 1996, polytechnics revised their views from that 'a university of technology is unnecessary', to that 'being a university is the

natural next step in an evolution of technical system' (Funnell, Hall & Rosanowski, 2000, p. 8)

The fostering of competition among multiple 'providers' of post compulsory education in New Zealand has put pressure on polytechnics to deliver programmes that will not only attract (or retain) students, but also begin to generate international academic reputations (Peters & Roberts, 1999, p. 17). Attempts to break down distinctions between vocations and academic education has resulted in new conditions of employment in respect of the type of professional development required of lecturing staff. Some office systems lecturers have taken the step toward academic qualifications augmenting their vocational skills. The literature review continues by looking at consequences for professional development.

Personal/professional reputations

The radical reforms in most polytechnics in the 1990s impacted on the professional development of all the educators they employ. Many staff in polytechnics and Colleges of Education sought higher qualifications, undertook rigorous programmes of research and changed the nature of their teaching during this time (Peters & Roberts, 1999, p. 25). At the same time tertiary educators had less and less time for active and well-organised resistance to some of the reforms because there was simply too much to do, too much pressure, too many essays to mark, too many urgent administration tasks to attend to, too many financial crises to address (Peters & Roberts, 1999).

Capper and Munro (1990) discuss the idea that many benefits accrue to teaching establishments through teachers' self-motivated professional development. They add to claims that a decision to embark on gaining higher qualifications, either employer-driven or self-motivated, may result in educators themselves incurring student debt (Boston, 1990).

In reviewing literature around the impact organisational change in the polytechnic had on the professional (and inextricably personal) development of polytechnic lecturers teaching

office systems, two distinctive themes emerge. The first is the requirements for keeping up to date with changes in pedagogical practices associated with computers and teaching (Peters & Roberts, 1999). The second is personal development based on the self-motivated contribution educators might want to make to their profession, their teaching department, and, ultimately, their students (Gray, 1994; Middleton, 2001; Wisker, 1996).

In terms of the first theme of computers and teaching, the use of information and communication technologies (both in traditional teaching environments and the "virtual" classroom) challenges many educators. At the same time as the education reforms were causing sweeping organisational changes, the unprecedented growth in the computing industry has had an effect on pedagogy, and on the need for professional and personal development. Some educators were fearful that something (of pedagogical importance) could be lost from a learning situation when all the might of technology is extended into educational environments, and opportunities for direct interaction with students begin to disappear (Peters & Roberts, 1999, p. 211).

Over the past decade computers have become faster, smaller and more powerful with each passing year. Computer monitors have improved, speakers and CD-ROMS have been added and, 'mice have come out of closets' (Peters & Roberts, 1999, p. 209). Importantly, software systems of all kinds are in the teaching portfolio of office systems lecturers, including, word processing, spreadsheets, graphics and presentations packages. With the arrival of the internet - global connectivity - we might expect to see ontological, epistemological, ethical and political changes of enormous import in terms of teaching practice (ibid., p. 209).

While many of the proposed and actual developments in virtual systems of teaching and learning are extensions of practices already in place, it sometimes seems that everything that is on offer as a result of advancing technology is bewildering (Peters & Roberts, 1999). In saying that, the responsibility for the effective integration of constantly changing virtual technologies with good pedagogical practice continues to rest with individual teachers.

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The second theme identified in the literature surveyed around personal and professional development indicated that for women educators, self-motivated, personal development 'is a balancing act' (Wisker, 1996, p. 4). Breda Gray (Gray, 1994) asks the question "what are we doing to ourselves" in the title of her research into women and higher education (Gray, 1994, p. 75). She focuses on issues of women's relationship with academic knowledge, and the ways in which procedures in higher education support and maintain dominant definitions of academic success. Gray's emphasis is on what she terms the 'success ethic', an expression used in connection with individual achievement and institutional rewards for success in establishments of higher learning.

Gray makes the claim that not all achievements within higher education gain the same recognition. Recognition for some activities, such as developing different learning approaches, creating a supportive learning environment, or challenging procedures within the academy, rarely contribute to personal success and gain little institutional recognition. Middleton (2001) illustrates how difficult it can be to recognise academic success even from within oneself as she reflects on her own academic, professional and personal development to say: 'I got my PhD, but I still feel a fraud' (Middleton, 2001, p. 1).

Advances in technology and qualifications from the NQF challenged resources in office systems departments. Financial assistance was not available to support all the development required through the 1990s. For office systems lecturers, who were also expanding qualifications, the demands were challenging. While a physical toll was a consequence, office systems lecturers were also experiencing personal development as a result of higher education. At the same time, many office systems lecturers became aware their own transformation was unlikely to have a similar effect on dominant ideas in the polytechnic.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have reviewed literature for the current study in two sections. Firstly, literature relating to work and women's natural role within the home was reviewed. The

second section reviewed literature around policies of the new right and their effect on the post-compulsory sector of education, particularly polytechnics. In the chapter that follows I discuss the feminist methodology and research methods used in the current study.

We can rummage through interviews as we do through an old
attic - probing, comparing, checking insights, finding new
treasures the third time through, then arranging and carefully
documenting our results (Anderson & Jack, 1991, p. 11).

Introduction

My experience as an office systems lecturer in a New Zealand polytechnic has been of a
gendered workplace and the authority of the male voice. From my position as an office
systems lecturer, office systems women's voices have been excluded in accounts of
organisational change that flowed from the education reforms of the 1990s. In writing this
thesis I have attempted to give voice to accounts of organisational change and the outcomes
of education reforms different from those in official records. My study gives voice to
accounts by women office systems lecturers who experienced these changes. In this chapter
I outline the research design for this project which was based on principles of feminist
research methodology.

The "why", "how" and "what" of this thesis are interconnected and the "results" are shaped
by the nature of the investigation. Eichler (1997) identifies feminist methodology as 'a
thick braid with multiple strands - which is sometimes snarled, sometimes cleanly braided'
(Eichler, 1997, p. 9). The chapter is divided into three interwoven sections. The first
section gives an account of the research logic and ethical considerations that underpin this

research. The second section describes interviewing office systems women about their experience of change in their work environment. The third section gives an account of how the analyses of these women's accounts were influenced by feminist poststructural perspectives, (Weedon, 1987). The chapter concludes with some biographical information about the participants in this research.

Feminist methodology and research design

This research has been guided by feminist theory and carried out from a feminist perspective that seeks to represent the interests of women. I am a feminist and my work is carried out within the context of a community of feminist scholars. The current project is informed by the critique of sexist bias in traditional "positivist" research (Eichler, 1991, 1997; Harding, 1987; Smith, 1987, 1990; Stanley & Wise, 1983). Feminists in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s argued for improving the status of women and critiqued traditional research as 'concealing women' (Smith, 1990, p. 62). At that time, their solutions to this concealment were largely additive. The remedy proposed was to take women's experience into account so that balance could be achieved by representing women's perspectives and experiences equally with men's (ibid., p. 62). Since that time feminist researchers have argued that traditional epistemologies (including additive research) exclude the possibility that women could be 'knowers' or 'agents of knowledge' (Harding, 1987, p. 3).

Dorothy Smith (Smith, 1987) argues that the institutional practices of excluding women from the ideological work of society are the reason we have a history constructed largely from the perspective of men, and largely about men (Smith, 1987, p. 35). This might be why we have official accounts of outcomes of education reforms that do not address the impact of organisational change on a large and historically significant group of employees: women office systems lecturers. The exclusion is clearly more than bias. Inclusion of this particular group of women requires authorship from the standpoint of their own experience of the reforms.

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I have drawn upon feminist approaches to research in this thesis (Acker, Barry & Esseveld, 1983; Eichler, 1991,1997; Finch, 1984; Harding, 1987; Oakley, 1981, 1998; Reinharz, 1992; Smith 1987, 1990; Stanley & Wise, 1983). Harding (1987) argues that in the best feminist analysis the inquirer is placed in the same critical plane as the subject (Harding, 1987, p. 8). She does not say that only women can do research that is good for women. In her view, any individual who meets the criteria for good feminist research should do it. However, she emphasises that women know best what women's experiences are, and that women's experiences 'in the plural' provide the "new" resources for feminist research (ibid., p. 7). According to Harding this "subjective" element in feminist research has the effect of increasing the objectivity of the research, and decreasing the "objectivism" which hides this kind of evidence (ibid., p. 9).

Reflexivity in terms of the relationship between researcher and the "subject" of the research is a source of strength in feminist research and Harding stresses this with her 'reflexivity recommendation' (ibid., p. 9). My "insider" status as a researcher was productive and importantly, respected and valued. Although positioned as a researcher, throughout the research process I was also in an active role as interpreter of *our* experience. Riv-Ellen Prell (Prell, 1989) refers to this as the 'double frame where one is aware of the double gaze of both subjects' (Prell, 1989, p. 255). Seeing oneself in the eye of the other is central in feminist methodology, orientating it towards mutual respect and valuing between women.

For many office systems lecturers the experience of change in their workplace has been difficult in the extreme. For some this was their first opportunity to talk about their work environment to somebody who was not an immediate colleague. I became increasingly mindful that my approach should not be inappropriate or insensitive to this and that particular matters required my attention. For example, I had a "record" of exploitative interview practices from previous experience writing for a daily newspaper.

In the course of a "past life" as a newspaper reporter, I was taught, mostly by example, how to structure interviews. As a journalist, I was trained to take control of the encounter; to order it in particular ways and to get through it quickly (this was deemed essential both to

maintain "objectivity" of the press and to meet deadlines). In the early stages of the current project carrying out interviews in the context of my research did not hold particular concerns for me: I felt I could handle "encounters". However, 'to presume that a researcher can take the data and run is inappropriate' (Kirby & McKenna, 1989, p. 69). Research methods are clearly about much more than an "encounter" with the subject. Shulamit Reinharz (Reinharz, 1992) makes the point that feminist interviewing needs to be consistent with avoiding control over others and developing a sense of connectedness with people (Reinharz, 1992, p. 20).

Feminist research should use methods of gaining knowledge that are not oppressive (Acker et al., 1983). Ideally, the 'object' of research should be an 'active subject' (ibid., p. 425). Researchers have a responsibility not to make the research relationship an exploitative one. Unstructured interviews are sometimes used to avoid researchers exploitation of participants (ibid., p. 426). 'Unstructured interviews' include arranging interviews in participants' homes and attempting not to impose the researcher's own ideas of what is important on the participant. To reduce distance between researchers and the participants, participants should be offered the opportunity to read transcripts of tapes and shown written material regarding the analysis.

In her early work, Ann Oakley (Oakley, 1981) challenges the masculinity of 'proper' interviews Oakley, 1981, p. 41). She argues that in most cases, the goal of finding out about people through interviewing is best achieved when the relationship of the interviewer is non-hierarchical and when the interviewer is prepared to invest her or his own personal identity in the relationship (ibid., p. 41). Her own experiences of interviewing mothers led her to argue that a non-hierarchical relationship can be achieved by women interviewing women. Where both interviewer and interviewee share membership of the same social group, the basis for equality may impress itself even more urgently on the interviewer's consciousness (ibid., p. 55).

Janet Finch (Finch, 1984) echoes Oakley when she presents her research experiences in a study of clergy wives and a study of mothers involved in pre-school playgroups. She says

she shares Oakley's preference for informal interview strategies on both methodological and political grounds because "quite simply, it works very well" (Finch, 1984, p. 72). Ning Tang (Tang, 2002) also readdresses the discussion of relationships between women interviewing women that Oakley initiated in 1981 (Tang, 2002, p. 1). Her analysis explores the differences of power in the interview relationship, arguing that both the interviewer and the interviewee's perceptions of social, cultural and personal differences have an impact on the power relationship in the interview. This is not simply an issue of quality of the interview, but the dynamics between the interviewer and participant (ibid., p. 1).

Ethical considerations

The key ethical considerations applied to this research are minimising harm to participants and protecting the participant's privacy - within the office systems community as well as outside it. The current study follows the Massey University Code of Ethics Conduct for Teaching and Research Involving Human Subjects (2000) and was approved by the Massey University Human Ethics Committee. A copy of the approval letter is included in appendix one. The study also has the approval of the Research and Ethics Committee of the polytechnic where the interview participants were employed. A copy of the approval letter is included in appendix two. Any information that identifies this polytechnic has been covered over where it appears in copies of this thesis.

The Massey University Code sets out ethical principles, all of which I have interpreted and applied in the context of this research. The major principles are: informed consent and confidentiality, minimising of harm, truthfulness and social sensitivity. To give due consideration to my own sensitivity and judgement in terms of causing no harm by undertaking the current project, I talked it over confidentially with a trusted colleague. We discussed some of our own experiences of the challenges that change in our work environment have presented over the last decade. We acknowledged that meeting these challenges was a personal cost to some women and we discussed how the aims of the proposed work must be reached without adding to this. These reflections influenced the

framing of the research proposal made to the Women's Studies Programme of the Massey University School of Sociology, Social Policy and Social Work.

Recruiting participants

My own position on the management team of an office systems department in a New Zealand polytechnic gave me contacts on other campuses whom I called upon to assist with finding other women office systems lecturers willing to participate in this study. A letter was sent to the CEO at the polytechnic where I hoped to carry out interviews. A copy of the letter is included in appendix three. This polytechnic has been established for many years and it offers office systems programmes and courses that I am familiar with. This initial contact received a warm response and I was encouraged to proceed with the study. I arranged a meeting with the Head of the Office Systems Department. At this meeting the research proposed met with the response: "at last, somebody is going to tell it how it really happened". However, there was also an expression of surprise that the experiences of office systems women could be the subject of academic writing.

Following a discussion with the HOD of the benefits of the study, attention was again directed to the likely effects on participants. The information sheets and consent forms, which are included in appendix four, were read by the HOD and it was agreed that they satisfied the principles of voluntary participation and informed consent. The Head of Department accepted the role of "gatekeeper" to provide access to participants willing to take part in this project. The information related to the project was collated into individual packages which included a profile sheet asking for biographical details and contact information. This profile sheet is included in appendix five. I received four responses on these sheets from women willing to take part in the research, and I made contact with each of them with a personal email.

I reiterated the rights of each individual over the research process in the initial email response and again immediately prior to beginning the interview. Although some of the

participants had signed their copy of the consent form before I arrived, I went over this with them again prior to accepting it. At the close of the interview I reminded the participants of the measures in place to protect their privacy and of my undertaking to ensure that the tapes and transcripts would be treated as confidential and that pseudonyms would be used in this thesis. Names were changed after the transcripts had been returned from checking by the interviewees.

Interviewing office systems women

I devised an interview timeline allowing for two interviews per day, and I made arrangements to travel to carry these out at the polytechnic where the participants were employed. Before these interviews took place I made a short presentation to my own office systems colleagues about the proposed work for the months ahead. While I told them I planned to collect information from women at another polytechnic, they wanted to help and talk about their experiences. I told them this presented ethical concerns, but some were still eager to be part of the process. In the time before the interviews were scheduled to take place, it was agreed between us that I would do some "practice" interviews to improve my interview technique and modify any tendencies to revert to my "reporter" style.

Preparing for the "practice" interviews I formulated questions like: "What stands out as important to you about your home and family when you look back on coming to work here"? I prepared to ask what was important to them about their experiences at school, and what were their strongest memories of the jobs they did before they became office systems lecturers. In terms of their experience of organisational change and education reforms in the time they have been employed the questions planned were similar. "How do you remember feeling when we took up the new qualifications", and "what are the important things happening in your personal programme for professional development at the moment"? It might have been my attempt to put the questions this way that resulted in outcomes from the "practice" interviews different from those expected by both myself and the "practice" interviewees.

These practice sessions were much more than opportunities for me to improve my techniques and inquiry skills; new relationships were formed. These new relationships appeared to come about as a consequence of women doing research together rather than as a consequence of collegiality. While other lecturers and I frequently discuss daily occurrences in our jobs, the setting this time was a new experience which had a particular affect on both of us. We were raising our voices to make sense of our own experiences, and recording them for research purposes; this was a new way of talking for office systems women.

Although the practice interviewees and I began believing it was a practice run, this became secondary to us making sense of changes in our shared environment. The information recorded on the tapes of these interviews has informed my thinking in the present study although the speakers have not been cited directly.

Despite my long experience as a lecturer, and the practice runs, I was nervous when it came time to carry out the "real" interviews. I was prepared for practical aspects of the interviews, but I had also become aware that personal agendas, and certain assumptions can short-circuit the listening process and fail to give women the opportunity to talk in their own words. I thought at the outset that my "insider status" in this research would play a role in bringing the interviews quickly to the heart of the research question. This was not the case for two different reasons. I explain the first reason here, the second concerns my thoughts about what happens when women do research together and I will return to it in the conclusion to my thesis.

Playing back the tapes of the initial interviews, I realised that in order to learn I needed to listen. My insider status did not mean that I had merely to align my pre-existing ideas with the ideas I had brought into the interview. Anderson & Jack (1991) give relevant insight into this when they discuss listening in terms of the research process as "listening in stereo" (Anderson & Jack, 1991, p, 11). In their analysis, listening in stereo means that when interviewing women it is important to learn to listen to both women's dominant and muted

channels of thought. The relevance of this to my research is that listening in stereo helped identify the contradictions within the discourses that the participants drew upon in telling of their experience.

Despite my concerns about matching up to the requirements for the task, and remembering to apply new skills, I carried out the interviews with office systems women, and there was a lot about the process that was fun (Hacker, 1990, p. 43). The tapes were filled with talk about how office systems women experienced their gendered workplace and organisational change in the polytechnic environment. They were also full of laughter and a few sighs. Every interview ended with a comment similar to the one Janet Finch (1984) reported in her research project: 'I've really enjoyed having someone to talk to' (Finch, 1984, p. 74). This heightened my awareness that this was probably the first time that some office systems lecturers had raised their voices in the expectation both that they had something of importance to say that anybody was interested in hearing, and that they were saying it with a serious purpose. The laughter, the sighs, the talk, and the pauses, were women making sense of our experiences of change, and in the later chapters of this thesis I have used direct quotations from the participants as fully as possible.

At the close of the interview I reminded the participants that I would return the transcripts to them so that they could delete or add information before I proceeded with the project. We agreed that once they had approved these transcripts I would begin the process of analysing the accounts they contained. However, I indicated that it would be at least a month before I completed the first draft, and that I would be pleased to hear any thoughts they had as they reflected on their interview.

Taking the first step in my data analysis and transcribing the tapes I was reminded, not for the first time in this project, of the value of my secretarial skills. Long, long hours of typing from audio tapes for a living have honed my ability to transform the tape into a typewritten record in very short order. This enabled me to concentrate quite intently on the tapes, and to begin to analyse and to mark the scripts with annotations of my analysis. I was also able to return the transcripts to the participants for checking within a short time after the

interview and they added and deleted information while their interview experience was still fresh in their minds. They made very few deletions and true to their profession they made suggestions for reformatting and corrected my "typos". They all reiterated that they had enjoyed being part of the project and all wished me well with it.

Analysing the women's accounts

The second key part of the research process was the methods employed in analysing the women's accounts. These methods were informed by feminist poststructural perspectives, particularly Chris Weedon's view of language as discourse (Weedon, 1987). My analysis of the accounts had its origins in a table drawn up in columns coding individuals statements to do with home, school, early work, and themes of organisational changes as a result of the reforms in the tertiary sector since 1990. Using this system I matched interrelated statements that enabled me to identify the three particular discursive fields that I think were most important for my participants as they talked of their experiences. I have called these discursive fields "working class", "maternal" and "professional". Within these discursive fields I could see different discourses that each participant drew upon to talk about themselves and to construct meaning around their experiences.

Weedon (1987) influences this study with her theory that the common factor in the analysis of social organisation, social meanings, power and individual consciousness is 'language' (Weedon, 1987, p. 21). In Weedon's analysis, 'discursive fields consist of competing ways of giving meaning to the world and of organizing social institutions and processes' (ibid., p. 35). They also offer individuals a range of modes of voicing our "subject positions".

Within a discursive field not all discourses carry equal weight or power. At any particular moment a subject is subjected to the regime of meaning of particular discourses. Weedon refers to these as competing discourses 'constantly vying for status or power' (Weedon, 1987, p. 41). She adds that 'the site of this battle is the subjectivity of the individual and it is a battle in which the individual is an active but not sovereign protagonist' (Ibid., p. 41).

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In a gendered society like New Zealand, subject positions available to women are different from those available to men. Weedon argues that as children we enter social institutions - the family, schools and colleges, the worlds of work - that pre-exist us. We learn how these institutions operate and the gendered relations they maintain, as true, natural and good "at our mother's knee". While in theory, no subject position is closed to women, being a "woman" requires us to accept, negotiate or resist what is constantly being offered to us as what is "normal" or "natural" for a woman. In this sense, language is not the expression of "unique individuality". Rather language constructs individual subjectivity as a site of negotiation within dominant gender relations.

In this thesis I argue that individual subject positions as well as being gendered are classed. Weedon's analysis of the social construction of gender offers a way of thinking which brings into question essentialist and naturalist assumptions about women dominant in institutions like polytechnics.

In this research the participants' accounts offered insights into the social relations within which office systems lecturers are situated. The participants frequently made statements like: 'you know how it is for us' and 'well, that's what we do around here - we just get told what to do and we get on with it'. They reproduced dominant assumptions in a range of formations about "their lot" as women working in office systems departments. Institutionalised definitions of women's nature and social role separate the "private" and "public" worlds and shape discourses that define, for example, the meaning of "labour", "motherhood" and "access to work" and "personal development". In analysing how office systems lecturers accounted for their experience of change in their work environment, I found that some women drew upon discourses that justified the appropriateness of existing forms of social relations, but others contested these.

This made me aware of how, as women office systems lecturers, we are constantly subjected to multiple and competing discourses that are not fixed or final. I explore the accounts of the participants in more detail in the following chapters.

Introducing the participants

The biographical notes which follow serve the purpose of introducing the interview participants and creating a link with the names used in the following chapters. These women experienced the reforms in the polytechnic environment on a daily basis during the 1990s. They are all between 45 and 55 years of age, and have been office systems lecturers for at least 10 years.

Dawn is a member of the management team in the office systems department at the polytechnic where she works. She has taught commercial subjects for more than 30 years.

Susan joined the office systems department in the early 1990s. She began her career teaching computer confidence courses offered by the polytechnic to students in a women's centre. She now teaches across the curriculum offered by the department to full-time students working towards national qualifications.

Margaret has also been a member of the staff of the office systems department throughout the past decade of change. She teaches students studying for national qualifications and students on programmes designed to help them meet the criteria for places on these programmes.

Brooke has experienced considerable change over the years she has taught a range of text processing skills. She teaches full-time students in several departments, including those in the school of computing. Brooke's particular speciality is word processing, but she has considerable knowledge about information and communications computing programmes, and her skills and expertise are used by many staff and students at the polytechnic.

The office systems lecturers who have participated in this project collectively have more than 60 years of experience providing training in office systems. Others within my own department have also informed this study through the practice interviews.

Conclusion

In this chapter I described the research design, outlined ethical considerations, described the research process and discussed the influence of feminist poststructuralism as the analytical focus of research.

The next chapter is the first of two in which I outline my empirical work. In the following chapter I illustrate how participants in the current project draw upon three discursive fields in their accounts of how they became office systems lecturers.

As children we learn what girls and boys should be, and later men
and women. These subject positions - ways of being an individual -
and the values inherent in them may not all be compatible and we
will learn that we can choose between them (Weedon, 1987, p. 3).

Introduction

This chapter presents four women's accounts of how they became office systems lecturers

in New Zealand polytechnics. The chapter is in two parts. The first part comprises the

participants' accounts of home, education and the gendered office environment they first

entered. The second part reports on the similarities and differences found both within, and

between these individual women's voices. Here, I identify two discursive fields that offer

the participants ways of talking about their experience. These are the working class

discursive field and the maternal discursive field. I conclude by demonstrating that these

fields offer *common-sense* ways of making sense of the gendered and class experiences of

becoming office systems ladies.

Part one: the participants' accounts

The participants' accounts have been edited to remove some conversational "fillers", and

verbal pauses. For example, "ahs and ums" have occasionally been omitted for readability.

In a few cases the tense has been changed, also for readability. The participants' accounts

have been presented chronologically according to the order in which I spoke to each participant.

Dawn's account

Dawn began her account with these memories of her mother

> My earliest recollection of probably pre-school, is of my mother sitting up at night sewing - hand-sewing the linings into men's suits. She did that through the war years, and post-war in order to save enough money to buy a house.

Describing her parents' life in terms of gender, class and what was expected of the men and women in her family, Dawn said that

> [B]oth of my parents came from a very working class background. My mother left school at 14 because her mother was unwell, and her father owned a coal business. At 14 she left school and lugged bags of coal.

> My father left school at 14 or 15 to work in the railways - that was what his family did - you worked for the railways.

When Dawn talked about her "working mother", she placed emphasis on the particular effect this had on her family at the time:

> My family was unusual in that my mother worked as well as my father. In those days, mothers didn't work, I don't know of any mothers that went to work. My mother worked for as long as I can remember, managing shops and department stores.

Discussing her mother's career as a secretary and how and where she received the training for this position, she talked about her mother's ability to learn difficult skills within a very short time, and expressed her understanding of the qualities required to do this within the following statement:

> When she was about 18 she went to secretarial college and studied for six months, she got to 120 words per minute in shorthand and about 60 words per minute in typing - in six months! She was a very focused lady.

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As she talked about her transition from school to work, Dawn described how she furthered her interest in accounting through her job, and continued study:

> I went from school to work and university part-time. I was very good at accounting and I decided I would like to go to university. So, when I left school I worked in an accountant's office and did part of my degree at night. You could work in the day and go to lectures at night - so I did my university part-time.

At the time Dawn was employed in the office, and studying part-time at university, specialised training became available for women who wanted to teach commercial subjects in secondary schools. She described the effect of the opportunity she saw for herself, and also gave insight into the nature of courses designed to meet the needs of both teachers and students taking up positions within commercial training in the secondary school setting at that time:

> I didn't finish my degree. Part of the way through my degree when the opportunity came to do a one-year teacher training course I did that instead of finishing my degree. I went to secretarial training which was a one-year "pressure-cooker" course at polytech to be a commercial teacher. That was fulltime during the day and I attended the polytech at night, doing the Chartered Institute of Secretaries qualification which I completed. I suppose that's why I never went back and finished my degree.

Reflecting on her parent's feelings about what she was doing with her life, Dawn felt that although her mother was the driving force behind her, both of her parents had wanted better for their children than they had experienced in terms of their education. She described their thoughts about what they thought would be best for her:

> My father was happy that I was being educated - it didn't matter particularly - and, because of Mum's experience she thought shorthand and typing would be a useful skill to have.

After teaching for about three years Dawn went overseas and worked as a secretary, using the shorthand and typing skills she had gained during her training as a commercial teacher. Her first job was in a small news service in New York:

> It was owned by a millionaire. His philosophy was to employ his staff from as many Commonwealth countries as he could. He didn't run it because he needed the money. He provided a Commonwealth news service and so I was his "Kiwi". He was like a father figure because he gave people chances.

The news service always had a position for Dawn and she returned to it a number of times over the years to be given a job:

> Whenever I went overseas with my husband later I went back to the news service. This "gentleman" took me back whenever I went there - he always had work for me. I'm sure he didn't really need me, but anyway he always had something for me to do, and so I went back.

Dawn gave an example of the respective roles she, and her different bosses, played in different jobs she had, with this description of the types of duties her employer carried out at the news service:

> In my experience I wasn't somebody who made the tea and tidied the desk and so on - he did that. I haven't been expected to do that sort of thing when I've been employed as a secretary. I just think I've been extremely lucky and had wonderful bosses.

In saying that she had generally been fortunate to have good working relationships with her bosses and not to have experienced being a handmaiden, Dawn recalled an incident when she observed hierarchical practices in the office environment:

> I had one experience where I was asked to work in a typing pool to help out because they were short-staffed. Now, that was a totally different experience. The typists were not helpful to young graduates who brought them work to do - they would discriminate against them. They had their own hierarchy; and it was most unpleasant.

Having already completed teacher training and taught in secondary schools, she had a head start on her colleagues when they joined the office systems department in the polytechnic. Dawn had also taught in an environment where young secretaries were being trained, and she described that experience:

> On one trip overseas I applied for a job in a private finishing school in Europe and I taught young secretaries there, budding secretaries. I taught them shorthand and typing and office practice. There were only 12 girls in the class and they did secretarial work and cordon bleu cooking. We went to the theatre, and they learnt how to be hostesses. They had a lot of grooming and that sort of thing as well.

Dawn's account of becoming an office systems lecturer was intersected with talk about being a mother, and the effect this has on her life. She described the consequences impending motherhood had on her career:

> For a while I taught in secondary school and then I left to have a family.

Having a family apparently changed the nature of Dawn's work. However, a new opportunity came her way with possibilities for future employment, and she told this story of how it all began:

> While I was having my children I taught at night school at the secondary school. While I was there, another woman teaching at night class as well and she was also teaching part-time during the day on a secretarial course at a polytechnic. They were looking for someone to relieve and she asked if I was interested.
>
> By that time I had four children under five and the relief just crept up on me. I was asked to help out and I like helping out. I would just be asked if I could come in tomorrow and I would organise the children and say, "yes I can do that" and that's how it really started. So I started relieving here and I have worked here for 15 or 16 years - going from relief work to full-time.

Dawn had always felt supported by other women, especially those older than her who had already been through the experience of working full-time and looking after their families. Her account described some of the criteria she felt needed to be met before she could commit to relief teaching, and the precautionary measures to ensure her children's safety.

> The course supervisor was wonderful. She had three children of her own, older than mine, and she was very supportive. We had a lot of autonomy at the time and we just got on with running things. It was close to home, only five or 10 minutes travelling to get home if I was needed.

Then, as Dawn puts it, she had a real dilemma placed before her. She had to make a decision between continuing as a part-time lecturer, just helping out, or taking on full-time employment and teaching responsibilities:

> After a year a full-time position came up and then I had a real dilemma, because I was very involved in bringing up the children. It wasn't as though I was really desperate, I was very busy, I didn't have time to be bored and I was teaching nights as well. I decided I wasn't really all that happy just helping out, I preferred being

> involved and part of the planning and the ownership, and in the teaching, carrying through things, not carrying out somebody else's role.

The dilemma was resolved after Dawn took care of her "primary responsibility". In the following extract she expressed how she negotiated and planned to maintain a secondary role and still meet the needs of her family:

> I've got a really supportive husband and so between us and the family I managed to do full-time. But, it was a matter of being well-organised and the children tell me now they never missed out. But it took my husband and myself. I could never have done it without his being involved and being flexible as well. And, forward planning as well, just hoping that the children got chicken pox one after the other during the Christmas break, which they did, or the mumps, or the measles - they all obliged and had them December and January and I'd be back at work in February - so I was lucky.

These obliging children had a central role in Dawn's life and she planned her other activities around them to become an office systems lecturer. Examples of privileging the primary role of mothers to look after their children were a feature of Dawn's account.

Susan's account

Susan began by talking about her own mother and the features of her mother's life which had an influence over both of them:

> Mum had come from a very lower class poor family. But she had been a secretary herself and she saw that as a career option. I don't know whether she learnt it at college or at a polytechnic, but she certainly learnt shorthand and typing, and her fairly short career, before she was married and started having a family, was secretarial.

> When it came to me, well, you were either going to be a teacher, a secretary or a nurse and that was about all you had a choice from really.

Susan was "directed" into a particular school setting as a result of family discussion around her degree of mental ability, and she described the effect this had on what she was 'going to be':

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I was going to be commercial because I was going to be a secretary. My next sister down, who was a lot brighter than me, was going to do academic and be a nurse. She didn't want to be a nurse, but that's what we were told we were going to do and you didn't argue.

As she looked back over her school experience, Susan expressed satisfaction about how some of the expectations of her were refuted, and the effect a change in attitudes had on her future education and training.

After I had passed School Certificate - a shock to me as everybody had been telling me I was dumb for so long - I thought I would go back to the sixth form. I had done TCB one and two[13] by this time, but part-way through the sixth form we realised that I was having to pick up things like history and geography that I had never taken before and it was very difficult, and also a bit of a waste of time. I thought, what am I doing here? Mum found out about a full-time secretarial course so she inquired and got me into that part-way through the year.

Universities and polytechnics offering higher education were established in every major New Zealand city at the time Susan had finished at secondary school. But, as she explains, this did not mean that each institution was equally accessible to her, or that she had options about where she would undertake higher education:

There was never any way anybody ever considered one of us going to university - it just wasn't done. It was something that only the really bright academic kids and wealthy kids did. We were farmer's kids and we were just going to go to college and get a job.

Classes at night after work offered students qualifications respected in the office work environment, and as Susan indicated, trades certificates were directly linked with skills for employment. Trade certificates and endorsements of shorthand speed could be achieved at polytechnic at evening classes especially timetabled for people who had to go to work during the day. Susan described her experience:

I carried on doing night school for a couple of years and got my TCB Four and also did Pitman's exams. I actually ended up getting 180[14] in shorthand, so that was a real achievement.

13   Susan is referring to qualifications in shorthand and typing administered by the New Zealand Trades Certification Board.
14   Susan is referring to being able to take down shorthand at the speed of 180 words per minute for a period of five minutes and then transcribe it back into English with a minimum of 98% accuracy.

She also talked about how these considerable achievements made a difference to her feelings about herself and how they spurred her on to greater heights:

> I was discovering that I was good at something. I couldn't let it go. Here was something that I could actually do better than most people, so I just kept on driving myself to get better and better at it... I was just so used to not being good at anything that it was like a driving force.

But, Susan had less than enthusiastic memories of her first job which she described in grim terms as, what you do when you can't do a lot else:

> I was 16 when I got that first job and I'll never forget it. It was in a typing pool of about 12. We had a head-typist, I even remember her name, and a senior shorthand-typist and then there was a pool of wee girls, and we all had our manual typewriters and had to do six carbon copies of everything we typed - you know - the old thing, terrible, terrible…..
>
> I hated it, especially because it was in a typing pool and [the head-typist] was really grouchy and cross and didn't like typists. She made us type everything about three times because it wasn't quite right and it was just a depressing place to be.

Susan recalled that her mother also found the second clerical job she went to, but when she talked about her memories of this office environment in the 1970s it was in much happier vein:

> It was the best couple of years of my life - I loved it - it was such a difference. I mean, going from the typing pool: first of all I got an electric typewriter and I thought I was the bees' knees with an electric typewriter, but secondly, I was the only typist there for a start. The men who set it up were lovely guys to work with - just lovely.

Elaborating on the effects on her of the new job, Susan described a transformation:

> Suddenly I discovered I was in a situation where I was the only one there and I was really valued. It made a huge difference, from being an anonymous person in a typing pool to actually being someone who was really valued - that did so much for my self-esteem and I just flourished there. The world was my oyster; I loved my job, loved all the people I worked with, and I had a wonderful couple of years. It was just brilliant.

She described the next significant event in her life:

> As soon as we were married we started a family: and that was that - well, that part of my career anyway.

It was however the beginning of the new set of activities for Susan that she described in terms of 'what she did while the children were young' and dependant upon her.

> I got involved in community organisations - started off with Plunket - most of us started off with Plunket, and ended up as secretary and president for a couple of years. Then I got involved in setting up mothers' support groups, and then a women's centre, and that was wonderful. I'm still involved. It's 12 years now since we set it up and I'm still involved with that.

Talking about her involvement with the women's centre, Susan reflected on how this led to the opportunity to do some teaching on community courses run by the local polytechnic to assist women re-training to return to paid work. She described firstly, her own thoughts about taking up this role, and secondly, how her mother felt about her venture into something different from secretarial work:

> Teaching was certainly a step up. I was really well qualified, with glowing references, and I had been a highly successful secretary, and Mum was good about that.

> But, when I first started teaching Mum was sceptical - she almost rubbished it because it didn't fit in with her image of me. I think she kind of thought, "oh no, she's doing too much, this is not her, this is not what she should be doing". It was like, "oh well, it's only community courses, it's only part-time, you know, you're not really a teacher", because well, maybe, like a lot of people she felt that unless you had been to Training College, you weren't actually a teacher.

Although described by her mother as 'not really a teacher', Susan felt comfortable about guiding women on their journey and she talked about how this eventually led her to teaching students at the polytechnic. It was, she said, a step up and a hard time:

> It wasn't too bad with computer confidence courses, because teaching computing your students are relating to the computer and you are sort of guiding them on that journey. But, in some of my other classes I felt out of my depth, embarrassed, as if I was going to bore them.

Actually, for a while it was quite hard on my self-esteem because I felt really inadequate, but the students seemed to be happy enough, it was just me, I just felt as though I wasn't there yet. I was really floundering for quite a long time until I slowly built up my skills and then started to feel I could stand up there and really be effective.

For Susan, the transition from "floundering" in the classroom, to becoming an effective teacher was her way of becoming different:

I love teaching, I really thrive on it. I suppose the teaching itself has made the biggest difference to me personally. Just learning to be a teacher and actually nervously developing from putting my toe in the pool with computer confidence to actually becoming a full-time tutor.

Although computer confidence apparently exceeded teaching confidence at the beginning of Susan's career, she ended her account by saying that both computers and teaching had become an important part of her life 'outside the family'.

Margaret's account

Margaret began her story of childhood by talking about nationality, and the family circumstances which meant that she came to New Zealand as a teenager. Her account moved then to her secondary school experiences and some of the difficulties she encountered in this setting.

My Dad was educated in New Zealand and he went to university and knew how to get through the system here. It was actually my Dad who helped me cope with the New Zealand education system because I found it really difficult. He was my greatest teacher. By the time I came to New Zealand we were nine - I was the eldest of nine children. My father was adamant that we would all get a formal education of some sort, and he encouraged us to go as far as we could.

Not speaking English as her first language influenced Margaret's future career:

I had very little English when I came to New Zealand and I found that very difficult. It wasn't that I didn't know anything, although that's the feeling I used to get even from teachers,

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> It was because; if I didn't say something, or answer a question quickly, they thought I was thick. It wasn't because I was thick and I knew that, but the teachers didn't. I always felt they didn't think I answered quickly enough. But it was because I was still translating, and it takes time to translate back to your mother tongue and then to English. I decided way back then, that one day I was going to be a teacher, in some way.

While she expressed her personal satisfaction with the school curriculum and programme she studied, she discussed the effect taking things for granted, and streaming based on academic ability, had on members of her family, and her friends.

> I did the commercial classes because I wanted to, but I had a younger sister who they also wanted to put into commercial because I had done that. It was because of some test she did in form one or two. But, [younger sister] didn't want to do it, so my Dad went up and told them that she was going to do "professional"

> I had some friends wanting to do "professional", but often they weren't allowed because all the classes were streamlined and they weren't allowed, they had to be in the commercial class. Their parents didn't come up and argue about it, no, but my Dad would have. If I had wanted to do "professional" my Dad would have come up and supported me.

Summing up her school experience, Margaret spoke about how she felt that being the eldest child in a large family placed her under certain obligations. She expressed these as a reality.

> But the reality was that I was the eldest of nine and my mother didn't have a formal education coming from [overseas] - she probably went as far as form one, form two, so I had this sense of responsibility. Even though my Did didn't say I had to, I always sort of felt that if I could get a job, I had to go out and work, and I put aside the idea of formal teaching.

The choice for her was office work and she described how she was comfortable with this option:

> I started working during the school holidays from about the fourth form. My English wasn't at its greatest then, but I still got jobs in offices. I had this love for office work and so I decided I would do School Certificate and I got passes in about three subjects. The eight others after me passed everything, but that was okay, and my Dad and I felt my passes were a success.

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After working her way up in the banking area Margaret left the office environment:

> I got married and had three children and it was my decision again. I wanted to be with my children and I stayed at home with them for about 12 years.

During that time at home Margaret said she was active nurturing her own children, being a sports coach and instructor for young people, and helping out with other groups in the local community. She went back to the polytechnic when her children were older to take some courses in business and she was offered the opportunity to do some part-time teaching herself. She described her reaction to this request:

> When I was asked if I would like to teach here, I didn't even think about it, I just said, "yes, I do that anyway. Just give me what I have to do, tell me where I have to go and I'll do it". I love it, I feel this is what I've always wanted to do. I just feel like I'm right at home. I was always a teacher. Being the eldest in the family, I had always taught my brothers and sisters lots of different things. I do feel as though I'm a teacher, I've taught in my family, and coached tennis and netball - it's the same skills, except in this place you get paid for it.

As Margaret completed her account of becoming an office systems lecturer she said that when she joined the department lecturers were still 'doing it the old way'. Again Margaret's account frequently placed emphasis on the influence of family matters with regard to paid work.

Brooke's account

Giving an account of her childhood, Brooke described her home and secondary school experiences in terms of how they prepared her for work in the office environment.

> I had very supportive parents - didn't have a lot of money - and I did a professional course at college. I had always done reasonably well at school. I didn't want to stay on and do University Entrance and when the vocational guidance teacher came along she was talking about business courses run at the polytech. So, I thought, "that's me, another year of study and I can go out and earn some money".

In accounting for her decision to leave school, she described some conflict involved with this decision:

> Possibly a lot of people would have been saying, "no, no, no, you should go to university and do this and that", but not my parents, more the teachers.

However, Brooke had reached her goal by the end of a year's secretarial training. With the skills she had acquired she was ready 'to go out and earn some money':

> I got a job locally in a solicitor's office. We did long documents, wills and so on, and in those days if we made a mistake we had to do the whole thing again - in legal offices erasures weren't allowed - we had to be perfect. Sometimes we would get to the last line and make a mistake.....

Brooke's emphasis on 'being perfect' struck a chord with the degree of accuracy and standard of document presentation described earlier in this chapter in Susan's account of her experience in the typing pool.

Brooke travelled overseas and worked for about four years as a receptionist and office administrator. She met her husband while she was travelling:

> I got married and came back to New Zealand and worked for another four or five years before having a family. I virtually gave up then.

Volunteer work, helping out with school activities and offering support in the school environment, took up most of the spare time in Brooke's life at home with the children, and she described how she filled it in with 'teacher-aiding, helping out up at the school, and things like that'.

However, as the children grew older and Brooke felt they were less dependent, there was time for other things, which she decided should involve gaining expertise with new technology and text processing software packages that had begun to appear on the market for use in secretarial applications.

> When [the children] got to the form one and two stage I decided it was about time I had a look at the things called word processors that had appeared in the time I had been off. So, I actually came to this polytechnic to do a course.

While she was a student, Brooke had the opportunity to reverse the position she was in and become a teacher:

> While I was doing that I met some of the people here, and one of the ladies also doing the course knew me and we got talking. She was also working at the polytech, teaching another part-time course. One day, just out of the blue, I got a call from the supervisor here saying that she had heard I had done a business course and would I be interested in some tutoring on a casual basis. I said: "oh, look, when I left they had manual typewriters, now you've got electronic ones - I'll need some time to look at those". So, we set a time and I went in. On that day a tutor had called in sick, so I just took over her exam supervision - talk about being thrown in at the deep end - but it really built up from there.

As Brooke explained above, the teaching time built up and her portfolio of teaching skills also expanded. These skills were an extension of those she had already acquired in her secretarial role as a result of her own polytechnic training and her paid work in the office administration environment. She explained how she was persuaded to develop these skills in a different direction.

> I was talking to one of the ladies who was in, what was then the self-directed learning centre. She said: "what do you think about computers"? I said: "no, no, I'm a typing teacher - I don't know about computers". At any rate she convinced me to come and have a look, and then she spoke to another tutor who was working on an introduction to computers class.

When Brooke gave an account of her experience of teaching, she talked about how she contributed to early delivery of computing related subjects in the polytechnic, by incorporating her skills with those of a lecturer from the computing department:

> He was very good on packages, but he wasn't a keyboarder so he wanted someone to teach his students keyboarding. I got a few hours just teaching keyboarding and then he decided that he wanted a job share and he asked me. So, I ended up picking up all these packages and I had to learn in a really big hurry.
>
> After that I came back to office systems and I ended up doing more and more work in this department.

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Brooke's account completes the women's stories presented in this part of the chapter. Like the other participants, she also placed emphasis on her experience of home and family and the responsibilities of caring for her children.

Part two: 'good for a girl' - working as an office systems lady

This chapter now turns to an interpretation of the similarities and differences between these four women's accounts.

In each participant's account, I found examples illustrative of the effect of discourses that are both gendered and classed. As the women talked about their homes and families, they drew upon discourses that separate private and public worlds, and locate woman's natural place in the home. The participants talked of homes where fathers went out and did suitable work for fathers and where mothers did work that was suitable but different for them. In each woman's account, emphasis was placed on the job their parents did, and they described these in terms of their experience of classsed and gendered homes, schools, and paid work environments.

When the women talked about their fathers they all noted the type of work they did in the public sphere. The women's accounts of maternal roles included references to what their mother's activities were both inside and outside the home, the activity itself, and its suitability for women of those times. Each participant reflected on her mother's education in relationship to her own education, and made a feature of the gendered school curriculum both mothers and daughters experienced. All four emphasised the gendered nature of school curricula in the 1960s, and each account was similar in that it contained references to streaming of programmes and classes based on prior testing of academic ability. While participants did not all take commercial programmes at school, they all spoke about the gendered nature of the curriculum and school setting they were exposed to.

Participants who did do commercial subjects spoke of the commercial curriculum as having been relatively narrow with a heavy reliance on filling in a girl's time at school with shorthand and typing instruction, and repetitive sessions when they would practice and practice to improve their speed and accuracy. This pattern of education with its association of trades separate from the academic life of the school; its location in classrooms that had machines on the desks, and no boys, continued to have an influence over the pursuit of higher learning for these women.

Not all of the participants went to polytechnic straight after leaving school. Susan, Margaret and Brooke took this path, but Dawn went to university for a short time before she began her one-year polytechnic course to be a commercial teacher. Each participant gave an account of higher learning as "night school", extra to her day's work. Skills learned at night school were directly related to their daily paid work and predominantly undertaken in a polytechnic.

All four participants spoke about being "out to work" young, before the age of 17. They were all subject to surveillance and authority in their jobs. Susan and Dawn, in their accounts of the nature of work in typing pools as they were in those days, illustrated oppressive, hierarchical arrangements; tedious boring work repeated under oppressive conditions, checked and rechecked until it was perfect. Each participant referred to male bosses and commented on the roles of individual women and men within the work environment. The participants' accounts did not all record the same experience of women doing certain tasks and men doing others, but all of the participants included their thoughts around women's and men's commonly assumed roles in the office in their accounts of unpaid work at home, and in the office environment.

Each individual woman's account contained references to the nature of women's paid work as temporary until marriage and children came along, whereupon motherhood would become their primary role. Although Dawn continued to teach when her children were very young, this work was part-time and evenings only, and supplementary to the tasks of the day. The activities carried out to fill in time in conjunction with mothering are illustrated in

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the interview participants' accounts to be those which are involved with babies (one's own and other women's), forming groups with other women for the purpose of mutual support, encouraging the young with learning, and generally voluntarily helping out wherever needed. The participants filled in their time differently, but all the women related their activities to their position as mothers.

The women, by their own accounts, took a step up to enter the polytechnic system as part-time tutors. They talked about their experience of organising their households and looking after children and their secretarial skills as suitable skills for the job. The women expressed their former experience as teachers in terms of nurturing young people and supporting children's learning. For example, Susan talked frequently about the duties and responsibilities of motherhood, but she was apprehensive about the step up being scary. However, Margaret saw it as an extension of her duties as the eldest child of a large family, and eagerly undertook the new role.

The participants' accounts of becoming office systems lecturers drew on two main discursive fields: working class and maternal. These discursive fields shaped the subject positions that were open and accessible to the participants and included dominant assumptions of what was "good for a girl", and later, a woman. However, the boundaries of each discursive field are not clearly definable, and within these discursive fields, subject positions differ and are fluid.

Distinguishing features of what I call the working class discursive field cohere around acceptance of the notion that working class individuals have to work to earn their living. Men are commonly assumed to be the breadwinners and women will supplement men's earnings to meet the needs of the family: he goes "out" to work and she stays "indoors".

The discursively constituted nature of work for a working class individual is that it will be "for" somebody else. Generally it is assumed by working class women and men that their work (unpaid in the case of a woman) will be for a man or men. Notions of "working for the man" and being subject to power and authority are framed within the discourse that this

is the "lot" of the workers. Acceptance and obedience are tied into the concept of one's lot. These discourses exemplify a range of suitable options to choose from around what a working class individual should be. The central idea located in the working class discourses, and identified here in this chapter, is that certain individuals have a proper place in relation to work, and this place is different for women and men.

Women and men, positioned differently within working class assumptions of what is "right" for them are subject to certain "beliefs" about the suitable nature of work. Working class individuals are good at "trades", they "use their hands" and certain machines. These machines, the "tools of the trade", are relatively unsophisticated, and gendered. Ideas that cohere within the working class discursive field include doing tedious work, in depressing surroundings; and being subject to authority and under surveillance. Within this discursive field is also the belief that working class individuals should be "thankful to have a job at all".

The gendered accounts the office systems lecturers gave comprised the commonsense beliefs outlined above, underpinned by the working class discursive field that "practice makes perfect". This perfection is characteristically held to be attainable by individuals, under constant surveillance, controlled and held to account, until they reach the standards set for them by "those who know more than they know".

Standards of perfection are not limited to the paid work environment. They also characterise the maternal discursive field. Within this discursive field, different discourses construct "perfect ("natural and normal") women" as having children and assuming the primary role of looking after them. Clearly, women do not have to be mothers to be subject to the discourses of motherhood. Similarly, motherhood alone would not constitute the perfect woman. However, within the maternal discursive field if women are mothers, perfection is the standard set for them. Within the sets of meaning identified as maternal, women are subject to the characteristics comprising them. The dominant assumption is that natural women marry and have children. When women have children they should look after the children themselves and "fill in their time" (any that is left over) with activities

associated with babies, patiently nurturing the young and dealing with emotional issues around supporting other women. Features of maternal discourses include emotion, patience, duty and sacrifice - compliance and obedience - subject to the beliefs around a woman's natural role and primary function.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have presented extracts from the accounts of the interviewees and noted the similarities and differences between these accounts. The second part of the chapter identified dominant assumptions located within the working class and maternal discursive fields that I identified as important in the participants' accounts.

In the next chapter, I present the participants' accounts of changes in the polytechnic since they entered the sector.

Chapter five:
"lecturers" and "professionals"

We have experienced a lot more change than other departments.
Why have all the changes started with us? We are very
compliant: as women we don't make a fuss. The schools could
never have done the job we do. I think it's part of being a
woman. I think that it's part of having that dual role of being a
mother and bringing up the children and getting on with it -
because that's what you do. (Dawn)

Introduction

This chapter focuses on how some women office systems lecturers talk about the changes
that have occurred in the New Zealand polytechnic environment since the reforms of the
1990s. In this chapter I argue that women teaching in office systems departments in New
Zealand polytechnics became subject to a "professional discursive field". Discourses
around "professionalism" offered women office systems lecturers new ways to make sense
of change in their workplace. The chapter is in two parts: The first part comprises the
participants' accounts of their progression from tutors teaching secretarial subjects when
they first joined office systems, to "professionals" lecturing in office systems departments.
Part two reports on the similarities and differences found both within, and between these
individual women's stories. Here, I further explore the discursive field I have called

professional and note the shift from identities around being "ladies" to "professionals", and how that shift offers the participants a new way of talking about themselves. I conclude by arguing that the professional discursive field is important to women office systems lecturers, but that it is not the only source of discourses available to them.

Part one: the participants' accounts

Dawn's account

When Dawn looked back over the 16 years she had been an office systems lecturer she felt it had been 'a matter of being well organised and having a supportive husband and family'. She said:

> The children tell me now they never missed out. They say, now that the older ones are working full-time, they don't know how you have children and work full-time, and still get the children to sports practices and be involved in everything they do at school. But, somehow, you do.

She described these busy years as a positive experience and gave the reasons why she remained in the polytechnic:

> I'm still here and I think that's because there's been a lot of change. It's just so different from what it was when I started and the biggest change, I would have to say, is in technology. There's also been a lot of change in teaching practices that have been really positive. There are always ways of doing things differently.

Doing things "differently" was her way of managing the changes she referred to. Describing the advances in technology affecting office systems subjects Dawn said:

> What has happened is that we went from manual typewriters to electronic typewriters to wordprocessors to computers and so you are developing as you are going along. I'm not frightened of computers, I'm challenged by them - I'm always learning. So my job has never stayed static and in order to develop you need to do extra study.

Dawn discussed the reasons she enjoys being a manager in the office systems department:

> I became [a manager] here because I like to be involved in running the area. Although it's like a team here, our school is very entrepreneurial. There's a lot going on with new ideas and a lot of change.

The new ideas and change required management and preparation before they could be implemented and she explained how this was undertaken:

> We have had to learn to work effectively. I mean, initially I lived quite close to another tutor and we were teaching in the same area so we would go to each other's houses in the evenings and work together. We would put our kids to bed and then go for it. By 7.30 or 8.00 at night we would be at each other's places, working on whatever, or perhaps on a Saturday or Sunday.

Working effectively was also described as making use of school holidays to learn to write a new shorthand language:

> I was a Pitman writer, then we taught Teeline, so I spent Christmas holidays teaching myself teeline in order to teach it to students, because that was the change that was required.

Dawn described the decision made by some office systems departments to teach unit standards making up qualifications from the NQF, as indicative of 'a lot going on in office systems'. Her major emphasis was placed on the workload involved in this:

> While a lot of people were resistant and critical of the unit standards, part of that was the workload. There was an enormous workload and it's like everything you change, you often go too far one way before you come back and find the equilibrium of what's sensible - and I think we're still searching for that. I think we're still trying to maintain standards, but not go overboard about being too prescriptive or too dogmatic - although there are performance criteria that have to be met.

> I had sleepless nights and pretty stressful times. I try and be well prepared. If I had to stay up all night to be well-prepared, I would.

Maintaining standards and meeting performance criteria was described by Dawn as part of the professionalising strategy undertaken by her department.

Everybody was looking for the answers and how to go about it. I think that developed really good teamwork within the school. It was absolutely the only way to survive, to work in groups with other women in your subject group. We streamlined that and maintained it. We have meetings scheduled and it works really well - like a support group.

Describing the constructive effect of teamwork in managing the requirements of the NQF in terms of course delivery, assessment and moderation, Dawn said that

All the processes that came along with the unit standards have made a huge improvement. We are very good at what we do. I think we are very conscientious and always looking out for what's best for the student - we're always looking out to maintain our professionalism and our standards.

I think that with all the changes that have come along with the unit standards, it has made us look at what we are assessing and it has made us more accountable. We have done the development ourselves and got the best out of it.

Dawn talked about lending assistance to other departments in the polytechnic taking up delivery of qualifications from the NQF, and commented on the relationship between office systems lecturers and other lecturing staff:

In our polytech, when some areas have problems in assessing that need to be addressed, we will be asked to help. I think that's because we know how to break it up now, to look at what it is you're needing to know, and I think the unit standards have done that.

Describing a 'really good relationship', Dawn referred to staff in other teaching areas and the office systems staff as 'thinking very highly of each other' and never in a situation where it is 'them and us':

One of the men tutors in [marketing] made me a cup of coffee this morning and brought it into me because I was busy. We get on really well.

Discussing the working relationship between departments in the polytechnic, she said:

I have no real sense of a male doing this and a female doing something else, except perhaps as I mentioned before about being at a meeting and [women] doing it all. If you were in a situation like a meeting it would probably be the woman who would make sure that everybody had a cup of tea and that the

food was there - that those things were done. But, perhaps that's what comes naturally, and it might be the guys who move the tables around.

Dawn commented that changes in technology and qualifications have not led to a change in the number of male students taking office systems courses and that it is unusual to have a man in classes. However, there was this exception:

> It's quite rare to have a man in our classes, but our top student recently was a male - an executive secretarial student - and when he went to find a job through an agency he had great difficulty. Now he's a personal assistant and highly spoken of, but when we asked the agency people why he was having difficulty they said it was because he was a male.

She expressed her opinion on why male students, who have a choice of similar qualifications in different departments, usually choose not to study for these qualifications in the office systems department:

> The [the computing department] have a lot more males, yet they do quite similar units. We have included "computing" in the name of our department, so it's something to do with administration I would say - they perceive that it's a woman's world. We might get a few men on our business administration and computing, but the executive secretarial? I don't know whether its just in a name because other polytechnics don't necessarily have "secretarial" or "office" - at lot of them now are called administration and it hasn't made a difference.

Talking about changes in requirements for professional development since 1990, Dawn referred to this as 'formal study' and gave this account of her experience:

> What has happened in the department of office systems is that your professional development just evolves all the time because there is such rapid change. So, doing formal study would just not have suited me.

She made the point that for her, formal study required a philosophical shift:

> My first philosophy is that my students never get the second best. My children never got the second best, so if you are balancing that, then, for me, doing formal study probably would have meant something had to give.

The time when 'something has to give' will be 'later' in Dawn's reckoning:

I prefer to do it in my own time. But, in my retirement I want to go back to university and finish my qualification which won't do me any good probably for teaching, but I think I'll enjoy it more and I think I'll get more out of it.

Rather than doing formal study, Dawn explained that she has fulfilled her teaching conditions by keeping up to date with teaching practices:

The different ways of teaching is the area where I have done my professional development - attending courses, accelerated learning seminars. Taking opportunities to look from a student's point of view how it's most effective to learn and how to meet the student's needs. That's the big thing rather than trying to achieve a qualification that might or might not be relevant. So I suppose I'm very student-focused - always looking at what's best for the student - that's been my one focus.

However, she does have plans for the future:

I work long hours and its impossible to [do formal study] while I'm still working unless I'm fitting it in around what I'm doing. I still have a really busy job and I still work long hours and while the children have left home I'm starting to have more time with my husband and that probably comes before study. So when we retire he'll play his guitar and do whatever he wants to do and I'll probably become a student and I'm looking forward to it - I don't see myself playing golf.

Dawn summed up her account of changes in the past decade in the following way:

All the changes, unit standards, technology, professional development, well they all go partly together. I've been continually professionally developed and continue to be, through technology, through the changes in the sector, through student's expectations and student's rights - student's demands.

All the changes have been an opportunity for me to learn, but basically, by nature I don't like change - that's how I would have seen myself. I didn't like the children leaving playcentre or kindy and starting school, I don't like them leaving primary school and going to secondary. I've lived in the same house for years. So, I think it's a huge self-development because I've basically been like that. When I look back I would say that I was a kind of homebody. But, I'm still learning about myself and still learning what I like doing and what I find comes naturally, and what I enjoy.

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Dawn's account of her experience reflected her sense of being challenged by the changes of the past and welcoming those she expected to come in the future. She made the closing remark that: 'wherever industry goes I see our department being at the forefront of that change'.

Susan's account

When Susan gave her account of becoming an office systems lecturer she said that she initially found teaching a scary prospect. However, she felt confident about new technology for business administration, and welcomed the chance to apply her existing skills to something new. Acknowledging that she didn't have a lot of technical knowledge about computing and that she was still learning to drive the thing herself, Susan took the initiative and helped out:

> I had the keyboard skill and the word processing packages came along and opened things up - lecturers were needed. Nearly all the teaching I did for a start was on the computer. Once I'd progressed from community courses I took another step into teaching computer applications.

> Well, there wasn't much status in those days. But, I think the advent of computers had a lot to do with an increase in status. It's one thing to be able to drive a typewriter, that's seen as a very low skill, to drive a computer is something quite different. Suddenly, we were on the same sort of playing field as people with high academic backgrounds who were coming in to teach computing as well.

At the same time as she was adjusting to her new role, the department undertook to teach unit standards and with this change, an experience Susan described as 'bewildering' and 'frustrating':

> I was right there when we did the changeover. There was nobody who had any resources, or assessments or anything. We had to start right from scratch - we had no idea what we were supposed to be doing with them: the frustration...

> This change was forced on us. I didn't feel resentful - I don't think we had anything to be resentful about - I just felt

frustrated. It was inevitable and it had a good side. In retrospect
perhaps it hasn't been too bad and I wouldn't want to go back
now. We are so far down the road, and to try and rewrite would
be horrible.

She talked about adjustments she felt were needed in order to deliver the new material:

It was like, we've got all this material here, and we don't know
what we are supposed to be doing with it. We've been teaching
traditionally, now how do we match it up? What actually makes
sense? For a while it was a matter of dropping stuff because it
didn't fit with the unit standards, and I guess we still do that
now.

Susan felt that this experience added to the professional standing of the department:

We set very high standards, in this department, and for other
departments who are using our unit standards. When we
moderate their work we find discrepancies, and we say "this is
the standard that it should be". It has meant that all have to
consistently meet the same high standards.

According to Susan, strategies set in place to reach high standards have resulted in a better
process involving all staff across all departments and teaching each unit standard, meeting
to discuss how the course is moderated. The result of this strategy has been a 'much more
productive' way of achieving the desired outcomes. 'Much better than just sending the
stuff back saying "no, I don't think that's acceptable"'.

In her account of moderation associated with the assessment of unit standards, Susan
expressed pleasure that when her work was externally moderated 'it came back with
glowing reports'. She thought: 'great, this means I'm doing it right', and added what this
meant to her:

It's recognition, and so pleasing to be valued. The unit
standards were a global thing, not just each group doing their
own little thing and not knowing whether or not it was right.

When Susan recounted her experience of meeting the conditions of professional
development required for staff teaching in her department she was enthusiastic about the
opportunities this had offered her. She said she 'welcomed it' and really enjoyed studying
at diploma level. Susan described getting 'hooked in' and said: 'every time I did a paper I
thought, "where's the next one - what can I do now"'. She talked about how she believed

professional development gave the opportunity to teach new subjects, such as accounting, which she had always enjoyed, and explained the personal satisfaction this had given her.

> When I graduated with my diploma the kids were there and that was lovely.

But Susan said she is hesitant about undertaking a degree and has these reservations:

> I'll just look and see what's available - just see if there are any interesting papers: even if I just do one, or two, I don't have to get all the way there, but it might be like the diploma - get one or two and get sucked into it....

She expressed the following concerns about getting 'sucked into it':

> I'm not a person who enjoys doing something by correspondence, and with teaching full-time there's no way I could do it any other way. By the time I get home at night I just want to crash, and while I was doing part-time [teaching] I could do one paper each semester, sometimes evening classes, sometimes day. Now that I'm full-time, it's a lot more difficult to try and do something like that.

In Susan's experience it is difficult to find time to study, and it requires sacrifices:

> I think, "oh do I really want to"? I love being in the classroom, I love being around people and being active and talking with people, that sort of thing - which is why I enjoy teaching as much as I enjoy being a student.

> I don't want to have to go home and think "I've got another assignment I have to do...and when am I going to get time to do it"....I just don't know.

As she finished her account, Susan indicated that she might not have reached a final decision on further study: 'It could be interesting...maybe I'll have a look....'.

Margaret's account

Margaret said in her account that 'she had always been a teacher to her eight brothers and sisters'. She continued her earlier teaching practices when the unit standards were adopted, adding new ideas to her classroom resources, because 'the world changes every five seconds'. Although she made few changes to her teaching practice, the

requirements of the new qualifications had an effect on her daily work life, as she explained:

> What I have noticed is the amount of work we have to do.
>
> You weren't really given a choice - it was like - "here the unit standards are - here". We knew nothing about it really, it was just like "you've got to develop this, you've got to develop that", and we didn't know what we were doing. We just had each other.
>
> It was like walking around in the dark, and wondering if we were doing things right. If anything we probably did far too much to begin with, like over-assessing, because you didn't have anyone else to look to for guidance. That was probably the hardest time, but because we've been there and gone through that period, worked hard and achieved the results, that we feel like it's a bit easier. I think we have to be careful because I don't think it was easy - it was difficult.

Margaret said that although she still felt burdened at times by the amount of paperwork involved with delivery of the unit standards, the worst is over now:

> We've grown accustomed to it. And, I'm a person who says: "well, a job has to be done, so, you know, let's get on with it". That's what I did - I just got on with it.

Describing the early 1990s as a difficult time, Margaret said it did have a positive side:

> We always felt we were doing a good job in our department. I have always felt there is a high degree of professionalism here. But, when other departments picked up the unit standards they had to come to us for help and people who thought we just taught typing learnt that we taught other things and did a good job.

Even though she expressed confidence in the office systems department's ability to deliver quality courses professionally, she said she believed the department was undervalued by others:

> It's a real shame... people work so hard in [office systems] and it's just as good as any other course. You sort of get it, not just from colleagues, but from customers too.
>
> It may be the impact of technology, but I see certain things happening - there are office systems programmes, and then

there's computing in our computing school. Now, they don't seem to have trouble getting the numbers in their courses - I don't know what it is - maybe it's the word "computing".

Margaret said she thought there were still times when office systems was treated like the 'poor relation', and that maybe that stigma is still there'.

> Someone can come in and not know much at all about what they want to do, and they mention "computing" and someone there could direct them straight into the computing school.

> But, if you really sit down and have a talk with the person, nine times out of ten, you will find that they want to get into more of a PA role.

She expressed her opinion that the problem is to do with gender: 'men don't want to do office systems courses':

> I see that in my class - this year I've got 20 students, they're all females. Last year I had two guys, but I remember when they came for the interview they really asked about it, they weren't sure whether they would fit in. For these guys it was probably the word "computing" in the qualification that convinced them to enrol and stay.

> It wasn't until they were actually in the class and it had started that they could see how they could fit in and they felt "okay" about it. But, I think a lot of times it might be that they don't really understand - they think it's for women only and not the guys.

> But, I remember those two guys last year in the reception area - they just loved it...answering the telephones and greeting the customers and setting up scenarios for role plays - they loved it.

Margaret attributed some of the gender imbalance in classes to

> [J]ust the way we've been brought up: you know, it might be parents who are telling their children, if you're a secretary, you're a woman - I think that happens a lot.

Describing her feelings about meeting professional development conditions of her teaching role, she said there were at times she felt some obligation to get 'another piece of paper':

> There have been times when I feel I should do a bit more. There hasn't really been pressure put upon me, but I can see what's happening because of changes. There have been big changes for

example in our nursing school, everyone has degrees and is working towards their masters ... sometimes I feel a bit left behind.

But, finding time to do extra study, out of classroom hours can be a bit difficult:

> I am so committed to teaching, but at the same time, you have got to be careful that your own development is not being left behind. There have been big changes and one of the impacts of change is that you are likely to be the one who will lose out with the job if you don't have formal qualifications.

Margaret explained that she preferred to be with her class rather than taking time out to attend lectures:

> I do have a real passion for teaching and I like to be with my class. Because of their age, they are a youth group, I don't like to have too many days off and I don't. I mean, one time I had to be away for a few days at a conference and it really rocked them - they get all silly - it's just their age.

However, a particular programme that appeals to her may be offered by the polytechnic in future and that will make a difference:

> When we have it here I will definitely do it - it's so handy and there wouldn't be the hassle of getting relievers for your class. I think if you can study on the premises you don't have to miss as many classes. It's something I've been thinking about, even within our school I see certain women doing extra papers - it's a matter of having to - but they enjoy it.

But, Margaret still has some reservations:

> It might just be stubbornness in me, but part of me holds back. Part of me thinks, "it's only a piece of paper", and I get confused at times, but then I think at the end of the day because our world is changing it might be that we all have to have a degree so I've got to be careful.

> But, at other times I'm think: it's only a piece of paper - it doesn't mean that because [another lecturer] has got a degree in such and such that they are better than me at teaching. I don't have to go and get a piece of paper, I know I can teach.

Bringing our interview to a close, Margaret said:

> I love working here... it's grown and I think that's why I'm still here. When I first started working here it was really handy for

my children, and my family is really important to me to be able to get home to. There's still lots of things we could improve on here, but that will come....and more issues.

Brooke's account

Brooke's first experiences of the polytechnic were connected with text processing technology, she explained how enthusiastic she was about the potential it had for her:

> I experienced the first big change with technology, and "yes, I loved it". Once I got into this computer I thought: "wow, I'm in control here, I can tell this thing what to do".

She said she had no trouble learning computer applications:

> No, no, the man I job-shared with was really good. Nothing was too much trouble to explain and he spent a lot of time going over things with me. He was very, very knowledgeable. He had a degree, in computer engineering I think it was, and he was excellent.

The introduction of unit standards and the resultant workload were a less pleasant experience: 'I don't know how I survived those years', she said:

> I was working, probably a 60-hour week to get it all done. But, my main focus was the students and making a success of it. When the units first came in, the way they were written led us to over-assess in a lot of ways. They have been refined now, but it was one heck of a workload - it really was.

> In office systems we have such high standards. We do a lot more moderation than other areas - yes, I think we do - we have very high standards and we work very hard. We have good collegiality amongst staff - we've got a good group of staff who work really hard and well together, but,

> [W]e were, sort of the guinea pigs to bring it in, and it was horrific.

During this horrific time Brooke recalled that she was also studying for teachers' diplomas in typing and word processing:

> I hadn't had teacher training, and once I started teaching, I felt
> there was a gap - there was something missing - I didn't have
> that theoretical background

She talked about how she 'felt really good' passing examinations 'with As' and the value of the course curriculum in terms of the theory of typing, and concepts around layout knowledge and the production of technical documents.

Brooke described her ways of meeting professional development requirements, and explained her reasons for using this time to keep up with software packages and new versions of applications used in office administration:

> Well, I know there's a push here for people to get degrees, not
> so much in our department where we're teaching certificates, but
> in others.
>
> For me, I am at a point in my life where: "no, I'm not going to
> spend 10 years studying to get a degree". I'll be ready to retire
> then. I don't see the point.
>
> I can do better things, and why spend my time doing a degree,
> say English papers, for example, when what I really needed for
> the students was to upskill in software because we were
> continually moving up to the latest versions and had to rewrite
> notes and assessments.
>
> There was enough work to do developing resources and
> everything else, and to have a BA or BEd, or whatever...I might
> have jumped up the salary scale, but not necessarily. I know
> some of the younger staff are looking towards degrees, but I've
> found that I needed it [professional development time] just to
> upskill with what I needed for teaching.

But, this decision could be renegotiated:

> If somebody said to me: "do the national diploma [in Business
> Administration Services]", I could see that, perhaps, as being
> more appropriate for benefiting yourself and the students,
> because you would be at a level higher than the one they are
> doing.

Students' success is a feature of teaching that Brooke enjoys and values, and she expressed her feelings. She described her feelings about changes in her work environment since she became an office systems lecturer in these terms:

There's not so much change in teaching - you're teaching the
same thing - it's just the assessment and record-keeping. But for
some of the students, yes, it's been a change. Some students
who have never achieved were receiving a certificate.

It just blew you away to see how happy some of these people
were. They would bring their whole family down and they
would be so excited about this student. You see, it would be the
first time they had ever been up on stage, ever gone up to get a
certificate - they didn't get anything at school - they would not
have got School Certificate - probably left at 15. They would
have been lucky to have got a leaving certificate.

But, oh for me, it is one of the warmest fuzzies. It's the
graduation at the end.

Part two: office systems lecturers becoming "professionals"

Staff in office systems departments were among the first to feel the effects of the tertiary
education reforms of the 1990s "on the ground". In chapter four, I identified two discursive
fields which the participants drew upon in their stories of getting work in office systems. In
this chapter the participants' stories of their experiences of change in their work during the
reforms have been presented.

This chapter now turns to an interpretation of the similarities and differences between these
four women's accounts. In each participants' account, I found examples illustrative of the
effect of discourses that are both gendered and classed. However, as the participants
described their experiences of reforms of the 1990s, their stories demonstrated
connectedness with "professionalism". In other words, discourses constituting "The
professional woman office systems lecturer" were in circulation.

Each individual woman's account offered insights into the effects of the introduction of unit
standards and the NQF on office systems departments. The general feeling was that

direction from the Ministry of Education to take up national qualifications was imposed upon them by an authority unprepared to fully declare its actions or intentions. However, each participants' account describes how the new qualifications *were* taken up: resourced, developed, delivered, assessed, moderated, and reported on within a very short time, by office systems lecturers who worked together and got on with the job. Dawn gave two separate examples of how women "get on with the job". She described women working together in each others homes after the children had been put to bed, *and* the strategies the office systems team put into place by setting up regular afternoon meetings, held in the office systems department to maintain "professional standards" of course delivery.

All of the participants talked about the professionalising strategy of formal, scheduled meetings, directed by the office systems team which lecturers (from throughout the polytechnic) teaching unit standards from the business administration sub-field of the NQF, were required to attend. While this probably added to the already heavy workload in the department, Dawn said she would 'stay up all night to be prepared for these meetings if she had to'. As noted, Margaret said that she had always felt the office systems department was professional, but she also felt formal meetings were an opportunity to make this professionalism more obvious. The clear message to lecturers teaching office systems subjects was that the standard of professionalism in terms of delivery of these standards should be high. As Susan said, taking on responsibility for the unit standards was an opportunity to insist on all lecturers meeting the same consistently high standards as those set by office systems lecturers. Office systems lecturers became very visible *as professionals* in the polytechnic.

Talking about advances in text processing and information technology, the participants expressed their satisfaction that they were at the forefront of unprecedented growth in office systems software. They saw the progression from manual typewriters; to electronic typewriters; to computers as a development which took them along with it. Developments in technology presented Dawn with a challenge and an opportunity to learn something different. None of the participants resisted the new machinery. For Susan and Brooke it gave the opportunity to join the polytechnic lecturing staff, and it made them feel differently

about themselves and their commercial skills. Susan became aware of improved status, from driving a typewriter, seen as a low skill, to driving a computer which was something quite different. Brooke welcomed being in control of the computer and being able to tell the machine what to do.

However, the gendered nature of "tools of the trade", and the gendered nature of the polytechnic gave rise to conflict in terms of where, and by whom, this new machinery and particular courses would be offered to students. Computing departments had sprung up in polytechnics during the 1990s and office systems lecturers were given a role teaching keyboarding skills to predominantly male students who flocked to join the programmes offered in schools of business computing. Brooke's account of job-sharing and teaching keyboard skills alongside a lecturer in the computing department, and Margaret's account of students experiences of receiving advice at enrolment time illustrate this. Students who say they are interested in computers are enrolled in the business computing department and not offered the option of undertaking business administration courses in the office systems department. Both curriculum and technology remain gendered in the polytechnic of the 1990s.

Changed requirements for professional development as a condition of employment was described in the participants' accounts in terms of a different approach to academic qualifications. All of the participants drew upon notions of class and gender in terms of professional development. Participants all gave accounts of the implications of combining 'formal study' with maternal responsibilities with duties to students, and the delivery of programmes that would meet their own high standards of professionalism. For example, Dawn described plans to complete a qualification in her retirement. She felt that the need to keep up-to-date with changes in teaching practices, technology, and the increased entrepreneurial activities of the management team in office systems meant she would have to put off further qualifications. Dawn saw the opportunity to do further formal study and *personal* development as something to look forward to in the future.

Susan also negotiated the changes in professional development and said that although she had enjoyed gaining qualifications she puts her energies into the classroom and is tired at the end of the day. However, further study looked likely as she contemplated perhaps, just one or two papers of a new qualification. Accepting that she might need to do something more in the way of qualifications, Margaret did not rule out this possibility, but she was adamant that she did not need to have a piece of paper to show that she could teach and that she already knew she was a good teacher without this particular evidence. Brooke put emphasis on keeping up to date with developments in information and communications technology. Brooke talked about plans for professional development that included qualifications directly related to business administration, such as the current diploma on the NQF, and subjects she could add to her teaching portfolio. She was resistant to becoming a student at her age.

In the public work environment "professional" individuals are commonly expected to have academic qualifications, most likely from a university. These qualifications are characteristically higher than those at certificate level, at least a diploma or degree level, and may not relate directly to the job being undertaken by the individual.

From a critical reading, I identified a new discursive field, which I have named the "professional discursive field" in operation in the women's stories. The discourses that comprise this field privilege a new type of "worker", and a new type of "work". The new type of worker is change focused. What Dawn expressed as 'a lot of change', Margaret likened to 'the world changing every five seconds', and all the women who gave their accounts described themselves as working constantly to respond to new ideas and directions. Dawn said she 'would work all night if she had to in order to do her job'. In terms of the new type of worker being responsive to student needs, Dawn gave this example: 'My children always came first and my students always come first'.

The new type of worker in office systems departments leads the way for others in the polytechnic and sets standards that are required to be met. Susan gave this example: 'we say this is the standard that it should be, and others teaching office systems subjects

elsewhere in the polytechnic must meet the same consistently high standards as we do'. All the participants identified high standards as inclusive of a range of performance criteria. High standards typified the new discursive field identified in terms of classroom practice, constantly rewritten resources up to the minute with new versions of computer software, assessment materials and close monitoring of student results. The new type of worker is a *hard worker*.

The new type of work is high volume. The participants drew upon discourses within the new professional discursive field to make claims about themselves as "professionals" and who could be a certain type of worker in this new environment. Brooke described the amount of work involved as 'horrific'. Margaret felt the amount of paperwork required to be completed was the most distinguishing feature of change. In the new type of work, emphasis is placed on administrative tasks. The monitoring of moderation procedures and record-keeping generates a heavy workload. Brooke gave the example of 60-hour work weeks being required of workers in this environment, but also said However, a primary objective of the new type of worker and an outcome of their hard work is rewarded in Brooke's account of 'students who are just blown away by their achievement'.

While the professional discursive field was in operation in the office systems women's stories, it was not independent of "working class" and "maternal" discursive fields. The working class and maternal discursive fields were obviously important in some accounts. Brooke talked about 'having better things to do' than formal study , and Margaret weighed up further professional qualifications as 'only a piece of paper'. In describing leading the way to develop unit standards for delivery to students of commercial subjects, meeting the requirements of teaching to national qualifications, Dawn expressed it as something 'only the office systems departments could have done'. She said: 'It's part of being a woman, having that dual role of being a mother and bringing up the children, and getting on with it - because that's what you do'.

Clearly, women and men are positioned different within professional assumptions of what is "right" for them. The discursively constituted nature of work for women professionals is

nevertheless, underpinned by notions of what a woman should be in terms of her primary role as a woman. The features of working class discourses and maternal discourses, including compliance and obedience, emotion, patience, duty and sacrifice subject to the beliefs around a woman's natural role and primary function are not negated when new subject positions within the professional discursive field come along. Characteristics of the professional discursive field made available a new set of voices for women office systems lecturers; and made available new subject positions as office systems lecturers. Within this discursive field, the participants accepted, resisted, and negotiated new ways of "being professionals".

The professional discursive field in circulation in office systems departments in the 1990s was "acceptable" to office systems lecturers. It was a way of doing it differently: personally and professionally. The participants talked about the changes as a result of reforms representing a huge improvement in the way things had been done, both in the department and in the wider polytechnic. Office systems lecturers had always been good at what they did. In the 1990s, they were being asked for help by lecturers from other departments. Looking out to maintain their own standards of professionalism, women office systems lecturers set improved standards throughout the polytechnic.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have presented the participants' accounts of managing change in the 1990s, and noted the similarities and differences between these accounts. From these accounts, I have identified the professional discursive field as a new set of discourses that women in office systems drew upon when talking about the reforms, and the impact on their work. The professional discursive field is not the only source of discourses available to women teaching in these departments, but it has been demonstrated to be a key resource for these women making sense of changes in their working lives. In the final part of the my thesis which follows, I will comment on how women office systems lecturers in the polytechnic sector negotiated their gendered subject positions during the reforms. I will reflect on the research process and experience of doing research.

Conclusions:
a new set of voices

What an event means to an individual depends on the ways of
interpreting the world, on the discourses available to her at any
particular moment (Weedon, 1987, p. 179).

Meaning is always political. It is located in social networks of
power/knowledge relations which give society its current form.
Not all areas of discourse are equally significant in the hierarchy
of power/knowledge relations but no discursive practice is
outside them (Weedon, 1987, p. 138).

Introduction

For most of the almost 20 years I have taught "secretarial" subjects in the polytechnic sector
I have known myself and colleagues as "office systems ladies". I have encountered the
polytechnic as an institution in my everyday life and shared similar experiences to those of
the women interviewed in this study. In this chapter I will comment firstly, on how women
office systems lecturers in the polytechnic sector negotiated their gendered subject positions
during the reforms. Secondly, I will comment on the claim made by a participant in this
research that 'there have been a lot of changes that have been really positive' (Dawn).
Finally, I will reflect on research process and experiences of doing research.

Accepting, resisting and negotiating

While in theory no subject position is closed to us, being a woman requires us to accept, resist and negotiate what is constantly being offered to us *as women*. As women office systems lecturers this involves us in accepting, resisting, and negotiating the gendered and classed polytechnic sector of post-compulsory education. Being professional in the New Zealand polytechnic of the 21st century is no bed of roses. Power relations in this institution still determine who does what and for whom, what we are and what we might become.

Power relations structure all areas of life, and discourses carry different amounts of power - some discourses justify the appropriateness of existing forms of social relations (Weedon, 1987). The dominance of "working class" and "maternal" discursive fields which the participants drew upon, particularly to describe their early life, but significantly also in their accounts of negotiating their gendered subject positions during the reforms, demonstrated this. New subject positions came into circulation that challenged accepted understandings or practices, for example, the "professional office systems lecturer", but the new discursive field was frequently marginal to, and marginalised by, dominant discourses, that is, those which carry the greatest status or power.

However, as Dawn said, there have been a lot of changes in office systems departments that are positive. A new discursive field has become available to women office systems lecturers that I have named the "professional discursive field", and within this discursive field, new ways of being for individual women. Access to the field does not bring change without negotiation on the part of the subject. The office systems curriculum remains gendered and classed, technology remains gendered and classed, and so does the polytechnic. But, in the 21st century, women office systems lecturers can learn to choose between a range of multiple and competing discourses that include the "belief" they are "professionals".

The positive experiences of change since reforms were balanced by negative experiences and some constraints. Improvements in teaching practices, increased responsiveness and accountability to students, and nationally recognised and approved qualifications were

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offset by constant hard work. Challenges to "self" (there was one occasion during her interview when Dawn referred to herself as a tutor) brought about by change were positive on the one hand, but unpredictable and unbounded on the other. The unpredictable nature of change in the 1990s was underpinned by a lack of choice. The participants in this research experienced change as forced upon them - 'here it is, here'. With very little guidance they developed the resources required to deliver new qualifications, sometimes within a matter of months, and in most cases without financial resources to allow time away from the classroom to do the work.

The professional office systems lecturer was respected by staff in other polytechnic departments. All the participants felt pleased to be valued, but that this recognition came at the cost of an enormous volume of work. Meeting, and maintaining, the performance criteria of the professional office systems lecturer involved tight deadlines for completing administrative tasks: for example, fast return of marked work to students, moderation procedures, reporting of results, and issuing student records. When this huge workload reached 'horrific' proportions some participants felt 'something had to give'.

The shift to professional office systems lecturer was not complete. There were examples of overlaps and contradictions that the participants drew upon to manage imposed, and unpredictable, change. Brooke said she 'had better things to do' and preferred to spend time with her family. Her rewards for all the hard work and effort were to watch students graduate and receive certificates of achievement. The professional discursive field is important to office systems lecturers, but it does not operate independently of "working class" and "maternal" discursive fields. Dawn said: 'we need to find the balance'.

Name changes including the words "business administration: and "computing" in qualifications and names of departments did not seem to make a significant difference in terms of secretarial programmes in the polytechnic, and these are still gendered. Tensions between acceptable courses for men in computing departments and women in office systems departments indicate the effective and powerful nature of particular discourses. Although the keyboard has been defeminised by its widespread use as the means of

accessing information and communications technology, keyboarding for business administration is still a secretarial role, and: 'if you're a secretary, you're a woman'.

The new discursive field open to women office systems lecturers as a result of "reforms" of the 1990s represents a shift, but subject positions within this shift are still subject to patriarchal power relations in which women's interests are positioned differently from the interests of men. My conclusions from this research are around the thought that patriarchy implies a fundamental organisation of power, which is not natural and inevitable, but socially produced.

A new set of voices

Here, I reflect on what happens when women think about their experiences within a particular framework that leads to a different understanding. My experience as a researcher in this project has been from the viewpoint of a woman office systems lecturer who has recorded a new set of voices. Like the interview participants, I really enjoyed having someone to talk to. It was a lot of fun and the tapes provided me with many, many hours of listening to women's voices - they are, indeed, treasures.

My role as researcher, especially a researcher asking about experiences of changes brought about by new qualifications, shaped the initial dynamics of the interview. For a very brief time at the beginning of each interview, some power imbalance seemed to exist between myself and the other participant. However, once the interview was under way and my position as office systems lecturer became obvious, the interviewing process gained momentum as well as a measure of informality.

The results and conclusions of this research are shaped by the nature of the investigation. Guided by feminist theory and carried out from a feminist perspective, both the results and the conclusions represent the interests of women. As accounts given by women who are 'knowers' and 'agents of knowledge' (Harding, 1987, p. 3), these accounts are important

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inclusions in the history of change in the polytechnic environment. The participants' accounts address the impact of organisational change on a large and historically significant group of women, from the viewpoint of their own experience of the reforms.

Analysing the women's accounts central to this thesis was a slow process and at times an emotional one. I recorded thousands of words, and repeated multiple critical readings of the transcripts. This process brought home to me the extent to which powerful discourses have a material base in established social institutions and practices.

Conclusion

In this thesis I have explored the accounts of women office systems lecturers in terms of their experiences of being "secretarial tutors" prior to and following the reforms that reshaped New Zealand polytechnic education in the 1990s. These women's voices had been silenced in the hierarchical and gendered polytechnic. In this research, they give accounts of the outcomes of reforms of the past decade very different from the official records of change. This research raises the voices of an historically significant group of women in the history of the polytechnic sector in New Zealand giving an account of change from the viewpoint of women office systems lecturers.

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Massey University Regional Human Ethics Committee: Palmerston North (HEC: PN)
Old Main Building, Turitea   Fax: 64 6 350 5622   http://www.massey.ac.nz/~muhec

Professor Sylvia V Rumball, Chair   Miss Karen A Kahukoti, Secretary
Telephone: 64 6 350 5249   Telephone: 64 6 350 6171
Email: S.V.Rumball@massey.ac.nz   Email: K.A.Kahukoti@massey.ac.nz

Massey University

28 March 2002

Lindsay Olney
█████████
█████████

Dear Lindsay

Re: HEC: PN Protocol – 02/18
Four plus one: Feminist oral history accounts and an analysis of the impact
of change in the polytechnic environment on some women educators

Thank you for your email received 26 March 2002 and the amended Information Sheet.

The amendments you have made and explanations you have given now meet the requirements of the Massey University Human Ethics Committee and the ethics of your protocol are approved.

Any departure from the approved protocol will require the researcher to return this project to the Massey University Regional Human Ethics Committee: Palmerston North for further consideration and approval.

A reminder to include the following statement on all public documents "This project has been reviewed and approved by the Massey University Human Ethics Committee, PN Protocol 02/18. If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research, please contact Professor Sylvia V Rumball, Chair, Massey University Regional Human Ethics Committee: Palmerston North, telephone 06 350 5249, email S.V.Rumball@massey.ac.nz."

Yours sincerely

Sylvia Rumball.

Professor Sylvia V Rumball, Chair
Massey University Regional Human Ethics Committee: Palmerston North

cc   Dr Jenny Coleman
      Sociology, Social Policy & Social Work
      TURITEA PN381

29 April 2002

Lindsay Olney

Tena koe e Lindsay

RESEARCH PROPOSAL

Thank you for forwarding your research proposal *"Four plus one: feminist oral history accounts and an analysis of the impact of change in the polytechnic environment on some women educators"*. This was considered and supported at the research and ethics committee meeting of April 24, with the one condition that a copy of the final report be sent to our committee.

We are pleased to be able to support your research and would like to wish you all the best with your studies. The committee noted the comprehensive nature of your proposal and literature review and would like to thank you for providing such a well-presented application.

You may include the following statement on public documents associated with your research:

> *This project has been considered and supported by the research and ethics committee, April 2002. If you have any questions or concerns about this research please contact .*

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any queries or would like assistance.

Heoi ano, naku na

[Massey University Letterhead]

2 April 2002

[Identifying information deleted]

Dear [information deleted]

I enclose an information sheet outlining research I propose to undertake to complete a masterate thesis in 2002. I would like your approval to invite willing members of your staff to participate in this research.

The research concerns the impact of changes in the polytechnic environment on some women educators from the Office Systems Department. It aims to record their experience of change in any measurements of the success of educational reforms which have affected this environment so dramatically.

I am keen to research outcome of educational reform in this particular area of the polytechnic environment. I hope my proposed methodology will allow some voices to be heard in the assessment of results which the designers might not have made provision to include.

Your approval for this project to proceed would be very much appreciated. This project has been reviewed and approved by the Massey University Human Ethics Committee, PN Protocol 02/18. If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research, please contact Professor Sylvia V. Rumball, Chair, Massey University Regional Human Ethics Committee: Palmerston North. I will be happy to meet any further requirements you may have to allow this research to proceed.

If you feel satisfied to allow this project to commence please contact me and I will send copies of the Information sheet to [information deleted] to be distributed.

Thank you for your attention to my request.

Yours sincerely

Lindsay Olney

SEX-TYPED: The impact of change in the polytechnic environment on some women educators from the 'secretarial' department.

INFORMATION SHEET

This project has been considered and supported by the [identifying information deleted] *April 2002. If you have any questions or concerns about this research please contact* [identifying information deleted]

My name is Lindsay Olney and I am a masters student at Massey University. I am currently on study leave from my position as Programme Leader, Diploma in Business Administration Services (L5). I have been a lecturer in the 'office systems' environment at Manukau Institute of Technology for the past 16 years and during that time I have seen a lot of change.

This project which I am inviting you to take part in is about how change has affected women educators in the polytechnic environment, particularly the traditional 'secretarial/office systems departments. My interest is focused around women who have been teaching in this environment for some years and for whom this has been their career. I would particularly like to talk to women approximately between 45-55 years of age: a category I fit into at the upper end!

The last two decades have seen a good deal of educational reform. Much of this reform has had a dramatic effect on polytechnics and most of them have responded enthusiastically to it. Usually the 'enthusiastic response' is linked to growth in student numbers and a proliferation of new courses. Whilst it is relatively easy to measure the success of these reforms in terms of the outcomes the designers had in mind, it is more difficult to measure the impact on the educators involved and their workplace.

The purpose of my study is to include the voices of women who have experienced a great deal of change in their working environment in a relatively short time in assessment of the results of educational reform.

The nature of the research will be to record the oral accounts of women who have experienced changes in their teaching programmes, courses, and assessment methods, as well as personal and professional development and remained committed to an environment of quality. I am interested to know how this experience has affected people's professional lives.

I propose to contact the CEO of one or two polytechnics (not my own) where national certificates in business administration are taught and to give them all the details of my proposed research and the purposes it will be used for .

I will ask the CEO to discuss the project with the Head of Department (Office Systems) and if they are both willing to support it, to distribute the information sheet inviting participation at a staff meeting or similar. I will ask the HOD to instruct participants to contact me directly if they are willing to take part.

If sufficient participants are not found at the first polytechnic contacted I will repeat this process at another. I will not use interview subjects from the polytechnic where I am a staff member.

When interview participants indicate to me that they are willing to take part in the interview process I will set up a time and place convenient to them for this to take place.

Before the interview commences I will go over the prepared Informed Consent form with the interview subject and negotiate any changes they would like to make. A copy of the form will be signed before the interview takes place.

What would you have to do?

If you agree to take part in this study I will ask you to complete a short profile sheet which I will mail to you and to meet with me for **one** interview of about one hour. This interview would take place at a time and place convenient to you, will be recorded (with your permission) and conducted in private. The interview will ask you about four or five questions about your experiences of change, your professional development, how you feel about your position in the polytechnic environment and how this affects your future plans.

What rights would you have?

If you agree to take part in the research you have the right to:

1. complete confidentiality - pseudonyms will be used for yourselves and your polytecnic
2. refuse to answer any particular question, and to withdraw from the study during the interview process, or after you have read the transcript
3. ask any further questions about the research that occur to you during your participation
4. provide information on the understanding that it is completely confidential to the researchers, and you will not be able to be identified in any material that is prepared from the research
5. examine and amend the transcript of your interview, and to indicate any part of the transcript that you do not wish to be used. Approval to proceed with the inclusion of the interview material after you have read the transcript will be deemed to apply until after the thesis has been submitted and examined
6. be given the opportunity to read a summary of the findings of the research when it is completed

7. determine the disposal of tapes, transcripts or documents made available to the researcher.

This project has been reviewed and approved by the Massey University Human Ethics committee, PN Protocol 02/18. If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research, please contact Professor Sylvia Rumball, Chair, Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Palmerston North, telephone 06 350 5249, email S.V.Rumball@massey.ac.nz.

Please contact me directly if you would like to assist me with your participation:

Lindsay Olney

The supervisor of this project is:
Dr Jenny Coleman
Massey University
email: J.D.Coleman@massey.ac.nz

SEX-TYPED: The impact of change in the polytechnic environment on some women educators from the 'secretarial' department.

CONSENT FORM

I have read the Information Sheet and have had the details of the study explained to me. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I understand that I may ask further questions at any time.

I understand I have the right to withdraw from the study at any time and to decline to answer any particular questions.

I agree to provide information to the researcher on the understanding that my name will not be used without my permission.
(The information will be used only for this research and publications arising from this research project).

I agree/do not agree to the interview being audio taped.
I agree/do not agree to the interview being video taped.

I also understand that I have the right to ask for the audio/video tape to be turned off at any time during the interview.

I agree to participate in this study under the conditions set out in the Information Sheet.

Signed: ....

Name: ....

Date: ....

SEX-TYPED: The impact of change in the polytechnic environment on some women educators from the 'secretarial' department.

PROFILE SHEET

Thank you for agreeing to take part in this research. I appreciate the time you are giving me. I have sent you this profile sheet in order to collect some factual information before our interview. It will both guide the process and ensure that none of your valuable experience is overlooked.

The facts you supply me with here will be followed up during the interview and serve to semi-structure it as well as make the best use of our time together.

Name: ....

Contact details: *(please do not give any details of places where you do not wish to be contacted)* :

email: ....

Telephone: ....

(Please only answer the questions which you feel comfortable to give information about)

When did you leave school?...

What formal qualifications did you leave school with?...............................

....

....

Did you go from school to a formal training institution?..............................

What employment did you take up after leaving school (or higher education)?

....

....

....

When did you become an employee at a polytechnic?.................................

Which department were you first employed in?...

How long have you been employed in the polytechnic environment?..........

....

What formal qualifications have you gained during your professional development in the polytechnic environment?

....

....

....

....

....

Thank you for completing this profile sheet. I look forward to our interview and will be in contact with you to arrange this at a convenient time to you.

Lindsay Olney