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What counts as accountability? : Towards an accountability framework for the pre-primary

Lennie Barblett
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**What counts as accountability?
Towards an accountability framework
for the pre-primary.**

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B.A., Dip.T., E.C.E, B.Ed. (Hons.)

**A Thesis Submitted for the Fulfilment of the
Requirements of the Award of
Doctor of Philosophy**

Faculty of Community Services, Education and Social Sciences

Edith Cowan University

11th September 2000

USE OF THESIS

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

DECLARATION

I certify that this thesis does not, to the best of my knowledge and belief:

- (i) incorporate without acknowledgement any material previously submitted for a degree or diploma in any institution of higher education;
- (ii) contain any material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the text; or
- (iii) contain any defamatory material.

Signature _____

Date 11. 9. 2000

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ABSTRACT

Accountability in the pre-primary year has become a focus for attention as schools develop corporate school plans. Pre-primary teachers can no longer work in isolation and are required to implement the school development plan in order to account for their portion of the school's work. This study aimed to find out how pre-primary teachers accounted for their educational programs and what factors influenced their accountability notions and practices. The study conducted in Western Australia used an ecological theoretical framework. Data was collected using multi-modal techniques and analysed using an interpretive-constructivist approach. Three case studies, a questionnaire and focus groups of pre-primary teachers were the main methods used for data collection.

The study revealed that implementation of the school development plan by pre-primary teachers was not uniform. Along a continuum of pre-primary teacher accountability, three main patterns of variation were revealed in a typology of the accountability landscape. At one end of the continuum was the group of teachers who felt threatened by the school development plan and so did not engage with the plan. In the middle were a group of teachers who were isolated from the school and uncertain about engaging with the plan. At the other end of the continuum were the pre-primary teachers who were fully engaged with the school development plan. The accountability framework designed in this study may assist pre-primary teachers by supporting them to interact with the accountability processes in the primary school setting.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

“I don’t think I am accountable to the Education Department as much as I used to...there is no-one, sort of out there.” (Interview #2, 27.8.97)

Jane is an experienced pre-primary teacher employed by the Education Department of Western Australia and like many pre-primary teachers is feeling isolated. She believes that her principal could not make an informed judgement about her work and she does not know how to demonstrate to him the quality of what she is doing. This story is similar to stories told by many pre-primary teachers before and during this study. When working as a pre-primary teacher I realised the need to develop an accountability framework because pre-primary colleagues complained about the difficulties of explaining their work to others in a way that was clear and valued. The answer at the time was to develop a framework that provided a focus for pre-primary teachers’ articulation of their pedagogy transposed into action contributing to school accountability processes. Thus, this study began.

The beginning sections of this chapter establish the background to the study and provide a description of the factors that make accountability an issue in Western Australian early childhood education. Using these factors as a contextual base, the subsequent sections outline the purpose and significance of the study. Following this are the questions the study seeks to answer and consideration of the terms and significance of this work. Finally, an overview of the thesis is presented.

Background

Accountability in education is not a new idea. The call to increase accountability in education has risen in part from the economic considerations involved in the push towards a global economy and the marketisation of the education sector. Like all Australian public sectors, the early childhood sector is buffeted by a push for accountability for quality outcomes, decentralisation of management to a local level and employee appraisal in a context of reduced public spending (Woodrow & Brennan, 1999). This push for quality outcomes is a reflection of an accountability movement across the world that has shifted from a focus on inputs to outcomes (Hines, 1996). In the Australian education sector, the move to outcomes has accompanied the decentralisation of state education systems and strong centralisation of curriculum control through curriculum councils (e.g. Western Australian Curriculum Council, 1998). Early childhood teachers have traditionally controlled the structure and content of their curriculum. This shift to centralising control of curriculum and the move to outcomes have the potential to change early childhood practices. It may alter the way that those in accountability relationships define and assess work and success. Early childhood professionals, mostly women, are being “repositioned by moves to introduce more explicit curriculum and accountability”(Woodrow & Brennan, 1999, p.78), should early childhood practitioners not contribute to the system accountability processes their own position and perspectives on how teaching and learning influence accountability processes will be lost. This section examines reasons for the rise of the accountability movement and factors affecting discussion on early childhood accountability.

The Rise of Accountability as an Issue in Western Australian Early Childhood Education

Accountability in education is discussed frequently in the context of the latter years of compulsory schooling. However, a number of factors such as arguments about quality, demographic change, provision and expectations of the pre-primary year in Western Australia have brought about a focus on the early years of education. Together, these factors have increased the pressure for more clearly articulated accountability practices in both compulsory and non-compulsory programs. The importance of high quality early childhood programs is one such factor.

There is increasing recognition in and beyond educational circles of the importance of high quality educational programs for young children. Longitudinal studies have shown the benefits of high quality early childhood programs on later learning and successful life skills (Schweinhart & Weikart, 1993). This increased recognition brings with it scrutiny of an area of education that has traditionally rested upon the practices of “nice women who like children” (Stonehouse, 1989). A framework that articulates the roles and responsibilities of early childhood teachers noting their accountability obligations to stakeholders would be a useful tool. Such a framework can assist stakeholders in recognising high quality programs for young children especially in a time when there are increasing numbers of children attending early childhood services. The National Childcare Accreditation Council (1993) reported that increasingly children are spending time in care and education programs before they begin compulsory school. This is due to demographic changes, the breakdown of extended families and increased numbers of women

entering and staying in the workforce (National Child Care Accreditation Council, 1993). More families therefore have contact with early childhood programs in the years of pre-compulsory schooling.

Politically, education is constructed as an economic good and many parents believe that their children's future economic security rests upon a sound education leading to later employment (Ball, 1994). A firm foundation for future learning and development should be established in the early years. However, in these early years of education, teachers report that increasingly parents judge a teacher's effectiveness on how well they advance their child's academic accomplishments, ignoring other enriching aspects of the program (Shepard & Smith, 1988). The pressure to implement academic programs in the non-compulsory years of school and centralising control of the curriculum is another factor influencing the rise of accountability as an issue.

Pre-school programs in Australia have become almost universal and many early years primary school teachers have begun to expect a common set of academic pre-requisites (Cuthill, Reid & Hill, 1998). In Western Australia, control of the educational provision for five year old children has long been moved from the Community Kindergarten Association to the auspices of the Education Department of Western Australia (hitherto referred to as EDWA). This means that early childhood professionals now work within a whole school context in primary schools where the impact of academic pushdown is apparent (Corrie, 1998). Academic pushdown is characterised by the language and concepts of more "formal" learning pushed down from the primary years to kindergarten and pre-primary (Cullen, 1994; Shepard & Smith, 1988). Academic pushdown has developed an "accountability" culture in the early years

of education (Shepard & Smith, 1988) and in some schools fosters “readiness for school” programs (Cuthill, Reid & Hill, 1998). The view that effective school readiness is necessary for academic success in the early years at school has led to increased scrutiny of preschool services.

The early childhood education sector in Australia is under constant scrutiny and discussion. The plethora of discussion papers and reports commenting on early childhood education is testimony to this (e.g. NBEET, 1992a; 1992b; 1992c; Australian Language and Literacy Council, 1991; Ministerial Task Force, 1993). A Federal Senate inquiry into early childhood education investigated in the field, in order to carry out “its legislative, review and accountability functions”(Senate Employment, Education and Training References Committee, 1996, p.1). Such inquiries pose questions about the accountability processes that are in place enabling practitioners to demonstrate to others not only the quality of their practices in the field, but the reasons behind them.

In summary, there are a number of outside forces contributing to the rise of accountability as an issue in early childhood education. These external forces include realisation of the importance of quality early childhood programs, changes in family demographics, increased parental expectations and academic pushdown. In addition to the broader social and cultural forces described in this section, discussion on accountability in early childhood education has also been influenced by issues related to the pedagogy and practice of early childhood educators.

Issues Affecting Accountability in Early Childhood Education

Clouding the issue of accountability in early childhood education in Western Australia, is the inclusion of the non-compulsory years of schooling (kindergarten and pre-primary) within the compulsory schooling sector. It is assumed that early childhood education will fit neatly with existing analyses applied to schools (Woodrow & Brennan, 1999). However this is often not the case. At times, preschool programs are overlooked or given different treatment within school policy contexts such as processes of teacher accountability. In addition, pedagogical differences between early childhood and primary programs may hamper the implementation of uniform accountability policies.

Further complicating the pedagogical discussion between those in the early childhood sector and their primary colleagues are shifts in the early childhood pedagogical base (Robinson & Diaz, 1999). Recently there have been calls to re-examine understandings about children and childhood and to reconsider them from multiple perspectives (Woodrow, 1999). Re-examination of early childhood pedagogy exposes fissures of disagreement when early childhood policy is constructed and implemented. Early childhood pedagogy has been influenced by theories of child growth and development, child rearing beliefs and societal and cultural expectations of education. Competing theories of child development and learning have been built, deconstructed and reconceptualised over time. The foundations of early childhood pedagogy derive from the work of people such as Rousseau, Pestalozzi, Froebel, and Montessori. Added to this body of early childhood knowledge was the work of the “child study movement” in the 1920s. However, the most pervasive influence in contemporary early childhood education pedagogy and research has been developmental psychology

(Kessler, 1991). Yet this influence has by no means been monolithic or uniform (Spodek, 1989).

Recent shifts in early childhood pedagogy arise from those with different orientations who challenge not only how young children learn but the content of what should be learned (Fleer, 1995; Cullen, 1994; Kessler, 1991). Many of these challenges reflect the dominant conceptions of different viewpoints that are illustrated when educational programs for children are described or classified (Goldstein, 1994). Kohlberg and Mayer (1972, cited in Goldstein, 1994) offer three models of early childhood education that have come to illustrate the three major strands of the pedagogical debate. The first, is referred to the “cultural transmission model” where the purpose of education is to equip students with specific life skills and knowledge. The second, the “romantic model”, reflects the belief that learning and growth must come from the child. The “progressive model” is the third model, drawn from the work of Piaget and Dewey that is based on the notion that children construct their own development (Goldstein, 1994). This model has come to embody the philosophy underpinning “developmentally appropriate practice” (Bredekamp, 1987) which has had a profound effect on early childhood pedagogy, practice and subsequent orientations.

The National Association for the Education of Young Children identified appropriate practices to use with young children in an attempt to counteract the academic pushdown of academically driven elementary school programs. A position statement on “Developmentally appropriate practices in early childhood programs serving children from birth through age 8”, known as DAP (Bredekamp, 1987) has had profound influence in the Australia and New

Zealand early childhood education field. DAP embodied the “appropriate way” for teaching and learning in early childhood programs. However, the popular culture of DAP bred a dichotomy of the “good, nurturing developmentally appropriate educator or his/her antithesis, the autocratic developmentally inappropriate educator” (Ryan & Ochsner, 1999, p.14). This dichotomy does not do justice to the rich variations in practice of early childhood educators who work between these poles. It also ignores the context and other influences that shape teachers’ beliefs and practices.

Research on teachers’ knowledge stresses that it is important to codify teachers’ thoughts and beliefs to establish standards of practice (Carnegie Taskforce on Teaching as a Profession, 1986). However teachers’ knowledge base is made up of knowledge of content, teaching strategies, values and personal beliefs that inform their teaching practice and largely go unarticulated (Isenberg, 1990). Teachers’ knowledge and beliefs are shaped by the context in which they work. As much practical knowledge is implicit, teachers’ reasons for selecting certain strategies may not be clearly understood until teachers explain their actions (Spodek, 1989). This knowledge base is in part formed during pre-service education, then constructed and reconstructed in the field. Therefore, in terms of accountability early childhood teachers may have difficulties in codifying their thoughts and beliefs regarding their work.

A push to centrally controlled curriculum is another issue affecting accountability in early childhood education. Guidelines and suggested curriculum frameworks for the preschool year flourish (eg. Queensland School Curriculum Council, 1998; Department of Early Childhood Services, 1996; Education Department of Western Australia, 1998). In Australia, the advent of

mandated curriculum frameworks or guidelines (in some states applying to the non-compulsory year of school) has unsettled some in the early childhood profession. Woodrow and Brennan (1999) argue that some may see such frameworks as reductionist and challenge what early childhood educators regarded as curriculum of value. Further, early childhood educators are challenged to reconsider “their traditional and tacit understandings of curriculum as holistic and child centred” (Woodrow & Brennan, 1999, p.83). Such guidelines and frameworks may alter the ways in which pre-primary teachers are asked to work. The Western Australian curriculum framework (Curriculum Council, 1998) is mandated for teachers to implement from kindergarten (age 4 years) to Year 12. This framework is outcome based and as such will challenge pre-primary (age 5) teachers to alter traditional programming rationale. Prior to this initiative pre-primary teachers were autonomous in their curriculum construction and many planned for children’s learning in an integrated holistic way related to growth in developmental domains. However, the new Western Australian curriculum framework (Curriculum Council, 1998) asks teachers to consider children’s learning and development in eight learning or subject areas.

Focus on learning areas instead of development may lead to different classroom practices. Differing classroom practices in pre-primaries is another factor that affects the accountability debate. Pre-primary classroom practices are shaped by a number of influences such as individual teachers’ interpretations of philosophy and curriculum construction, different preservice education from primary teachers, and the school context. Linked to classroom practices is the implementation of the school priorities as set out by the staff in the school development plan. The school development plan is the vehicle for EDWA

school accountability that increasingly influences pre-primary practice. Indeed teachers within EDWA are bound to implement them. Together these factors influence each teacher's design, implementation, classroom practices and evaluation of their program.

The language used to describe work in early childhood began to change in the late 1970s reflecting the alignment of the non-compulsory early childhood education programs with the education sector. The curriculum genre brought new terms to the early childhood sector (Woodrow & Brennan, 1999) where greater licence was given to terms such as "curriculum" and "assessment". Incremental language shifts in the past twenty years masked significant turbulence in the terminology driving early childhood education. The term "curriculum" is part of the vocabulary of pre-primary education with debate in the early childhood literature centering on its application and definition. The early childhood education curriculum debate is wider than issues of curriculum content, encompassing the definition of the term curriculum itself. Leading educational bodies and commentators use common terms in different ways and this highlights the difficulties early childhood practitioners face when discussing educational practices (c/f Royal Society for the Arts, 1994; National Association for the Education of Young Children, 1991). Similar terms can have diverse meanings for early childhood practitioners and for those viewing their work. Woodrow & Brennan (1999) found that preschool teachers and administrators did not share the same definition of curriculum. They reported that the teachers viewed curriculum as the totality of child experiences in the educational setting and administrators had a narrower focus on content and outcomes (Woodrow & Brennan, 1999).

Added to the complexity of the accountability issue is the diversity of educational frameworks and practices used in this sector of education. Shifts in pedagogy, the use of different working terms and the diverse mixture of educational frameworks used across and within particular countries highlight the challenges of applying accountability frameworks in the early childhood sector.

Compared with schools, accountability in non-compulsory early childhood services not linked to schooling, such as those of childcare, is well developed. In Australia, a national “Quality Improvement and Accreditation System”, prompted initially by the Australian Early Childhood Association, accredits long day-care centres providing quality programs for young children and their families (National Childcare Accreditation Council, 1993). Programs are self-assessed by directors, staff and parents using an accreditation manual which incorporates 52 principles (currently being revised to 40) that outline quality outcomes for children. Unlike the voluntary accreditation program run by the NAEYC since 1984 in the USA, the Australian accreditation program is mandated federally and directly linked to federal government funding of centres. Educational programs for young children in the school sector have not been under the same scrutiny for assurance of quality provision. The pre-primary year in Western Australia is state government funded and is within school accountability processes in practice, however being a non-compulsory year of school it is often overlooked.

This section highlighted the issues moulding accountability in early childhood education. These issues include management of pre-primary within the compulsory schooling sector, change to curriculum for this year, differing classroom practices, and problems with teacher articulation of pedagogy and

practice. The following section outlines the purpose and significance of this investigation of accountability.

Purpose and Significance of the Study

Increasingly at all levels of the educational process, teachers are being asked to justify and explain curriculum practices. A worldwide push for accountability and assessment has been brought about in the context of educational reform, the marketisation of the education sector, and the move towards “value added” education. The ideology of the market place is used in policy formulation based on an ideal “that market forces would solve economic and social problems” (Woodrow & Brennan, 1999). This ideology is reflected in the Australian education sector with a push for decentralisation of administrative control to a local level, but establishing a tighter control of curriculum through centrally mandated curriculum frameworks. Local frameworks mirror the worldwide trend of assessing quality outcomes for students. In Queensland, a mandated preschool curriculum represents a significant shift in direction for the early childhood sector as the guidelines are compulsory and content defined (Woodrow & Brennan, 1999). Similarly, in Western Australia the mandated curriculum framework (Curriculum Council, 1998) will affect the way in which pre-primary teachers are asked to account for their work.

Pre-primary classes have been associated with “play”. As enrolment is non-compulsory explanations for practices have not generally been sought within mandated curriculum frameworks. As schools move towards a corporate plan of development, Western Australian teachers can no longer operate autonomously in pre-primary centres. At the pre-primary level to date, teachers have been relatively independent in constructing their program in terms of structure and

content. Until recently they have not wanted or been asked to enact a corporate school view. This begs a question about how other educators, parents and the community are assured that effective pre-primary programs are in place?

Pre-primary teachers do not have a common language that accounts for their practice or relates early childhood with early primary practices. Indeed the term accountability is used more at the policy level than in the field. Early childhood teachers are not practised in justifying to other professionals the decisions they make in constructing, implementing and evaluating their educational programs, whether in terms of outcomes or other measures.

Pre-primary teachers need to be able to articulate the reasons for their classroom practices to contribute to the formulation of the school development plan. However, the premise that early childhood practitioners are not well versed in justifying or explaining their practices has been highlighted in moves towards early childhood teacher accountability. David (1990) believes that for too long early childhood teachers have hidden behind slogans such as “play is children’s work” and as such have not had to justify their practices. But now early childhood practitioners are being called upon to review and defend their practices, due to shifts in early childhood pedagogy, increasing influence by the school sector, a search for quality and a focus on accounting for public spending. Schools are seeking assistance in monitoring early childhood programs and their effectiveness.

The purpose of this study is to understand what pre-primary teachers think and do about accountability. Pre-primary teachers are asked to implement existing compulsory schooling accountability processes so accountability understandings and actions are identified at the practitioner level rather than

from the policy level. A framework subsequently constructed, provides pre-primary teachers with a tool to use when accounting for their curriculum decision making and action to others. The framework is significant for its applicability because it was a “bottom-up” initiative rather than a “top-down” directive. An accountability framework for the pre-primary year which incorporates early childhood philosophy and connects with school based accountability processes was clearly being sought by teachers. Such a framework has the potential to assure continuity of practice in early years settings (4-8 years). No succinct material is available in Australia pre-Year 1 to help pre-primary teachers to account for their practices to others inside and outside the early childhood field. The accountability framework facilitates pre-primary teacher involvement in school policy development, relating to their work within the context of the school.

The outcomes of this research assist pre-primary teachers by providing a shared language of accountability in order to justify early childhood practices to others. This study provides a much needed discussion on accountability in the pre-primary year, given previous scant attention in previous research and lack of practitioner input in previous work. Indeed, a study of pre-primary (or equivalent) teachers’ accountability practices has not been conducted in Western Australia or elsewhere in Australia.

Research Questions

1. How do teachers demonstrate their accountability in designing, implementing and evaluating educational practices in the pre-primary year?

Subsidiary Questions

2. What factors do pre-primary teachers consider when,
 - a) designing the program?
 - b) implementing the program?
3. What is the range of methods that pre-primary teachers use to ensure the quality of the program?
4. What measures do pre-primary teachers take to explain their program to others?
5. What are the implications of the range of pre-primary teachers' accountability understandings for school level accountability processes?
6. How do pre-primary teachers' means of demonstrating their accountability relate to accountability models prevailing in the literature?

Definition of Terms and Acronyms

accountability - "The implicit, professional and contractual relationship that exists with one's students, colleagues and employer. There is a joint responsibility with students for learning; with colleagues for adherence to a code of conduct, good practice and sound management; and with the employer for working towards the attainment of the organisation's purpose."(EDWA, Draft, 1994, p.1).

early childhood - internationally this is referred to as the period from birth to eight years.

performance management – "is the continuous process of reflecting, negotiating, developing, reviewing and making decisions about an individual's performance in achieving organisational goals" (EDWA, 1996, p.3).

pre-primary- this term is applied to the year before the first compulsory year of primary schooling in Western Australia. The pre-primary year comes under the auspices of the primary school principal and offers four full days of education for children of five years of age.

program - this term is used to refer to the educational content planned by the teacher for a particular period of time and includes all experiences in both formal and informal sessions and informal activity times (Tayler, 1987).

school development plan - “ A development plan should be a working document that helps to focus teachers’ efforts constructively. A school’s staff and community produce it in order to guide teacher decision making. The plan is a device to assist the management team with the internal operations of the school.” (EDWA, 1989, p.3.)

AECA – Australian Early Childhood Association

ALEA – Australian Literacy Education Association

EDWA – Education Department of Western Australia

EYES– Early Years in Education Society

INTASC – Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium

MIS – Management Information System

NAEYC – National Association for the Education of Young Children

NBPTS– National Board for Professional Teaching Standards

P&C – Parents and Citizens Association

Overview of Thesis

Each chapter sets out steps within the research process. Chapter 1 highlighted the issues surrounding accountability in the early childhood sector

and identified the purpose and significance of the study. Chapter 2 outlines a detailed literature review on issues pertinent to the study. The definition and models of accountability, notions of evaluation in education, shifts in early childhood pedagogy and discussion of quality early childhood programs are discussed in relation to the literature. Chapter 3 summarises the conceptual framework of the study. Chapter 4, the methodology chapter, describes the interpretive–constructivist perspective adopted and the multi-method approach used in gathering and analysing data throughout the study. The next four chapters (5-8) are based on three comprehensive classroom case studies. Chapter 5 sets the scene and introduces the participants and chapter 6 sets out the teachers' educational programs. Chapter 7 describes teacher professional relationships and Chapter 8 illuminates the teachers' views on accountability. Information presented in the case studies is analysed in the context of the survey in Chapter 9 and Chapter 10 presents the focus group research. Chapter 11 presents the discussion and recommendations of the study.

Conclusion

This chapter established the context in which this study developed. The combination of issues illustrated the difficulty that pre-primary teachers have in discussing accountability with clarity of purpose and articulation of practice. Pre-primary teachers in Western Australia teach a non-compulsory year of school and are managed by the compulsory schooling sector in a whole school policy context. Mandated curriculum framework and assessment policies may place pre-primary teachers under pressure to change their traditional integrated practices. The Western Australian curriculum framework (Curriculum Council, 1998) asks teachers to account for their work based on the accomplishment of

student outcomes. Changes to work practices may occur as pre-primary teachers are asked to shift from a focus on developmental domains to learning areas. Apparent difficulties pre-primary teachers have in articulating the reasons for their practice further complicates the accountability issue. Shifts in pedagogy and changes in the traditional language associated with early childhood practice are reasons for this difficulty. The next chapter outlines the literature pertinent to this study.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

The growing literature on accountability in education reflects a diversity of views on school and teacher accountability processes, but the focus of the literature has been on the latter years of compulsory schooling. The early years of school and the focus of this study, the pre-primary year, have not been subject to the same level of investigation and public discussion as the upper years.

The research literature on pedagogical issues in early childhood education is extensive. Similarly, there is much discussion about quality, best practice, teacher appraisal and developmentally appropriate practices in the field. Yet, few studies have investigated pre-primary teacher accountability, a gap in research addressed by the current study.

Definitions and Models of Accountability

Definitions and models of accountability abound (e.g. Becher, Eraut & Knight, 1981; Halstead, 1994; Kogan, 1986; Lessinger, 1970). In its broadest sense accountability is defined in the Concise Oxford dictionary (1982) as, “bound to give account, responsible” (p.7). However, different purpose and processes underpin accountability models and frameworks. Each model has discrete theories of “state and knowledge that sees powers, responsibilities, rights, professionalism, and entitlements differently” (Macpherson, 1998, p.68).

Illustrating the complexity of describing accountability Becher (1979) identifies five forms of accountability. They are moral accountability to one's clients, professional accountability to oneself and one's colleagues, contractual accountability to one's employers, political accountability to one's political masters and public accountability in terms of public interest. By contrast with Becher (1979), Kogan (1986) identified three major models as shown in Table 1 (as represented by Macpherson, 1998, p.68). Each model determines the appropriate partners, the processes by which partners can exercise control and suitable sources of criteria for judgements. The notion of power and control stands out in Kogan's review and subsequent definition of accountability. Accountability in education is defined as "a condition in which individual role holders are liable to review and the application of sanctions if their actions fail to satisfy those with whom they are in an accountability relationship" (Kogan, 1986, p.25). Not only does this definition imply power and authority in the accountability process but describes that those in accountability relationships know exactly what they are accountable for in the instance of review.

Table 1

Kogan's three models of accountability in education

Dimensions	Public or state control	Professional control	Consumerist control
Purposes of accountability	Given and legitimised by democratic processes	Arbitrary, therefore to be determined by experts	Arbitrary, therefore to be determined by clients
Appropriate accountability processes	Bureaucratic structures and lines of authority Hierarchical and one-way relationships and top-down external reviews	Team-based structures and expertise-based authority Interactive relationships, internal and external reviews	Temporary functional structures; contracted partnerships; political relationships and external reviews
Source of criteria	Superordinates	Professional peers	Elected representatives and the market

Note. (Kogan in Macpherson, 1998, p. 68)

Halstead (1994) used Kogan’s work as a foundation and constructed six models of accountability based on the themes of “contractual” and “responsive” accountability (see Table 2). Macpherson (1998) described the contractual models as valuing the causal relationship between teaching and learning outcomes. By contrast, the responsive models value stakeholder constructivism and consensus over consequences. These themes of responsive or contractual accountability often termed professional or bureaucratic accountability, litter the current literature on educational accountability (Darling-Hammond, 1990; Wildy & Wallace, 1996). These terms and their associated models imply different agents for educational change (Macpherson, 1998).

Table 2

Halstead’s six models of accountability in education

Dominant stakeholder	Contractual accountability	Responsive accountability
Employer	Central Control Model Teachers (employees) contracted to provide measurable learning. Testing and inspection considered appropriate methods. Can have low internal ownership or formative dynamics.	Chain of Responsibility Model Decision makers at each level in a hierarchy also responsive to legitimate stakeholders at their level. Can stimulate growth of bureaucracy, power struggles and structural ambiguities.
Professional	Self Accounting Model Teachers (autonomous professionals) self monitor learning and teaching using internal and subjective methods. Can have low external credibility.	Professional Model Contractual matters delegated to the governors. Matters of responsiveness delegated to the head and teachers. Can lead to localism and ‘provider capture’.
Consumer	Consumerist Model Teachers (providers) exposed to market and political mechanisms such as league tables, parental choice and LMS. Can intensify work and inequalities.	Partnership Model Legitimate stakeholders pool options, interact critically, decide, plan and evaluate. Can lack external legitimacy and be undermined by local politics.

Note.(Halstead in Macpherson, 1998, p. 69).

Usually, bureaucratic accountability is equated with monitoring student test scores or assessments of school performance indicators (Wildy & Wallace, 1996; Darling-Hammond, 1990). Professional accountability is based on the

assumption that the teacher's work is too complex to be controlled and prescribed, therefore teachers should be entrusted to make responsible decisions regarding the educational needs of their students (Darling-Hammond, 1990).

The Education Department of Western Australia incorporates both bureaucratic and professional accountability in their definition of accountability that guides all teachers. EDWA defines accountability as: "the implicit professional and contractual relationship that exists with one's students, colleagues and employer. There is joint responsibility to a code of conduct, good practice and sound management; and with the employer working towards the attainment of the organisation's purpose"(EDWA, Draft, 1994, p.1). This definition makes no reference to parents who are a major stakeholder in the public accountability debate and this omission has attracted criticism of bureaucratic or contractual accountability (Bernauer & Cress, 1997; Darling-Hammond, 1990; Macpherson, 1998; Wallace & Wildy, 1996).

The definition of accountability has attracted little agreement between researchers in the field. Therefore this study aims to tease out the issues that pre-primary teachers view as important in forming a definition of accountability. It is a complex task because accountability may not be a term used by pre-primary teachers and it is not a term used often in the early childhood literature. Accountability is used at the policy level and common terms of accountability used by teachers need to be established. Legally, teachers are bound to abide by the definition of accountability implicit in their contract. However, the issue of values (those beliefs that need not rely on facts or evidence, Kogan, 1986) are important in a teacher's construction of accountability (Halstead, 1994). Values change in response to life experiences and change over time and in different

settings. The shifting nature of values underlie individual notions of accountability and affect its implementation (Kogan, 1986). “Perceptions, preconceptions and tacit cultural assumptions” are no longer universally shared by teachers and it is doubtful if there is sufficient agreement on the values that are basic to our shared life which provide a framework for basic educational criteria (Halstead, 1994, p.158). In Western Australia, however, the new curriculum framework (Curriculum Council, 1998) focuses on a vision for future education in Western Australia and articulates values for all schools (Kindergarten to Year 12) in the education system, including what every student should know. More specifically for the early childhood field, the Australian Early Childhood Association has espoused a number of core values related to working with young children in a Code of Ethics (AECA, 1991).

Thus, accountability in the literature is discussed mainly in terms of education systems and does not highlight the dimensions of accountability for pre-primary teachers. The definitions of accountability are diverse and it is important to ascertain what pre-primary teachers mean when they use the term. Answering the questions accountable to whom, about what, when and how will give those in accountability relationships a clearer focus (Dunn, 1989; Ebbeck & Ebbeck, 1994; Halstead, 1994; Walker, 1977). The current study enables early childhood teachers’ understandings of accountability to be identified which is valuable information as little work has addressed accountability at the pre-primary level.

Evaluation and Accountability

Accountability cannot be demonstrated without some form of evaluation (Jones, 1977; Kogan, 1986). Evaluation implies judgement by others, and raises

issues of relative power which comes back to the issue of values in education. Teachers cannot be held accountable without some evaluation of their performance. Yet for evaluation to take place teachers must understand for what they are accountable and responsible. One way of assessing teacher performance or a program's effectiveness is to assess class results or performance targets.

Performance Targets

Performance targets have come under criticism as they can be set to reflect political desires rather than educational realities (Dunn, 1989). Focussing on results to measure teacher accountability does not take into consideration other operational aspects in a student's education. It ignores the students' own actions and responsibilities, their parents, school administrator's priorities and roles and implies that the teacher is the only influence on what students learn, how they will perform and finally how they will achieve (Frymier, 1998; Wagner, 1989). Methods of achieving results are often overlooked when focussing on outcomes. Early childhood literature reinforces the view that the teaching, learning, evaluation methods used are particularly important in relation to the education of young children (Bredekamp, 1987; Bredekamp & Copple, 1997; Bredekamp & Rosegrant, 1992; Elkind, 1986; Shepard & Smith, 1988).

In Western Australia, methods of assessment in traditional early childhood programs have rested on child study and assessing development across domains (Moulin, 1997). Informal techniques of gathering information about the child, such as observation, are used in this method. By contrast, the quantification of skills and subject knowledge gained is associated with primary school assessment and performance. Traditionally, evaluation of children's learning at the pre-primary level has taken into account the individual differences apparent

in development and the differences in children's experiences before they come to school. Recognition of the unevenness in background experiences saw the rise of early intervention programs in the USA, which sought to ensure all children started school with equal opportunity of success. In turn, these programs have seen a rise in standardised achievement testing of very young children in the USA the year before they start school in order to assess children's ability levels. Work by Meece (1994) indicates the onset of standardised tests corresponds with changes in goal motivation of students and a notable increase in "work avoidance" behaviour.

Many early childhood educators and peak bodies representing teachers around the world have disagreed with standardised testing, citing the limited reliability of the formal testing of young children (Elkind, 1986; Meisels, 1987; Shepard & Smith, 1988). In Western Australia, written reporting of child progress to stakeholders in the pre-primary year has been a subject of discussion in the Good Start program (EDWA, 1996). Clearly the tracking of children's progress and establishing children's competencies in the year prior to compulsory schooling is controversial and is closely linked to perceptions of teacher effectiveness at this level. Leaders in the field assert that accountability processes must take into account the nature of young children's learning and emphasis must be on leading towards further development, rather than the quantification to meet arbitrary standards (Darling-Hammond, 1990). However, the other side of the coin of educational evaluation is not the evaluation of the student but of the teacher.

Teacher Appraisal

The growing push for educational reform across the world has seen a renewed focus on teacher performance. McLaughlin and Pfeiffer (1988) argue that those in policy making positions regard teacher evaluation as having “a major role to play in promoting accountability and improving the quality of education” (p.1). However, the evaluation of teacher performance illuminates the policy and practice tension often inherent in an educational system. There is a deep-rooted tension between the policy makers push for increased quality and accountability and the practitioners push for increased professional autonomy (McLaughlin & Pfeiffer, 1988). The dilemma of judgement and the purpose of the evaluation heighten this tension.

Beare (1989) outlined five common assessment purposes that focus on teacher performance. Teacher assessment can be undertaken for professional improvement, teacher promotion, school improvement, accountability measures and to improve student learning outcomes. Issues such as the purpose, structure and criteria for assessment dominate the literature on teacher evaluation (Beare, 1989; Ingvarson, 1998a; Ingvarson & Chadbourne, 1994; Louden, 1994; Mason, 1997). Over the last ten years, the focus on teacher evaluation has seen the construction of a range of teaching standards. Standards have been used in the promotion of teachers (EDWA, 1997), the evaluation of beginning teachers (INTASC, 2000) and for the recognition of teaching excellence (NBPTS, 1988). However recently in Australia, the Senate Inquiry into the Status of Teaching (SEETRC, 1998) called for an independent national body to develop and facilitate professional standards in teaching.

Debate over the use of standards exposes the policy and practice tension described previously, which is clouded by the summative versus formative pull about teacher assessment. For example, Mason (1997) argued that the assessment must generate teacher discourse about teaching, and that adhering to the idea that one set of standards fits all, automatically separates the evaluation from the individual teaching. Allied to the Mason camp, Delandshere (1997) asserts that teacher assessment must be continuous, dynamic and principled rather than static and prescribed. Teacher evaluation needs to be an integral part of teaching practice because removing it from the realities of the classroom practice means it will have little effect on student learning (Mason, 1997).

From an early childhood perspective, standards illuminating practice have been written by two groups in the USA. The INTASC (2000) have reviewed construction of a set of standards for beginning teachers in elementary education. These standards attempt to integrate the guiding principles of early childhood practice with the content demands of the elementary school. The NBPTS (1995) have devised a set of standards that teachers address in order to obtain national recognition for early childhood teaching of a high quality. Teachers complete various tasks represented in a portfolio and prepare a video presentation to illustrate the NBPTS (1995) early childhood specialist standards. The portfolio has become a well-used tool in the appraisal of teachers' work.

Teacher Portfolios

Wolf, Whinery and Hagerty (1995) report that teacher portfolios are growing in popularity and appearing in a number of settings. These settings include university faculties involved in teacher pre-service training (Krause, 1996), national teacher certification (NBPTS, 1988), classrooms (Wade &

Yarborough, 1996), subject projects (Pisano, 1993) and teacher promotion (EDWA, 1997). Much of the literature in this area addresses the applications, structures and implications when using teacher portfolios (Barton & Collins, 1993; Ingvarson, 1998a; Wildy & Wallace, 1997; Wolf, 1991).

A teacher portfolio has been defined as a “tool to enable teachers to integrate theory and practice about teaching, learning, knowledge, students and the school milieu” (Barton & Collins, 1993, p.200). Different purposes may govern the construction of teacher portfolios but they can be a powerful tool used to document teachers’ work and decisions. Portfolios are usually made up of a collection of artefacts, attestations, reproductions and productions accompanied by written reflections (Collins, 1992). Proponents of teaching portfolios argue that portfolios offer teachers a tool that is sensitive to their teaching context and provides “a connection between the context and personal histories of real teaching” (Wolf, 1991, p.129). Early childhood teachers welcome instruments that are sensitive to different contexts because they recognise that specific socio-cultural contexts shape their professional knowledge that underpins their practice.

Another factor that influences the construction and implementation of a teacher’s practice is their pedagogical orientation. Over the last two decades the theoretical foundation that has been the mainstay of early childhood education has shifted.

Shifts in Theoretical Foundations

Themes in the discourse on early childhood pedagogy in the 1990s can be attributed to specific historical, social and political contexts of the past century (Puckett & Diffily, 1999). Historically the work of people such as Froebel

(1782-1852), Montessori (1870-1952) and Dewey (1859-1952) followed by those interested in the measurement of child growth and development such as Gesell (1880-1961) set the foundations of early childhood pedagogy for the Twentieth century. Over time the “philosophical points of view have converged, diverged, and clashed in spirited interaction” (Puckett & Diffily, 1999, p.67). However, traditional early childhood pedagogy underpinning mainstream early childhood programs of the latter half of this century have been influenced by developmental psychology (Spodek, 1989).

One of the influential developmental theories guiding modern early childhood pedagogy was the stage based cognitive development theory of Piaget (1967). Piaget’s theory asserted that the learner actively constructs knowledge through direct interactions with the environment. The theory was used in the justification of an informal play based early childhood curriculum (Cullen, 1994). Programs reflecting this perspective are often referred to as “child-centred”, “integrated” and “informal”. The approach was based on the belief that the thinking of younger children is different from older children so formal learning should be delayed until children’s development had reached the level of concrete operations. The hypothesis that learning experiences needed to be matched to stages of development was used to explain why children failed to benefit from school based teaching (Cuthill, Reid & Hill, 1998).

Although this theory influenced some in the early childhood sector, at the time of its publication the USA was gripped by an “academic frenzy” that followed the launch of Sputnik and Lyndon Johnson’s war on poverty (Goldstein, 1994). Adding fuel to the academic achievement frenzy were publications such as “Intelligence and Experience” (Hunt, 1961) and “Stability

and Change” (Bloom, 1964) which found that children’s early cognitive experiences, interactions and settings influenced later cognitive development. Bloom (1964) asserted that half of a child’s intelligence was formed before four years of age and preschool education should no longer simply support the natural unfolding of the child. Therefore, teachers would prepare children to start school on an equal footing, which would be achieved by the use of direct teaching instruction, appropriate experiences and instituting school language and behaviour (Cuthill, Reid & Hill, 1998).

An academic emphasis pushed down into preschool programs from the elementary school grew from the academic achievement frenzy and the later “back to basics” agenda of the 1980s. In response the NAEYC wrote “A position statement on developmentally appropriate practices serving children from birth through age 8” (Bredekamp, 1987). The DAP statement outlined appropriate practices to be used with young children, drawn from the work of Piaget. DAP was to become one of the most influential documents on early childhood education in the last decade and now “underpins early childhood practice in Australia” (Cuthill, Reid & Hill, 1998, p.53). However post-Piagetian scholars have challenged the passive nature of stage-based development and stressed the importance of the socio-cultural perspective, which was largely ignored in Piaget’s work (Clay, 1991; Cullen, 1994; Spodek, 1991; Vygotsky, 1979). The lack of consideration of the socio-cultural perspective was one of the major criticisms of the 1987 DAP document. Alloway (1997), assuming a post-modernist perspective, asserted that the Piagetian based DAP did not cater for children outside white middle-class cultures.

A socio-cultural theory requires teachers to understand the particular socio-cultural setting in which the child's development takes place. This perspective views the child's learning journey not as a solitary one but requiring "extended opportunities for discourse and problem solving in the context of shared activities (which) are essential for learning and development" (Berk & Winsler, 1995, p.113). The work of Vygotsky (1979) and others taking a socio-cultural perspective challenge the traditional role of the teacher in children's cognitive development (Fleer, 1995). Pundits of this perspective identified an active, at times directive role for the teacher. Teachers were asked to extend and scaffold children's learning through meaningful interactions while assisting the child to make links across the different school and home discourse bases (Berk & Winsler, 1995).

Herein lies the dilemma for today's practitioners in articulating and practising their early childhood pedagogy. The dilemma lies in the fact that although early childhood practitioners may acknowledge the implications of these theories for early childhood practice, translating them into practice remains a challenge as teacher's theoretical knowledge is often piecemeal and incomplete (Cullen, 1996). This is not to say that early childhood teachers are not knowledgeable and thoughtful. Teachers construct their pedagogy based on their knowledge, beliefs and the context in which they work.

Early Childhood Curriculum Design and Practice

Around the world debate flourishes about how curriculum should be constructed and enacted in the years before compulsory schooling. Historically, issues such as the function of the preschool, child development and child rearing practices and the nature and degree of intervention by the state into the care and

education of young children molded this debate. Traditionally, the structure and content of the pre-primary curriculum has been left to individual teachers but with the introduction of mandated curriculum frameworks this position is changing. The introduction of curriculum policies has brought with it a re-examination of the early childhood curriculum debate.

From a pedagogical point of view, the debate on early childhood curriculum has formed a binary that early childhood education must be child-centred or teacher-directed (Cuthill, Reid & Hill, 1998). Popular culture has constructed these teachers as appropriate (read child-centred) or inappropriate practitioners (read teacher directed), but is the debate that simple? Pratt (1983) described this binary, as being polarised on two dimensions, the developmental, child centred approach and the subject-based, teacher directed approach. These two camps according to Fraser (1993) have different views regarding curriculum emanating from their psycho-philosophical stance. One way to view curriculum is to conceive it as based on the requirements of success in an adult world. Therefore developing skills necessary for successful integration into wider society are seen as a priority. This orientation is designed to facilitate young children's academic success in educational programs that are to follow, by presenting fragments of an idea ultimately fitting into a whole. Emphasis is on academic success promoted by the direct instruction of basic skills particularly in the area of reading and mathematics. Ready-made programs, often including pencil-paper and seatwork activities, are used for training children in ability groups.

A different stance is to view early childhood education from a developmental perspective. Success in later life is promoted through cultivating

a child-centred approach to curriculum planning, which begins with observing and identifying of children's developmental characteristics. The developmental perspective rests on the view that the curriculum should not be determined by the demands of later school content but current developmental experiences are essential in their own right (Fraser, 1993).

Limiting the discourse to two poles is misleading, because presenting a "dualism makes it difficult to consider other options" (Lubeck, 1996, p.151). Ryan & Oschner (1999), argue that by defining good early childhood teaching by contrasting it to developmentally inappropriate "limits the kinds of interventions teachers might take..." (p.15). Early childhood teachers make decisions every day about the type of assistance they provide to enhance child learning. Different philosophies may result in selection of different strategies and teacher's explanations of their practice may vary substantially. For example, if key importance is assigned to the knowledge that will be gained, particular importance will be given to scope and how to assess attainment of the associated sequence (Halliwell, 1995).

Recently the early childhood curriculum debate has come to focus on the central control of curriculum and the mandated use of curriculum frameworks. Previous attempts to ascribe content for the non-compulsory early education programs had been resisted vigorously. The pre-primary has generally operated within a policy framework focussing on operational matters and "sometimes cursorily included in primary school curriculum documents" (Woodrow & Brennan, 1999, p.80). The move to introduce a compulsory curriculum framework for the non-compulsory years of early schooling is unsettling to many in the field.

In Western Australia, pre-primary curriculum has traditionally been left to teachers to construct and implement based on their knowledge of best practice and the use of guiding documents (see EDWA, 1998; First Steps, 1994). The implementation of the new curriculum framework (Curriculum Council, 1998) with accompanying student outcome statements may herald a change for pre-primary curriculum practices. The framework sets out “what all students should know, value and be able to do as a result of the programs they undertake...” (Curriculum Council, 1998, p.1). The shift in curriculum emphasis for early childhood teachers is the move to outcome based learning described in terms of student outcome statements and learning areas. However, terms often used in early childhood education are emphasised in the curriculum document section describing young children’s learning from Kindergarten to Year 3 (ages 4-8). In this section, terms such as “integrated learning”, “concrete” and “experiential learning” as well as “autonomy” and “ownership of learning” are used (Curriculum Council, 1998, p.29-30).

The Search for Quality

The importance of effective early learning in high quality non-compulsory programs before compulsory schooling is established (Schweinhart & Weikhart, 1998). The early childhood literature abounds with variations on the theme of quality in early childhood educational programs. Appropriate teaching techniques (McNaughton & Williams, 1998), assessment techniques (Puckett & Black, 1994), effective curriculum (Bredenkamp & Rosegrant, 1995) and physical learning environments (Corrie, 1998) are some of the issues that characterise the literature on quality provision in early childhood programs. Equally treated in the literature are concerns for the erosion of program quality and the provision of

inappropriate learning experiences for young children (Bredekamp & Copple, 1997; Corrie, 1998). Current themes on this topic concern the pushdown of traditional school practices, quality assurance and the reconceptualisation of the term and meaning of quality.

The focus on quality early childhood programs is reflected in policy documents of the 90s (Cuthill, Reid & Hill, 1998). Policy formulation focussed on the prior to school programs in order to ameliorate later learning problems, especially in literacy (NBEET, 1995). In South Australia, a School Entry Admission test is administered in order to identify and track children considered at risk. In Western Australia, the Literacy Net (EDWA, 1999) identifies and tracks children with literacy gaps or early learning difficulties in the trial process. In response to such policies and in terms of accountability for children's learning Cuthill, Reid and Hill (1998) report that teachers are providing formal instructional curriculum to "ready" children for school.

Accountability practices in the pre-primary year therefore need to address the issues of the teachers' demonstration of the effectiveness and quality of their program. These issues have been addressed in the day care sector where a system of Quality Improvement and Accreditation (1993) has been implemented for seven years. In this system, part of the centre's assessment is carried out by experienced independent assessors who evaluate and make recommendations to the Quality Improvement and Accreditation Council who has the power to accredit centres. In EDWA pre-primaries, quality assurance is left to individual teachers and their performance managers who are primary school principals. Stamopoulos (1995) found that primary principals required guidance in their leadership role within the preprimary because they had little early childhood

experience and lacked knowledge of early childhood pedagogy. One way of making early childhood practice and pedagogy explicit is the collation of this knowledge into frameworks such as standards, measures and guidelines of best practice.

The most influential of the best practice frameworks is the DAP document (Bredekamp, 1987). However, current work in the area of quality in early childhood, as in other sectors, centres on expert definition of indisputable knowledge and methods of measurement of such knowledge (Dahlberg, Moss & Pence, 1999). Such work is reflected in teaching standard frameworks most notably for the early childhood teaching profession from the USA (NBPTS, 1995). However, detractors of teaching standards highlighted the point that such frameworks reduced the complexities of early childhood education into “stable rational criteria” (Dahlberg, Moss & Pence, 1999 p.99). By contrast, Ingvarson (1998b) argued that teaching standards heighten the standing of the teaching profession and improve the quality of teaching and learning. Such debates have brought about a discourse on the reconceptualisation of quality in early childhood education.

The definition of quality is one aspect of the reconceptualising discourse. Bush and Phillips (cited in Dahlberg, Moss & Pence, 1999) argued there are problems defining quality in early childhood because quality is a value laden term and conceptions of quality differ according to the stakeholder, the economic status and culture. Further, the concept and language of quality does not allow for “diversity, multiple perspectives, contextual specificity and subjectivity” (Dahlberg, Moss & Pence, 1999, p.6). Instead of the word quality, Dahlberg et

al (1999) used the phrase “meaning making” (p.6) which allows teachers to situate and ascribe significance to their work.

In sum, the search for quality has become a universal issue and is highlighted in the debate on best practice and developmentally appropriate practices. The outlook and orientation of the viewer will affect the ways in which quality and best practice are assessed. Corrie (1998) writes, “Judging quality is problematic, and it is risky to apply blanket statements about quality in diverse socio-cultural settings” (p.6), and therefore, issues of quality and best practice are relative dimensions. Both experiences and expectations are “framing” factors in the assessment of quality in any given setting. Accepting that best practice and quality in early childhood education are constructed in diverse social cultural contexts are means for the close study of individual contributions.

Conclusion

A definition of accountability is not unanimous and cannot be separated from the social cultural context. Those who debate models of professional and bureaucratic accountability promote different dimensions of “state and knowledge” (Macpherson, 1998, p 6). Furthermore, clouding the issue of accountability is disagreement on the place of evaluation in the definition. The notion of evaluation as an integral part of accountability leads us to ask where should this evaluation be focussed? In educational terms, this evaluation can be focussed on areas such as the children’s learning or the teacher’s performance. In early childhood education the idea of formally testing young children poses serious problems. For teachers, formal evaluation of pre-primary teacher performance in Western Australia has yet to take into consideration the specialist

nature and the complexities of early childhood teaching. Tools such as specialist standards and portfolios have gone in some way to rectify these problems in other parts of the world.

The stage-based theories of Piaget reinforced in the pedagogical underpinnings of DAP have had a profound influence on early childhood pedagogy and curriculum practices. However, recent challenges from those advocating a post-modern perspective argue that limiting the discourse of early childhood pedagogy to represent two opposing poles restricts debate and has left teachers confined to articulating “appropriate practices”. Traditionally, pre-primary practice has been individually constructed and self monitored due to the absence of compulsory curriculum guidelines for the non-compulsory pre-primary year. A mandated curriculum framework and EDWA accountability policy may change traditional modes of working.

The importance of quality pre-primary programs cannot be underscored. Traditionally, measures of program quality have been left to individual teachers in Western Australia but this has changed as primary principals administer pre-primary programs and staff. Best practice guidelines or teaching standards are tools used in the assessment of quality. However, critics of these tools argue that they limit the discourse about quality and reduce the complexities of teaching. The suggestion by Dahlberg, Moss and Pence (1999) that the phrase “meaning making” be used instead of the term quality allows teachers to situate their work and ascribe meaning to their actions which is important in the study of early childhood settings.

The next chapter presents the conceptual framework that drives the study.

CHAPTER 3

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Introduction

This chapter describes the theoretical context of the present study within a conceptual framework. Identifying the dimensions to be studied, the key factors and describing the relationships between these factors is the purpose of the conceptual framework. The conceptual framework according to Miles and Huberman (1984) is a way of setting out all the “bins” to be examined. These bins come from theory, the literature, experience and from the general objectives of the study. These “bins” are labelled but all the contents of the bin or the interrelatedness of the bins may not be entirely known. Laying out the bins, naming them and beginning to build some clarity about their interrelationships is the essence of a conceptual framework. The conceptual framework at this stage is a researcher’s map of where he or she is at this moment. The conceptual framework may be made more precise as the research continues and information about relationships increases.

Theoretical Context

Bronfenbrenner (1977,1979), Kessler and Swadener (1992), Moos (1980), Puckett and Diffily (1999) and Whitebook, Howes & Phillips (1989) discuss the importance of contextual issues on educational settings. The contextual issues are important to this study as the context influences the different theoretical

stances upon which the teachers base their programs. Different teaching orientations may lead to different dimensions of the program being highlighted and therefore different accountability practices within educational contexts.

The ecological perspective (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) is oriented towards the context and viewing the interaction between the individual and the environment, and is the approach selected for this study. It is within the individual's environment that answers to questions posed and explanations of the individual's beliefs and behaviour are sought (Garbarino & Abramowitz, 1992). The ecological environment has been described as a "set of nested structures" not unlike "a set of Russian dolls" (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p.3) or "like the layers of an onion" (Howe, 1999, p.41). It is drawn as a set of concentric overlapping circles of influence where one cause-one effect notions are shunned (Ochiltree & Edgar, 1995). The merit of this perspective is that examination of the different layers reveals connections that may otherwise go unnoticed. Garbarino and Abramowitz (1992) argue that the ecological perspective "looks beyond the immediate and the obvious to see where the most significant influences lie" (p.19).

The spheres of influence that Bronfenbrenner (1979) identifies are the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem and macrosystem. This ecological model views the immediate setting, the microsystem as the centre. The microsystem is the innermost level where the individual constructs and experiences every day reality. Radiating from this and containing factors that influence the individual within this setting is the mesosystem. The mesosystem is described as the links between the relatively autonomous microsystems in which the individual experiences reality (Garbarino & Abramowitz, 1992; Howe, 1999). A third level

of influence is the exosystem, which includes events or forces, which will indirectly influence what is happening to the individual and the individual's development. Forces in the exosystem include aspects such as social structures and institutions where the individual does not have direct influence. Meso and exosystems nest within the broad ideological and institutional patterns of a particular culture or subculture within which the individual develops. This is the fourth level, the macrosystem. Howe (1999) describes this level as the "blueprint" for determining the living and working patterns throughout the systems (p. 44), therefore it is important not to lose sight of the total ecology. The ecological perspective led to a reconceptualisation of how early childhood educators viewed educational settings for young children (Harms & Clifford, 1993).

In this study the context and the spheres of influence impact upon the work practices of the pre-primary teacher and the teacher's justifications of these are important understandings. These spheres of influence are important in creating meanings for behaviour in educational settings. McLean (1991) argues that "teachers are believed to draw not only on their content-specific knowledge about teaching and learning, but also on their understandings of the broader personal, social and cultural context in which they are embedded"(p.6). For this reason the conceptual framework for this study was derived from the work of Harms and Clifford (1993) who developed a theoretical framework for studying early childhood care and education settings based on Bronfenbrenner's (1979) model. This model was refined to focus on the teacher within the pre-primary setting, not to provide an analysis of teaching and learning but to illuminate how teachers in these settings justify what they do.

Figure 1 represents an ecological model of investigating elements that influence teacher's accountability knowledge and practices within EDWA pre-primary settings.

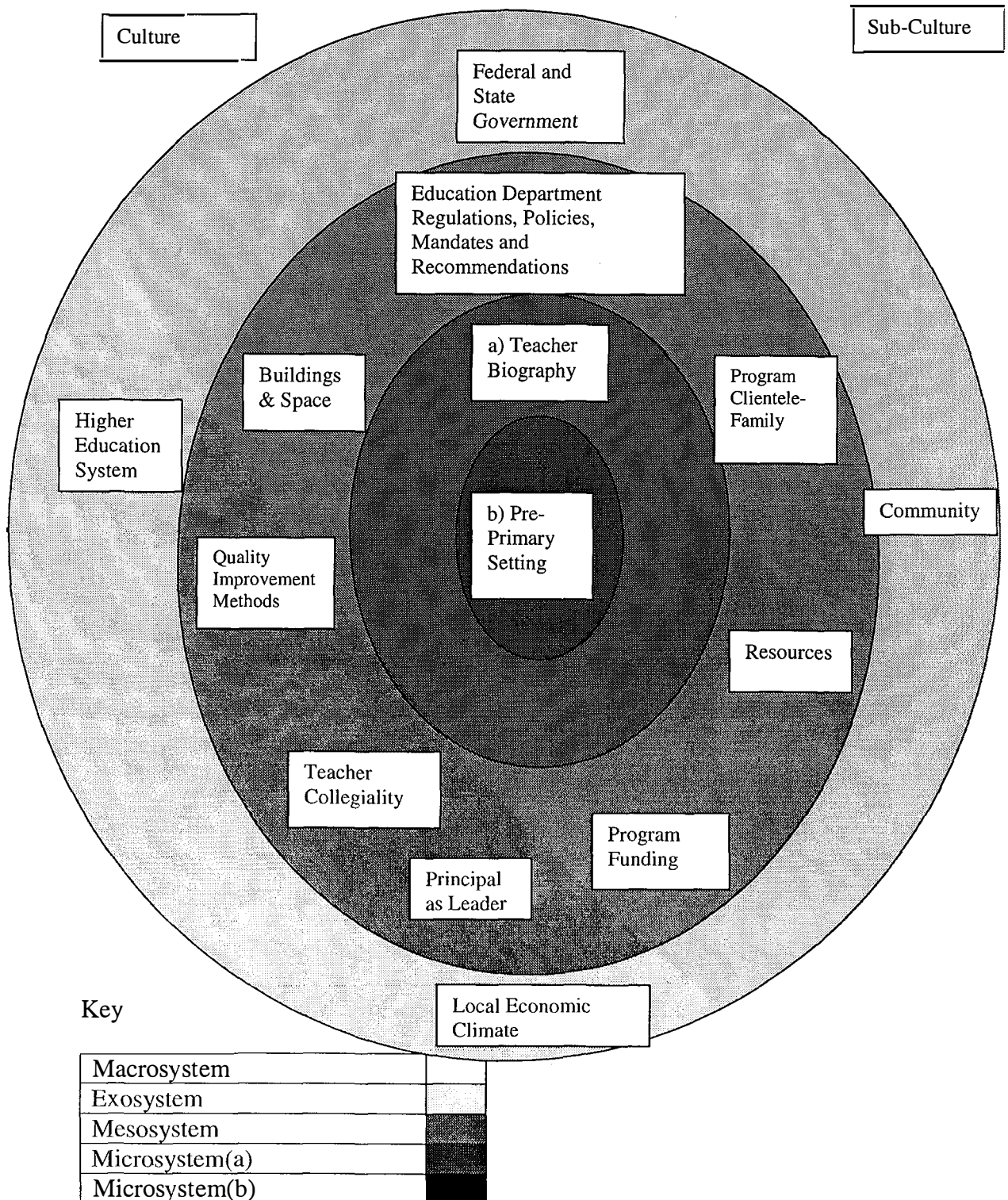


Figure 1. Elements that influence teacher's knowledge and practices about accountability.

The model represents the systems as defined by Bronfenbrenner (1979) but as related to the pre-primary setting in Western Australia, and investigating pre-primary teacher accountability. Following is a brief description of the various systems and the influences as represented in Figure 1. The outer layer, the macrosystem, includes the influences of culture and sub-culture within which the individual develops. Howe (1999) argues that the impact of economic rationalist policies and increased globalisation have been felt in the Australian macrosystem. In terms of education these influences have seen the rise of educational reform, restructuring and calls for increased teacher accountability. It is therefore important to consider such changes as they “permeate the other levels of the total ecology” (Howe, 1999, p. 44).

The exosystem represents the forces that indirectly impact upon the pre-primary setting. These forces most typically would impact upon the teacher and the physical environment of immediate educational setting. It is important to note that identification of these factors do not exclude others that may be found to impact upon a given educational setting. These influences include the Federal and State Government, higher education, the local economic climate and the community. In the sphere of the mesosystem, influences were formulated from the literature, researcher experience and the modified model of Harms and Clifford (1993). They include aspects such as the EDWA regulations, policies and mandates, as the pre-primaries under investigation all come under the auspices of EDWA and as such have certain operating requirements. This sphere contains the influences that such regulations, policies and mandates may have, for example, pre-primary curriculum guidelines, the school development policy, curriculum framework and student outcome statements. In conjunction with

particular pre-primary operating requirements the pre-primary teacher should also operate as part of the larger primary school staff. This means that input into school development plans, policy statements and whole school planning which may influence operating procedures in the pre-primary. In addition, the role of the principal as educational leader and performance manager may have bearing on the teacher's practices. Another influence in the mesosystem could include issues within school reform such as quality assurance. It could also involve parent education or practices that target the improvement of the educational setting. Teacher collegiality is another aspect and includes the influences of early childhood networks, professional development and early childhood associations. Added to this is the teacher's affiliation with teacher training institutions and teacher rapport within the early years of the primary school. Program funding and the physical amenities (for example, buildings and space) are other influences that impact upon the ability of the teacher to resource and operate the programs. Funding is influenced by the broader economic climate in the community. Funds may come into the educational setting via the primary school budget, Parents & Citizens allocations and other various grants. The last influence depicted in the mesosystem in Figure 1 is the program clientele. The close tie between early childhood settings and the families whose children are in those settings is the hallmark of high quality programs (Harms & Clifford, 1993). Therefore, in an investigation of influences on the pre-primary setting the family was viewed as having a direct influence and so is part of the mesosystem. The community influence was seen as more indirect and so is part of the exosystem.

The microsystem was redesigned to include two parts. The microsystem (a) is an outer ring of the microsystem and was designed to encompass the individual histories of the teachers who are in the setting and who have the most influence on the pre-primary setting. It is important to note as McLean suggests (1991), “If we are to understand anything of the individual’s framework of making sense of the environment, we must also know something of the person’s life, his or her biography (p.6).” Following this theme, Garbarino and Abramowitz (1992) describe each individual as bringing a “unique arrangement of personal resources” (p.16). Such things as pre-service training, background teaching experience, age, gender and early childhood pedagogy frame these personal resources, therefore, a teacher biography was established.

The microsystem (b) is the inner core of the model that contains the key elements of the pre-primary setting. Figure 2 describes these key elements. Five elements were identified for investigation within the pre-primary setting. They are the program, centre management, class structures, personnel assisting and interactions. These elements were identified from the early childhood literature and this researcher’s experience in pre-primary classrooms as making up the core pre-primary setting in which the teacher works. Each of these areas was investigated to gain a clear picture of the teacher’s accountability practices within each setting of the case study schools. This was achieved through observation, interviews of staff parents and the principal. Added to this, detailed document analysis provided descriptions and explanations of teacher accountability practices. The program itself was of particular interest but it must be remembered that the interplay of other components alongside impact on each other. Harms and Clifford (1993) strongly suggest that in studying educational

settings we focus on our area of interest related to our purpose but in doing so, cannot lose sight of the total framework.

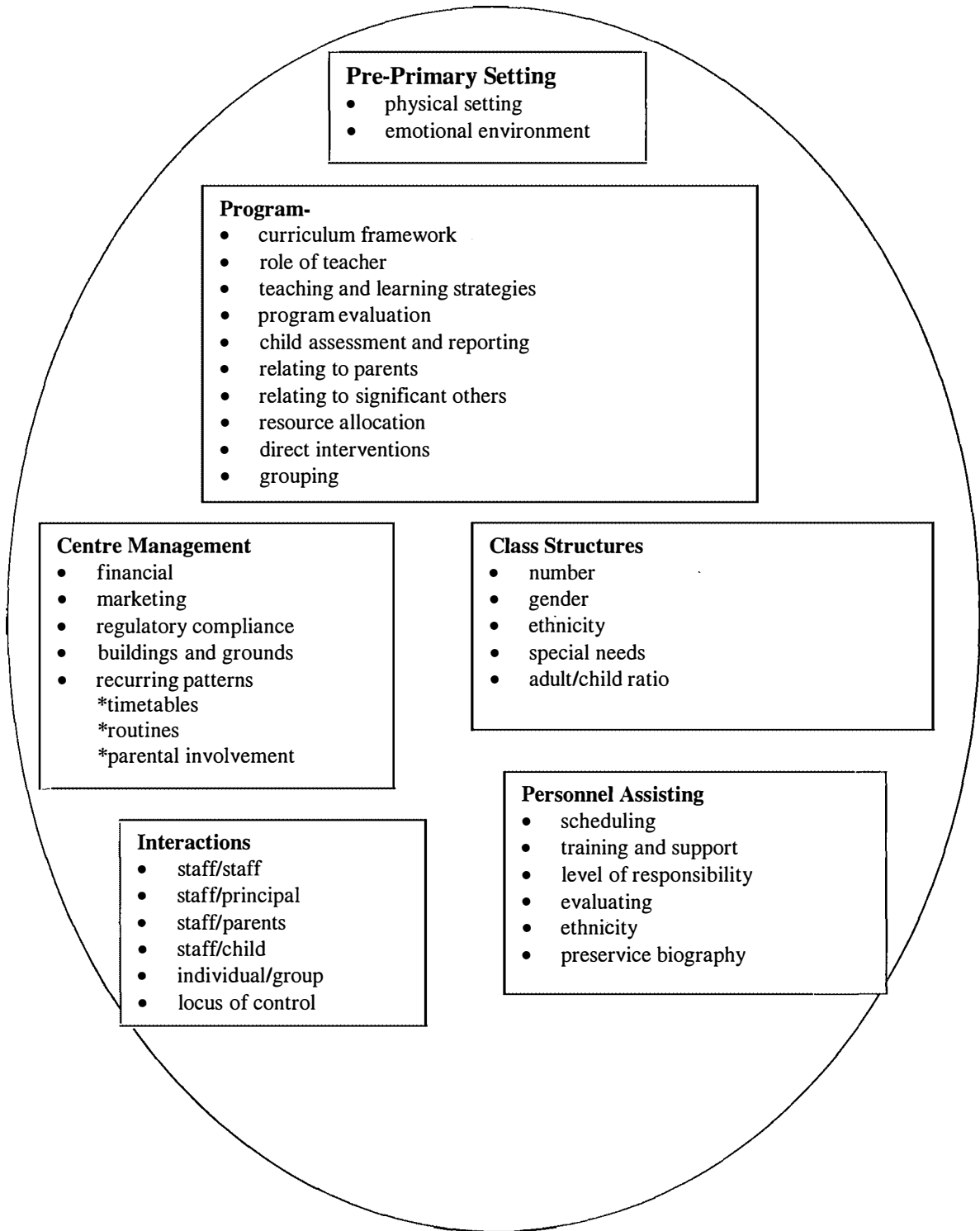


Figure 2. Key elements of pre-primary settings.

Conclusion

This chapter sets out the conceptual framework that drives the study. Taking an ecological approach to studying pre-primary teacher accountability is appropriate when the context is seen as a key factor influencing teachers' work and decisions. This approach not only views the context as important but recognises the interaction between the individual and the setting.

In this study, the layers of this model radiate from the immediate setting that includes the teacher and as such combines to make up the microsystem. The influences of the radiating layers of the model are important considerations when viewing and attributing meaning to the actions of individuals in the immediate setting. In this way, the researcher must explore all plausible explanations for teachers' constructions of their reality.

The ecological perspective dismisses the one cause-one effect notion and so opens the field of examination. However, focus is required so that the researcher can set out all the "bins" to be examined. In doing so, this study used a modified version of the Harms and Clifford's' (1993) model of studying early childhood settings.

The next chapter outlines the methodology, highlighting the interpretive-constructivist approach taken and the use of multiple methods of investigation. Each phase of the research is set out and the links between each phase established.

CHAPTER 4

METHODOLOGY

This chapter outlines the method used in seeking, gathering and analysing information with the purpose of describing and interpreting what pre-primary teachers know and do about accountability. This information, based on a number of research sources, is interwoven with information from a literature review to construct an accountability framework. The study seeks to evaluate the information used in the construction of the framework by reviewing the framework in the field.

The sections of this chapter start with a discussion of the relevance of an interpretive and constructive approach using research techniques borrowed from both the qualitative and quantitative traditions. This chapter describes in detail the five phases of data collection, the methods used and their interplay with the conceptual framework. Finally, the steps taken to ensure the quality of the study and the ethical considerations are described.

An Interpretive-Constructive Approach

An underlying assumption of qualitative research is that human thought is based in social interaction and the meaning people attribute to these interactions is constructed differently (McGee-Brown, 1995). There are, however, different strands of qualitative research: constructivist, interpretive, naturalistic, hermeneutical and ethnographic (Erickson, 1986; Hauser, 1995; Lincoln & Guba, 1989; Schwandt, 1994). Although there are differences

among them “each bears a strong family resemblance to the others” (Erickson, 1986, p. 119).

This study draws particularly on the interpretive and constructivist traditions. The interpretive approach draws from an extended family of traditions rather than from one tradition (Walsh, Tobin & Graue, 1993). It is a productive process where the researcher strives to represent and make sense of the meanings of the phenomenon studied in a given context. The choice of this approach reflected the researcher’s desire to understand the complexities of pre-primary teacher accountability from the teacher’s point of view. The constructivist platform rests on the premise that what is learnt is formed as a result of perceptions, therefore knowledge is not discovered but constructed (Lincoln & Guba, 1994). For a constructivist, the process and construction of meaning by the participants through their actions and words must be illuminated and clarified. Coupled together, the constructive-interpretive approach allows for a creative research process that strives to weave meaning, description and illustration.

In interpretive-constructivist work the quest to understand the participants’ perspective is a critical feature (Greene & Carachelli, 1997). It is this understanding in situated contexts that allows access to contextual issues that are important to consider in an ecologically bound conceptual framework. By using this approach, a text is woven together that recreates for the reader the real life studied, interpreted from analysis of multiple data sources. The use of multiple data techniques is possible using an interpretive constructivist paradigm and a rationale for a multimodal method is outlined in the following section.

Multimodal Methods

All interpretive inquirers at some stage of their research “watch, listen, ask, record and examine”; how these activities are defined and used depends on the inquirer’s purpose (Schwandt, 1994, p.119). In this inquiry, the activities described by Schwandt have been interpreted to include methods borrowed from the qualitative and quantitative traditions. In the seventies and eighties debate raged over the perceptions of quantitative versus qualitative research methods. The debate ranged from the view that the two approaches are totally incompatible (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), to the premise that one model may be better suited to certain research questions, to finally, the position that in many cases a combination of the two is superior to either one on its own (Greene & Carachelli, 1997). Indeed a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods has been used to give a fine-grained analysis of research questions (Galton, Simon & Croll, 1980).

In this study, a pragmatic approach (Datta, 1997; Greene & Carachelli, 1997) has been applied where research methods were selected that best met the research dilemmas posed. By using mixed methods of research that are compatible the quality of the research is enhanced and “situational responsiveness” is improved (Datta, 1997). Greene and Carachelli (1997) outline three convincing reasons for the use of a multimodal method. First, that the understanding of the individual and the typical case will be enhanced by a mixed method approach. Second, factors of particular significance will be isolated while also integrating the whole using such an approach. Third, that the results will be full of emic meaning but concurrently offer

connections of wider significance. A multimodal research design adds rigor, breadth and depth to an investigation.

Phases of Inquiry

The study consists of five phases. Each phase is linked to the subsequent phase of the inquiry. The first phase of the study centred on case study as method and used varied processes of inquiry that focussed on three pre-primary teachers in their natural classroom settings. It documented the connections teachers had with children, their families, other adults, administrative structures, their program and the physical environment. In the second phase a questionnaire was applied to seek further information and multiple viewpoints to questions and notions that came from the case studies of the three pre-primary teachers. The third phase of the inquiry involved constructing an accountability framework for pre-primary teachers. The accountability framework was developed from analysis of the data from previous phases coupled with a review of scholarly texts, other frameworks and further member checks with early childhood professionals. In the fourth phase of the research, sections of the accountability framework were presented to focus groups of practicing pre-primary teachers for comment and scrutiny. The final phase was the refinement of the framework. The following sections outline the phases of the study.

Phase One

Case Studies

The case study is a powerful tool that allows the use of “thick description” (Geertz, 1973) to enhance understanding of the participants’

views and actions in situated contexts. The case study optimised exploration and understanding of the “bounded system” (Adelman, Jenkins & Kemmis, 1976, p.141) of the pre-primary classroom. It allows the researcher to cover contextual issues and retain the holistic and meaningful characteristics of real life events. Investigation is undertaken in naturalistic settings so that “context stripping” or “decontextualisation” often seen as obstacles to the study of human phenomenon do not occur (McLean, 1991).

In early childhood education, the case study story invites the reader to view the teachers as individuals with distinctive characteristics and gives a voice to practitioners who “historically have been silenced and isolated” (Walsh, Tobin & Graue, 1993). The three case studies in this research focussed on the teachers and the multifaceted role they played connecting with others, enacting their program and accounting for their practice in the pre-primary settings. The cases were written separately but presented as case descriptions, where aspects of the “key components of pre-primary settings”(see Figure 2) were compared and contrasted across the three cases.

McGee-Brown (1995) argued that there are four demands of the inquirer when interpreting the social construction of meaning in early childhood settings. First, the unspoken significance of negotiated meaning needs to be captured. Second, the roles and relationships of the people involved in the negotiation must be identified. Added to this, the environment and the social context in which the negotiation took place needs to be fully described. Finally, the inquirer must ascertain if the meaning generated was due to the inquirer’s presence (McGee- Brown, 1995). The three case studies were

undertaken focussing on a single pre-primary teacher within the context of their classrooms.

The four demands McGee-Brown (1995) highlights are important to consider when piecing together the complex puzzle that the researcher endeavours to represent faithfully to the reader. Detail of the participants, their relationships and the social environment in which their interactions take place was carefully described and represented. Added to this is the notion that the researcher's presence may influence proceedings so that the case studies must strive to present considered detail and continued validation of knowledge gained through multiple sources of data. This is done in order to present a fair representation of the pre-primary teacher's work in these settings. The next section will describe the selection of participants and pre-primary sites used in the case studies.

The participants and the sites

The case study is not a search for cause but rather a process of learning about the case (Stake, 1994). The three participants were selected to reflect, rather than represent the range of views about pre-primary teachers' accountability in EDWA schools. The teachers were the focus in the case studies and were selected to provide "maximum variation" and "intensity" to the research (Guba & Lincoln, 1989, p.178). Colleagues identified experienced pre-primary teachers and further variation was sought by identifying teachers with different modes of educational delivery and early childhood pedagogy. This was done in part by referring to the continuum of teaching strategies provided by Bredekamp and Rosengrant (1995, see Appendix 1). In the small pool of teachers identified by this process the

selection of the three teachers was narrowed by the selection of the site. To assist in providing variation, the sites that offered differences in school structure and socio-economic status were selected. A community based preschool newly attached to a primary school, a pre-primary in an early childhood educational unit and a pre-primary on the grounds of a primary school were chosen (see Table 3 for demographic details). An early childhood education unit is a junior primary school that has school status and is administrated and staffed as a primary school. As well as the teachers, three teaching assistants, three principals and three parents participated in the case studies. All were observed interacting in the classrooms and were interviewed to provide a form of verification to the teacher's stories.

In the Field

Before the research began permission was sought in writing from the EDWA superintendents of the school districts in which the three teachers were situated. Subsequently, written application was made to the teachers through their principals explaining the research project and inviting them to take part in the study (see Appendix 2).

Once permission had been granted time was spent with each teacher in each setting during a "non-contact" time to explain the purpose of the research project and the teacher involvement. These initial meetings were proposed before observations started so that a friendly rapport and a relationship of trust could be established. At these meetings the teachers spoke informally of the philosophy that guided their practice and the researcher's role as learner and inquirer was promoted. Two preliminary visits were made to each classroom, which allowed the beginning of the

spatial-temporal mapping and introductions to the key players. The principal was notified whenever research was being undertaken on the school premises.

Table 3

Demographic Details of the Teachers and Sites of the Study*

Participant *	School Structure*	Location	Qualifications	Teaching Experience
Susan 31yrs	Southport Preschool	High socio-economic area	Diploma of Teaching, (E.C.E.) B.Ed.	Country. pre-primary 5 years
	A community based preschool annexed to a primary school	Offsite	(E.C.E)	Metropolitan independent pre-primary. 6 months Current location pre-primary -2 years
Jane 42yrs	Calderwell Pre-primary	Middle to high socio- economic area	Diploma of Teaching (Primary)	Metropolitan Yrs 1-6 - 6years
	One of two pre-primaries	Onsite		Country pre-primary -9 years Current location pre-primary - 1 year
Glenda 58yrs	Chitteringbro ok Pre-primary	Low to middle socio- economic area	Diploma of Teaching (E.C.E.)	Metropolitan pre-primary - 20years
	One of four pre-primaries	Onsite		Current location- pre-primary - 1 year

* Pseudonyms have been used for both teacher and school names

Data Collection Methods

The purpose of this section of the fieldwork was for the researcher to be immersed into the teaching lives of the three pre-primary teachers in order to interpret their constructed understandings and applications of teacher accountability. The data methods reflected the researcher's need to observe, recount, interpret and discuss behaviour (Wolcott, 1987). The "key components of the early childhood setting" as outlined in the Conceptual Framework (see Chapter 3, Figure 2) was used as a starting point for data collection. Each data collection method was used to add to the picture of pre-primary teacher accountability, to corroborate teacher's stories and to add thick description to the case studies.

Observing.

The role of the observer in this inquiry was overt. Interacting with participants was done without deliberately participating in activities of the group. The aim of observing was to record the ongoing experiences in the classroom and to represent the teacher's actions and the events that made up their daily teaching lives. Careful decisions had to be made as to what to observe and record in the hectic pace of the teacher's pre-primary life. To do this the researcher relied on experience as a pre-primary teacher and what Eisner (1991) calls "connoisseurship". A connoisseur is able to look past the trivial to the significant and place what is seen in an "intelligible context" (Eisner, 1991, p.221).

Eight to ten half-day visits were made to each site during morning and afternoon sessions of first term and second term in 1997. In addition, visits were made to interview all participants and attend teacher arranged parent

meetings. The number of observations was left open and data collection ended at different times in the three settings, at the point when no new information was being revealed about the case.

Field Notes

During the observations a running record depicting the ongoing life in the pre-primary was kept. As the teacher was the focus of this research every attempt was made to record her movements, behaviour and interactions. In order not to intimidate the teachers with note taking the researcher moved around the classroom and sat alone or with groups of children. Other times if the teacher needed privacy when speaking to a parent the interaction was noted and inquiries about the encounter were made at a later date. The researcher endeavoured to provide rich descriptions of the nature of events, interactions and snatches of conversations to provide visual illustrations of the teacher's work. Detailed field notes were kept in a journal with the action of the observation noted on the right hand page and the left-hand page left vacant for questions and interpretations. Each evening, after the observation this space would be used to write reflections, enlarge stories and to note questions or incongruencies that needed further investigation. Often questions were noted to ask teachers to explain particular courses of action, thoughts, routines or words. At this time a review of the purpose and priorities of the study to keep the focus clear were undertaken (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1983). The observations were coded using the abbreviations from the "key components of an early childhood setting" (see Figure 2) derived from the Conceptual Framework discussed in Chapter 3. Added to this, coding the components allowed easy retrieval of data at a later date and was a beginning point in the search for patterns.

Interviews and Conversations

Interviews were conducted with participants in order to ask for opinions, clarify actions and interpretations and to provide a means of clearly hearing participants' voices. Semi-structured interviews were held with the teachers, their assistants, the principals and one parent from each class. The interviews were semi-structured so that participants were free to offer their own themes for discussion and the interview was flexible to allow the following up of new ideas.

Each participant interviewed signed a confidentiality agreement, understanding that their stories would not be shared with other participants without their permission. All interviews were taped with the participants' permission. In order to overcome any anxiety on the participant's part, an outline on how the data would be used was given.

In the interviews the teachers were encouraged to extend their answers and offer examples to illustrate their ideas and experiences. Uncovering the terminology teachers used when discussing accountability was an important part of the inquiry. Therefore, the interviewer strove to be an active listener and was conscious of not introducing terms. The teachers' interviews were the most intensive of all the interviews, as it was their views and stories that were the focus. The other participants were interviewed to verify teacher's stories and offer their opinions on accountability issues. The teachers were interviewed twice, once near the middle of the observation period and a second time some weeks after the last observation period. The first interview concentrated on each teacher's views of planning, evaluation, assessment and school development issues but was flexible enough to allow the introduction of other themes. The second interview was primarily focussed on

accountability issues. Both interviews were transcribed and returned for comment. The teachers were interviewed in the classrooms, the principals in their offices while the parents were asked to choose a location. The teachers assisted in selecting a parent to be interviewed. The locations for the interviews with the parents ranged from the pre-primary kitchen, a school interview room to a parent's house.

In addition to the interviews, informal discussion with the teachers occurred in the course of observations, after observation periods or in telephone conversations during non-contact times. These interactions took place continuously throughout the observation period where clarifications and examples were sought. Each teacher remarked how they had enjoyed the conversations during the course of the observations as they had an opportunity to discuss early childhood issues. The conversations continued past the initial observation period, as the teachers were keen to follow the study through its duration. The teacher's comments were sought on findings from time to time and the teachers assisted in reviewing the pilot questionnaire.

Document and Record Analysis

Evidence of pre-primary accountability was sought through in-depth analysis of documents and records kept by the teacher, principal and school. Information through these sources were sought to verify and expand on information gained from other sources (Yin, 1994) or perhaps not given in the spoken form (Hodder, 1994). The teachers willingly shared all their written work and gave copies of documents in their planning files; information collected from professional development sessions and staff meetings. Material from the teachers' planning files included teacher philosophy,

planning documents, written information sent to school or parents, examples of record keeping and report forms. The principals gave copies of the school development plan and any documentation they used in their administration of pre-primary teacher accountability.

Each teacher's set of documents was analysed individually. The documents were kept in large files placed into similar categories used in the first interview. Categories such as planning, evaluation, assessment and school development issues were used while other sections such as reporting and passing on information were added as new information came to hand. During the preliminary analysis searches were conducted for descriptive phrases, illustrations, incongruencies and links to what had been observed in the centre. At times clarification was sought from teachers about meanings or reasons for particular documents.

Spatial – Temporal Mapping

“Mapping the field”, is an important way of analysing the spatial temporal relationships in a site (Schumacher & MacMillan, 1993). Spatial maps note the locations of facilities, equipment and specialized services provided whereas a temporal map describes the cadence of organisational life, timetables and unwritten routines and rituals. Each observation time, the indoor and outdoor areas were mapped noting displays, information on notice boards and arrangement of furniture and resources. Timetables, staff deployment, adult interactions and rituals and routines in the daily running of the program were among the many facets of pre-primary life observed and noted.

Verifying Data

During the data collection period, the researcher was conscious of not imposing her interpretations on the participants. Therefore, it was imperative to cross check between researcher-imposed and teacher-generated meanings. During the field study, questions were asked frequently to verify the meaning of teachers' actions and words while clarifications were sought from all participants. A chain of corroborated evidence was built by linking information from diverse sources validated by the participants (see Table 4). The parents, principals and assistants were interviewed to confirm teachers' stories and constructions of accountability. Documents, records and spatial-temporal maps were matched to information seen and heard in the settings offering triangulation of data. Teacher interviews were returned for comment and validation. Finally, the completed case studies were returned to the teachers for verification and comment.

Table 4

Data Collection Techniques used in Case Studies

Technique	Structure	Specific Intent
Observation	Overt observation in the pre-primary classroom, outdoor play areas and parents' meetings.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Record and document the ongoing activity in the pre-primary classroom with the teacher as the focus. 2. Corroborate evidence collected to add to "key components of an early childhood setting" and accountability issues.
Interviews and conversations	Semi – structured interview schedule Teachers – two interviews Assistants – one interview Principals – one interview Parents – one interview Conversations with all participants	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Record views and illustrations of accountability, pre-primary planning, assessment, school development planning and other issues generated by the participants. 2. Corroborate teachers' stories.
Document and Record Analysis	Planning and assessment documents School development plan Teacher performance management documents Photographs of environments School and pre-primary news letters Pre-primary handbooks	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Collect and analyse documents and photographs used by the participants relating to the aggregation of information for "key components of an early childhood setting" and accountability issues. 2. Corroborate teachers' stories and compare written data to practice.
Spatial and Temporal Mapping	Map indoor and outdoor environments Record timetable Record classroom displays Record written information around the classroom Record interaction of specialist teachers or other staff Record rosters	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Record and document changes to the environment and written information that the teacher displays for others. 2. Corroborate teachers' stories and compare links to articulated practice.

Data Analysis

Information sources such as field notes, documents and interview transcripts are not data but sources from which data must be interpreted by some form of analysis (Erickson, 1986). Therefore the researcher must find key linkages where plausibility is established and the process of establishing such linkages have been termed “analytical induction” (Erickson, 1986). Organising the case study findings under the headings of “key components in an early childhood setting” as set out in the conceptual framework (see Chapter 3, Figure 2) allowed analysis at a more abstract level.

Analysis was undertaken in two stages. In the first stage comments were made in field notebooks about hunches and questions were posed. At this time, insights, reflections and proposed lines of argument were drafted. LeCompte and Preissle (1993) describe this process as theorising and assert that it is a basic tool of the researcher. After each observation session the data theorising tasks such as comparing, contrasting, ordering of links and relationships were carried out. Other data sources were matched with what had been seen and heard from the teachers to create a comprehensive picture of pre-primary teacher accountability.

Furthermore, the interview data and observation records were scrutinised to provide “vignettes” and the teacher’s own words were used to capture a sense of the teacher’s voice. In this way the case studies were written in order to put forward the teacher’s point of view or interpretation of their reality not the researchers. Another technique used when reviewing the data was to find tangible links between the teachers’ espoused beliefs and

their actions. Researcher notes matching or mismatching the teachers observed classroom behaviours and conversations to other sources of evidence was a useful technique. Finally, each case study was written from the data collected and analysed. The categories of the conceptual framework were not necessarily used in the final case writing. The ongoing analysis of the data intensified the focus of research and research questions were constantly monitored.

The second phase of data analysis was the systematic examination of the data across the three cases. Writing three individual case studies allowed contrasts and comparisons to be drawn between the three teachers, their situations and the interpretations of their work as it related to their practice and accountability. Combination of the data collected from the three cases allowed for indepth development of themes that emerged and are presented as case descriptions. When presenting the themes taken from the cases, the teachers' words have been used to assist in keeping the teacher's voice in the fore. The teachers' words also act as an easy means of comparison of the teacher's opinions on different issues. A chart was constructed (Miles & Huberman, 1994) for researcher reference that described the teachers' work in terms of the headings used and noted descriptions of events, conversations or interactions to be used as illustrations in the text.

Issues and notions that came from the analysis of the case study data formed the basis of the questionnaire used in the second phase of the inquiry. A number of questions were raised, dilemmas identified and clarification of information was sought from a greater number of pre-primary teachers in the

field. The next section outlines the formulation, implementation and analysis of the questionnaire.

Phase Two

Questionnaire

The purpose of the questionnaire was to investigate the research questions further by consolidating and questioning the information gathered in the case studies. This phase probed the areas of accountability terminology, teacher explanations, planning considerations, record keeping, school development planning, quality assurance and performance management. The following sections describe the process of constructing and implementing the questionnaire then analysing the data.

Construction of Questionnaire

The construction of a questionnaire is a complex process, as it requires critical thinking by more than one person to produce a valid and reliable questionnaire (Deschamp & Tognilini, 1988). The questionnaire items were based on the questions and issues needing clarification that arose from the case studies and then they were passed to a number of people for comment. Firstly, an experienced questionnaire researcher was consulted to ensure items were clear and rating scales were correct. Each questionnaire item was matched to a research question or questions in order to ensure the items in the questionnaire were focussed on the study at hand. The first draft of the questionnaire was passed to a panel of early childhood professionals for comment. Then it was reviewed and trialed on a combined group of 20 practising pre-primary and junior primary teachers undertaking further study

at Edith Cowan University. The participants were asked to answer the questionnaire and to comment on any questions that were ambiguous or needed further clarification. The questionnaire was scrutinised and refined once again. Finally, the questionnaire was passed to each of the case study teachers for comment before the pilot process.

Pilot of Questionnaire

In order to pilot the questionnaire pre-primary teachers in part of the largest EDWA metropolitan district were selected on the terms of accessibility to the researcher. Fifteen pre-primary teachers known to the researcher were asked to trial the questionnaire, each were sent a letter of explanation and the questionnaire to complete and return. All were returned and a trial of analysis procedures on quantitative answers was completed using the SPSS computer analysis program (Version 7.5). The descriptive answers were analysed by searching for themes and common language.

After this process was complete, the questionnaire was again analysed and scrutinised from the pilot sample to check the effectiveness of the questions. Changes were made where warranted and the questionnaire was again passed back to the panel of experts and supervisors for final comment.

Questionnaire Sample

One hundred and six pre-primary and preschool teachers employed by EDWA in three metropolitan school districts were selected to complete the questionnaire. The three districts were selected to give maximum variation of socio-economic situations across and within districts. The notion of a representative sample is debated in the literature but Jaeger (1988) suggests that the researcher selects the sampling frame and this in turn defines reality.

However, comparing the representative standing of this sample compared with the demographics of known samples of teachers was difficult.

Comparing the ages of South Australian teachers (South Australian Board of Teacher Registration, 1999) with the ages of the teachers in the study sample (see Figure 3) showed that the pre-primary teachers in the sample are younger. However, the South Australian sample included teachers from all sectors of education not specifically early childhood teachers. Logan and Dempster (1989) presented the only sample specific to early childhood teachers ten years ago, which rendered it too old to be informative. Thus, it is unclear if this sample is a representative sample of early childhood teachers. However, the sample used in the study provides a sample of experienced pre-primary teachers whose years of work in the field leave them equally poised to contribute knowledgeably to this questionnaire.

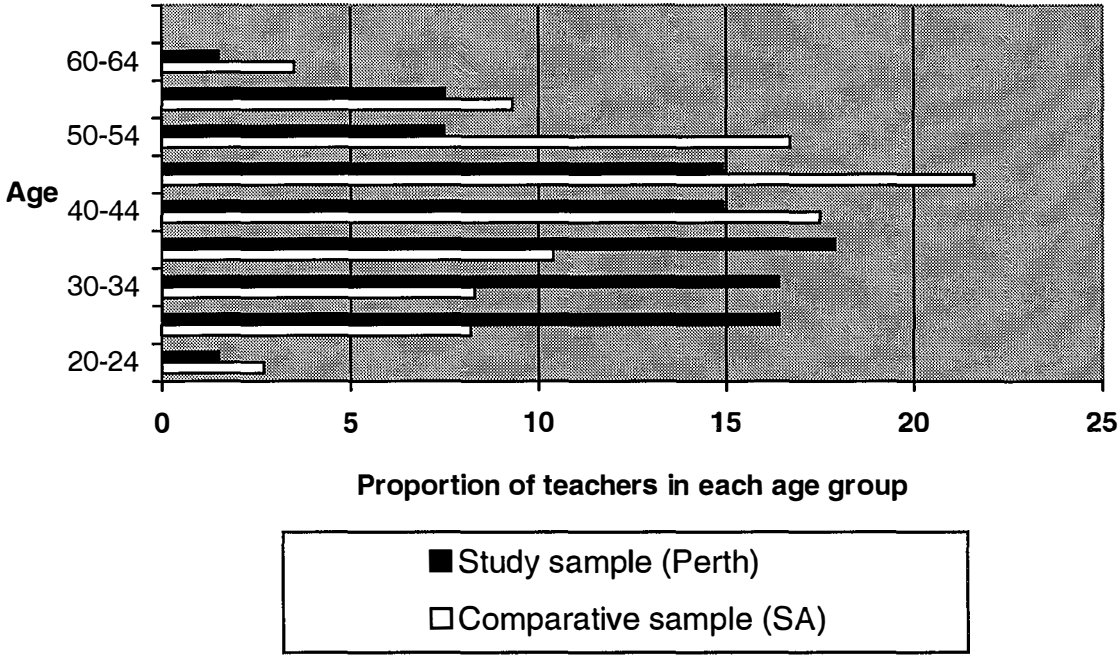


Figure 3. Comparison of teachers' ages

Implementation

During the course of this study EDWA ethics policy had changed so that any research undertaken in schools was at the principal's discretion. For that reason letters of explanation of teacher involvement in completing the questionnaire were sent directly to the teacher through the principal (see Appendix 3). Questionnaires were sent with a self-addressed stamped envelope to assist in an easier retrieval process (see Appendix 4). Participants were given a period of three weeks for completion and then reminder telephone calls were made in order to retrieve questionnaires. After the initial phone call a second reminder call was made to those who had not returned questionnaires. The sample consisted of 106 pre-primary and preschool teachers and 67 questionnaires were returned. Five phone conversations revealed that the principals of those schools had not passed on the questionnaires. The pre-primary teachers said that it was a common problem that information was not passed on from the school. Many teachers contacted spoke of not having enough time to complete the questionnaire, as they felt overwhelmed with work. One teacher said she refused to take part as "any accountability discussion was a matter between herself, the principal and the Education Department."

Analysis of Questionnaire

After collecting and numbering the questionnaires for reference, the analysis was undertaken in two stages. The first stage consisted of processing the responses, both quantitative and descriptive. The quantitative responses were analysed using the SPSS computer program (Version 7.5). When responses had been tallied and represented statistically, tables and graphs

were constructed for a finer grained analysis of the data. Answers were compared across the districts to see if there were any significant differences in responses. Next the descriptive responses were analysed. These responses were at times coded and then tallied as an attempt was made to identify common language in explanations and common themes in answers. Where answers did not permit this process they were summarised in a field notebook. The notebook held thoughts, lines of investigation and possible arguments to be fostered.

The second stage of analysis lifted the level of scrutiny. This stage was a finer grained analysis concentrating on using the primary analysis to guide the construction of the accountability framework. For example, the main areas of analysis such as the language teachers used, techniques for gathering and passing on information, planning considerations and teachers experiences with school development planning and performance management were reviewed with consideration of use in the framework.

Phase Three

Literature Review and Framework Construction

Constructing a framework to assist pre-primary teachers to address issues of accountability was a difficult task. The information used in the framework's construction came from three major sources. The first source was the information gleaned from the pre-primary teachers in the case studies and those surveyed. The second source of information was a review of literature in specific areas relevant to the construction of an accountability framework. Finally the third source of information was advice from a panel

of experts. In the following section the information reviewed and the construction of the framework will be discussed.

The pre-primary year is a non-compulsory year of school in Western Australia and as yet implementation of accountability processes has been inconsistent. There are a number of documents that offer quality programs and guidelines for “best practice” but as yet there is no accountability framework for early childhood teachers in Australia. Therefore the search in the literature was centred on three main areas. Firstly in order to capture the essence of quality in early childhood educational programs documents such as DAP (Bredenkamp, 1987), Australian documents such as “What is good early childhood education” (EDWA, 1998), “Foundations of Learning” (DECS, 1996) and the “Preschool Curriculum Guidelines” (Queensland School Curriculum Council, 1998) were scrutinized. Secondly to construct a framework that would indeed represent early childhood teacher accountability other promotional and accountability frameworks were reviewed. Documents such as the EDWA Level 3 promotion handbook (EDWA, 1997), EDWA School Development Planning documents (EDWA, 1989; 1990; 1991) and the American National Board for Teaching Standards – Standards for Early Childhood Generalist (NBPTS, 1995) were used. Thirdly, were teacher portfolios. After thorough consideration and discussions with colleagues, a teacher portfolio was thought to be the most effective tool for pre-primary teachers to use when representing and explaining their accountability. Therefore a literature review in this area was undertaken.

Once the literature was reviewed, notes were made in each area defining the core ideas relating to the framework. This was a lengthy process and

seven sections were drafted with indicators that would assist in defining a quality early childhood program. The literature review on frameworks and portfolios assisted in the structure of the framework while the data and literature review on best practices in early childhood education made up the content. When shaping the content of the framework the information taken from the field data with the literature was cross-checked. For example, factors proposed in the literature that early childhood teachers should consider when planning were compared to the responses to this question from the teachers surveyed and studied. This comparison was used as a guide to focus on what information and language should be used in the sections on “Early Childhood Curriculum” and “Teaching for Meaningful Learning” in the framework. One dilemma faced was the language of the framework. It had to be constructed using the vernacular of the pre-primary teachers but in a way that would effectively demonstrate pre-primary teachers’ accountability to people outside the field. Another dilemma was using the information teachers supplied about their practices while matching it to other accountability practices so the framework was cross-referenced to other accountability documents used in the construction (see Appendix 5).

The last part of this process was the review of the framework by early childhood and accountability specialists. Three early childhood specialists and an accountability specialist identified by colleagues at the university reviewed the framework and after lengthy discussions with each, changes were made. Once the completed changes were made the revised framework was sent to five pre-primary teachers known to the researcher. After reviewing the teachers’ comments changes were made where appropriate to

the framework (see Appendix 6 for framework sections). After the procedure was complete the framework was presented for review by a number of practicing pre-primary teachers in focus groups. The final phase of the study described below was set up to test whether the field data had been interpreted accurately.

Phase Four

Focus Groups

Merton, Fiske and Kendall (1956) coined the term “focus group” which originally was described as a technique applied to a group interview after considerable research had been completed. Since then, the use of focus groups as a qualitative technique has grown and the parameters of the group interview have widened. Focus groups are now designed dependent on their purpose (Knodel, 1993) and offer another method of triangulation with the advantage of “polyphonic” accounts (Frey & Fontana, 1993). The importance of focus groups as noted by Blumer (cited in Frey & Fontana, 1993) is that a small group of well informed individuals brought “together as a discussion and resource group, is more valuable many times over than any representative sample”(p.24).

There were three principal ways in which information was collected in the focus groups. The first was to use each group as a collective resource and ask for teachers’ comments on a section of the framework. The second was to validate findings from the questionnaire. The third way was to use the multiple voices of the groups with accounts and concerns from the field. The

procedure and analysis techniques of the focus groups are discussed in the following sections.

Procedure

In 1997 there were five large EWDA metropolitan regions. At the time of implementation of this phase of the study, application was made to all five regions through the early childhood specialist attached to the region. Permission was sought to use the early childhood network meetings of EDWA pre-primary and preschool teachers as focus groups. Entry was granted to four of the five regions and meetings were convened with the early childhood specialists and often their line managers to discuss the aims of this phase of the study. Each region had different methods of convening early childhood meetings and the time in the day and purpose for the meetings differed. Therefore the researcher had no control over group size so small group tasks were constructed so that all teachers were able to participate in the discussion. At the conclusion of this phase 145 practising pre-primary or preschool teachers, nine principals and four district early childhood specialists commented on the framework. The principals were used as a reference group as they were scheduled to attend the whole day of professional development offered by the region. Detailed notes were made in a field diary about the participants and the content of each focus group (see Table 5).

The method employed in each group was flexible but the structure of the group schedule remained consistent so that comparisons could be made across groups. To ensure a measure of continuity of method a semi-structured schedule was written adding the role as moderator. This allowed a focus on issues that needed to be clarified or explained but permitted flexibility for new

ideas and issues to be introduced. Each group was started with the acknowledgement that the researcher was there to learn from them, something Bellinger (cited in Morgan, 1988, p.57) calls acknowledging “incomplete understanding”. Participants were asked to perform three tasks before discussion was prompted and moderated. The first two tasks were centred on reviewing a section of the framework and the third task was to complete a member check from findings of the questionnaire (see Appendix 7 for questions, worksheets and member check).

Once the written tasks were completed the teachers were asked to form small groups and discuss the points in the section of the framework they had reviewed. Through discussion, the teachers were asked to reach a consensus on which point was the most important for a teacher to consider when examining their work in that section. This task acted as starting point for discussion after which groups were brought together and results of the consultation were tallied and discussed. A discussion of accountability issues followed that was guided flexibly so teacher introduced themes and ideas could be followed. This flexibility allowed the researcher to query or ask for clarification and illustration of issues that were raised. As Morgan (1988) has said of focus group leadership, “The moderator needs to be free to probe more deeply when necessary, skip over areas that have already been covered and follow completely new topics as they arise” (p.57).

In two of the three focus groups, principals were present and their written task was to read and answer questions on the framework (see Appendix 8). Once their written task was completed they joined in the whole group discussion. It must be noted that their presence, as well as the district

early childhood specialists may have influenced teachers' responses and discussion.

Table 5

Focus Groups: Demographic Features and Content of Discussions

Region	Group	Participants	Schedule	Themes of discussion
Brown	1	27 teachers	Only speaker 1-3pm	*Child development and learning *Early childhood curriculum ~Performance management
	2	12 teachers	Only speaker 1-3pm	*Assessment and reporting *Early childhood curriculum ~Stakeholder hierarchy ~Information gathering techniques
	3	17 teachers	Only speaker 4-6pm	*Assessment and reporting ~Terms of accountability ~Stakeholder hierarchy
Black	1	28 teachers	Only speaker 1-3pm	*Teaching for meaningful learning *Early childhood curriculum *Whole school context ~Stakeholder hierarchy ~Performance management
	2	27 teachers	Only speaker 1-3pm	*Whole school context *Educational partnerships ~School development planning ~Performance management
Red	1	18 teachers 6 principals	Full day P.D. 1.30- 3.00	*Educational partnerships *Building professional responsibility ~Accountability definitions ~Performance management ~Stakeholder hierarchy
Green	1	16 teachers 3 principals	Full day P.D. 1.15- 2.30	*Child development and learning *Building professional relationships ~Educational partnerships ~Quality ECE programs ~Performance management

Note. Key: * Section for analysis and topic introduced by moderator
~ Topic introduced by teachers

Focus Group Analysis

The decision about which techniques to select in order to analyse and report focus group data could be described as pragmatic. Morgan (1988) argues that there is little written about the reporting of focus group data and that the researcher usually selects what best represents their focus group design. Siedel and Clark (1984) have distinguished between interpretive and mechanical techniques for analysis of the focus group data. Interpretive analysis involves determining categories for coding the focus group information and searching for patterns on which to draw logical conclusions. In their case, the mechanical analysis as described by Seidel and Clark (1984) uses a computer program such as NUD.IST for further qualitative analysis by cutting and pasting information within the categories chosen. However in this research the mechanical method will refer to the quantitative computer analysis of the three tasks that each teacher completed using SPSS (Version 7.5). The following section describes the analysis that was completed after each focus group and then analysed as a whole set.

Analysis of Data Collected using Focus Groups

In the group sessions, notes from the whole group discussions were written on a whiteboard so the group could keep track of themes discussed or comment made. At times these notes included quotes and anecdotes of experiences as related by the participants. At the conclusion of the session these notes were transferred to a field notebook and further analysis was made of the notes when theorising tasks were completed. Most importantly, added to these notes were the reflections that allowed a thorough review of technique so that the researcher's skill as moderator became honed as time went on.

The written tasks the teachers completed were dealt with at the conclusion of each session in two ways. Firstly, the numbers from the tasks were tallied using the SPSS computer program (Version 7.5) for a means of comparison. The analyses of tasks one and two were represented in tabular form and can be found in Chapter 10. The answers to the member check that was task three were tallied (see Appendix 9) and then compared across groups and regions. Secondly the descriptive answers were analysed in a number of steps. The first step involved coding explanations the teachers had given and trying to cluster them into common themes, noting common use of terms. The second step was to analyse the written comments that many teachers had made on the sides of the papers, which were noted in a field notebook and clustered into common themes. The third step started with a search for patterns in the descriptive data obtained from the written answers and notes from discussions. Then possible lines of argument were proposed for future use. Finally the analysis of the data was reviewed so that the framework could be refined and that process is described in the next section.

Phase Five

Refinement of the Framework

Similar to the other phases, the final phase of this study rested on the analysis of data from the previous phase. Each of the seven sections of the framework had been reviewed by approximately 20 teachers and their comments analysed. The teachers were asked to review the section presented to them in terms of affirming the content and highlighting instructive information gathering techniques they used. Viewing this information led to

confirmation or change of the indicators used to represent aspects considered important by the literature and teachers in the field. Next, consideration was given to the techniques that teachers considered as effective and informative when gathering information in their classroom. This was done in order to offer information gathering techniques that were regarded as worthwhile by teachers in the final draft.

Throughout their scrutiny of the section, teachers were asked to consider the language to ensure terms were used correctly. This information was used to comb through the framework and adjust any terms that needed clarification. The principals had reviewed the framework as a whole and their comments were used to refine the introduction to the framework. Finally, when the refinements were made the framework was passed back to the panel of early childhood and accountability experts for comment.

Quality of the Study

Much has been written about the quality of qualitative research. Terms such as plausibility (Campbell, 1978), assertability (Dewey, 1929; Geertz, 1973), verisimilitude (Denzin, 1989), trustability (Erickson, 1989) and understanding (Wolcott, 1990) are used to describe the quality of a study presented by the researcher. However, it is not only the truthfulness of the data but the integrity of the research process, the reader's validation of what is presented, and the researcher's influence that must be monitored to ensure quality in qualitative research.

There are as many notions as there are terms similar in substance and meaning used to define and describe how quality can be asserted in a qualitative study. One of these notions is the concept of trustability, which

Erickson (1986) argues can be achieved by addressing three criteria. First, in an interpretive study it is essential to ensure that the actors' meanings are conveyed. In the case studies this is ensured when the narrative contains verbatim accounts achieved through using data that were mechanically recorded such as audio-tapes and photos. The analysis of documents and spatial-temporal maps assisted in adding situated accounts, snapshots of classroom life. Checking for shared meaning through continual researcher participant dialogues and obtaining the teachers' review of their case studies adds to the claims of trustworthiness and integrity of the research. In the questionnaires, teachers' voices were represented in a tallied form and descriptive phrases taken from written replies. In the focus groups teachers' voices were heard in a polyphonic form where individual comments were used to describe notions and experiences of accountability issues.

Second, Erickson (1986) claims that how well the researcher confers and corroborates the evidence strengthens trustability. The research must be presented credibly with a coherent argument and a considered frame of reference. The conceptual framework guided the study and the researcher's "connoisseurship" allowed focus on the areas identified for investigation. In this study, the coherence of the argument was strengthened by structural validation, where multiple types of data are analysed and presented to support the interpretation and appraisal of the phenomenon studied (see Table 4). This strategy was used to bring about "a confluence of evidence that breeds credibility" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p.110). Credibility can also be increased through multiplicative corroboration where the reader and inquirer concur that the interpretations and findings are consistent with the evidence presented or

their own experiences (Eisner, 1993). In corroborating evidence, categories used in data collection and analysis must be matched between research based categories and the “participant’s views of their social realities”(Schumacher & McMillan, 1993, p. 376). Corroborating evidence in order to present the participant’s view was ensured in a number of ways. First, the research and evidence presented reflect the reality of life for the teachers in their work settings. Second, continual effort was made to check with participants that the interpretations presented were accurate. Added to this was the continuation of the research journey beyond the three teachers. It involved a number of data collection phases that rested on the analysis of the previous phase. This study was constructed carefully in order to link the analysis of each phase while continually validating findings with practicing teachers in the field. The phases of the study are linked together and represented in Figure 4.

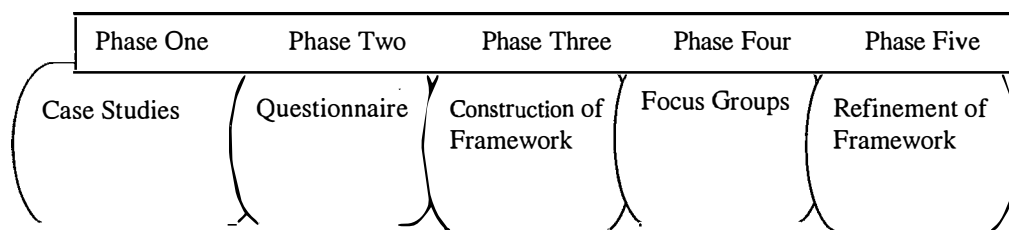


Figure 4. Flow chart indicating the links in the phases of the study.

The last criterion Erickson (1986) draws upon is that the notion of power and advantage is acknowledged within the study. The researcher must not only look to develop procedural objectivity but to understand how the researcher’s presence may effect the research process. In the case studies, confidentiality agreements were signed by all acknowledging that a

participant's story would not be told to others without that individual's permission. The principal, teacher, parent relationship was fully acknowledged. In the focus groups the researcher was in control of the ebb and flow of the proceedings. Therefore, it was particularly important to acknowledge how the researcher's presence not only affected the group but also that of the district early childhood supervisor and at times principals may have affected teachers' discussion.

One way of addressing the notion of power and advantage is by maintaining "disciplined subjectivity" (Schumacher & McMillan, 1993). This can be achieved by the triangulation of information obtained through the use of a variety of data collection methods such as was the case in this inquiry (see Table 4). Each stage of the inquiry was built upon the information collected and analysed from the preceding stage. An audit trail was noted carefully and can be followed through the study showing that not only was each phase of the research process subjected to rigorous questioning and re-evaluation but also reflections on how the researcher's presence influenced proceedings.

Many researchers write about the influence of the researcher on their work, in terms of what and how it will be reported (Eisner, 1991; Fontana & Frey, 1994; Glesne & Peshkin, 1992). It is the case in interpretive and constructive research that the researcher's view of the participant's world is filtered through his or her own perspective. It was clear at the outset that the researcher's frame of reference of early childhood education, while useful in moulding a study, had to be guarded so that no self-imposed limits would affect what was found. An attempt was made to represent all points of view

without judgement especially when they may have clashed with the researcher's own early childhood philosophy.

Ethical Considerations

This research was a journey of growth regarding the researcher's ethical considerations. While the researcher had always considered herself as a guest in the "private spaces of the world" and maintained the strictest code of ethics (Stake, 1994, p.244), the power wielded with the pen had not been realised. In the case studies relationships of trust and mutual respect were built where the search for meaning was shared and negotiated. It was this relationship of trust that was quite daunting in the first instance especially where the practices viewed clashed with the researcher's beliefs. However, in the negotiation of meaning the researcher endeavoured to adopt the case teachers' perspective, which was vital in representing their work honestly. All participants made informed decisions to participate in the study with the understanding that they could withdraw at any time. Interviews and the completed case studies were returned to the teachers for comment and authentication. Participants in the case studies signed letters of consent outlining participant confidentiality and confirming that participants would be unidentifiable in the final report. The school principal was informed of the researcher's presence on the school site, and the material collected from the teachers and the school were securely stored with only researcher access.

At the district level, the superintendents, early childhood consultants and their line managers were informed of the research being under taken. The survey respondents were informed by letter of the purpose of the study and how the questionnaire data would be used. All the questionnaire responses

were noted as numbers not names were used to identify participants. The responses were securely stored and the researcher had sole access. The focus group members were verbally assured of the confidentiality of their responses and alerted to the way in which the data collected would be used. The written responses from the focus group teachers were unnamed.

Conclusion

This chapter has described the five phases of the research inquiry. The study has been designed so that each phase is linked to the subsequent phase offering avenues for further investigation and corroboration of data collected. The study began with the three case studies, which allowed a platform or knowledge base to be built that represented the three teachers work and their views on accountability. Following on from the cases, the questionnaire sought clarification and further investigation of issues uncovered in the case studies. The next phase concentrated on constructing an accountability framework for teachers and the final phases sought to validate and refine the framework with a larger population of practicing pre-primary teachers. In the final stages of this chapter discussion focussed on the aspects considered to ensure the quality of research undertaken and presented. Finally, the researcher's journey was described when considering the ethical dilemmas that arose and the techniques used to ensure high ethical standards.

This account of the methodology has set out how and why certain techniques of inquiry were used at particular stages of the research project. The remaining chapters provide discussion of the information gathered and analysed throughout the phases of the inquiry. The following four chapters present the case descriptions taken from the three individually written case

studies, followed by a discussion of the questionnaire and focus group data. The next chapter introduces the three case study teachers and the settings in which they work.

CHAPTER 5

BUILDING A PICTURE

Introduction

This chapter is the first of four that describe themes that were drawn from the case studies. The chapter builds a picture of the case study settings and the main players who interact within them. Chapter 6 provides a detailed analysis of the educational programs of the case study teachers. Chapter 7 details the professional relationships of the teachers and Chapter 8 reviews the issues of quality assurance and teacher self-reflection. The final chapter describing the cases presents the teachers' views on accountability.

The conceptual framework has shown the importance of viewing the interplay of contextual features when viewing the educational program a pre-primary teacher constructs and enacts. At the centre of this model is the immediate educational setting in which the teacher works. To gain an understanding of the teachers' practice, a clear sense of the setting in which this practice is found should be constructed. As Stake (1990) points out each "educational practice has its habitat, its milieu, its frame of reference..."(p.231). Not only is a picture of the setting needed but also of the participants found in these settings. The focus of inquiry is the teacher but the class composition and the assistant will be described to add to the representation of the context. Added to the teacher's description is a personal biography because, as previously stated, McLean (1991) argues that we must know

something of the participants' lives in order to understand their framework for making sense of their environment. The sections in this chapter offer detailed descriptions of each site, the assistants, makeup of the classes and the biographies of the teachers.

The three pre-primary settings were selected to represent typical settings found in the state government education system. While these three settings are typical they are also representative of different pre-primary contexts found in the Perth metropolitan area. The first is a pre-primary based on the site of a primary school. The second is a community preschool contracted to a local EDWA primary school. The third is a pre-primary on a primary school site but part of an Early Childhood Education Unit. All the centres cater for the full-day education for four days per week of children turning five years old and the teachers are formally accountable to the principal of their primary school.

The following descriptions of the settings reflect the socio-economic environments in which the schools are placed. Differences are marked. All participants have been given pseudonyms and each case description in this chapter has been labeled with a pseudonym given to the participating teachers.

Case Study 1 – “Susan”

The Pre-school

Susan's preschool was an old community-based pre-school nestled in a prosperous suburb. The pre-school was an easy five minutes walk from its “parent” primary school. Across the road from the pre-school was a very large park with a

natural water hole which had been the local “tadpole” spot for generations. Over several decades the park had been tidied up to move from swamp to garden status, which was in keeping with the high socio-economic status of the area. The houses around the pre-school could appear on the cover of a lifestyle magazine. Mature trees in gardens and lining the streets gave the leafy feeling of a well-established suburb.

The pre-school was first established in 1946 and moved to the present site in 1954. Its first year of operation was chronicled in 1955. Since this time it was affiliated with the Kindergarten Board but more recently it has been run as a community based EDWA pre-school with a parent management committee. In 1997 the pre-school entered a contractual agreement with EDWA to affiliate the pre-school to the local primary school, retaining its pre-school status and management committee. Thus pre-school became the entrance year of the local primary school. The centre offered a full-day five-year-old program, four days per week. On the non-contact days of Wednesday morning and Friday afternoon a program for four-year-olds was offered by a separate teacher and assistant.

The pre-school fitted very well into its surroundings. The playground around the pre-school building was very large, well tended and green. Large trees shaded the playground and bird life abounded. The substantial corner block had a high fence that edged the perimeter so the playground was secure but visible from the road. A car park set on the fringe of the park was well utilised so there was no congestion at delivery and departure times. To enter the grounds an adult height

security gate must be unlatched before a short walk up the path to the pre-school door.

The pre-school was purpose built for early childhood education. It had a very spacious main room with a smaller room to the side, a separate office, store-room, kitchen and large bathroom. The bathroom had three child-sized toilets and one adult toilet and housed a large cloakroom area. The centre did not look its age. It was fresh, clean and tidy with a spacious air. In the main room, in an L shape around the large home corner and block corner areas were four activity tables and a large collage activity table. The block corner and home corner were partitioned from one another using shelving and low freestanding partitions especially designed for this purpose. These areas were on a large strip of carpet whilst the activity tables were placed on the shiny lino floor. The front entrance opened onto this scene so that when all the children were working at the tables, there was a strong feeling of concentration and 'busy-ness'. The smaller room was used for quieter activities such as puzzles, manipulative games and books. There was another activity table and an interest table, making six activity tables in all. In this room the whole group activities were held, as well as music and movement. Shelving in this room displayed a wealth of resources, musical instruments, puzzles and games.

What stood out in this classroom were the displays. The displays of children's work were a feature and it was apparent that the teacher spent considerable time and energy displaying and arranging children's work. Each display had a title and was often accompanied by documentation prepared by the teacher which described what the children had learned by completing the activity. For example, the information

pinned above the interest table written in an ornate script, read: “Here are some of our very special baby clothes that we used to wear. We are learning how the needs of babies are different to ours” (Field notes, 20.2.97).

The children’s paintings and drawings that were displayed had instantly recognisable and maturely drawn human figures, with all bodily features. Most wall space was utilised displaying the products of children’s efforts from the same activity. Many of the displays on the pin-up boards were cooperative projects completed by the children under teacher guidance.

The outside area had wide-open spaces and attractive nooks and crannies. The playground looked like a display at an outdoor education centre. The outside area included: a purpose built hill with tunnel underneath; a two storey tree house that spanned three trees, with a slide and ladder attached; a cycle path with petrol bowser and three tricycles; a flying fox with platforms; wooden “wobble walk” and built in balancing logs; a comfortable wooden swing chair to rest in and observe the doings of the playground; a wooden play house complete with hanging pots; a very large sand pit with cooking facilities, digging equipment and construction materials; a life-sized dinghy in the corner standing ready for sea going adventures; monkey bars that rest over a bed of sand for safety and a flying fox built to mirror the monkey bars; two sets of swing frames, one with swings and the other with a rope ladder, foam balls on a rope and a half foam ball swing; the water trolley and guinea pig cage were also nestled in between the play equipment. Colourful shrubs and plants added to the opulent feel of a well-stocked play area.

In stark contrast was the basic Education Department issued outdoor equipment, which consisted of a set of A – frames with climbing boards. These items stood out in stark contrast to the other play equipment although they had been painted in bright colours.

Case Study 2 – “Jane”

The Pre-primary Centre

Jane’s centre was located in a busy inner city suburb. Caldwell pre-primary was a large purpose built centre nestled at the side of the school oval. There were two pre-primaries on the school grounds, the other being a small demountable pre-primary building resting on the side of the school oval. On one side of this pre-primary was a blossoming rose garden and on the other side was the school oval. Huge Morton Bay trees fringed the oval giving the place an aged feeling. In front of the pre-primary was an “in and out” driveway shared with the local child health clinic that was built on the side of the pre-primary building.

The area around the pre-primary was filled with a mixture of newly renovated and old federation style houses. Most of the houses in this area had very small, if any, outside areas and parking was mostly in the street. This gave the school surrounds a cluttered feeling intensified by the busy shopping precinct one block away. Added to this was the hustle and bustle of business associated with the area so parking was a major problem, especially at pre-primary pick-up and drop-off times.

The front of the pre-primary building was deceptive. A 1970's pale brick façade and gray bitumen drive did not hint at the cheery environment to be found behind the front door. Sheltering the entry to the pre-primary was a small portico that housed pinup boards bearing information about parent help and laundry rosters. A single glass and wood door made entry into the centre difficult when children and parents rushed in the door at opening time.

The pre-primary activity centres were housed in one very large room. Off this room to one side was a small office for the teacher and a storeroom that housed art supplies and manipulative games. On the other side of the room were a separate adult toilet and a large cloakroom for children. The cloakroom had three child-sized toilets and three hand basins as well as ample room for bags. Low wooden benches were built around three walls so the children could sit in comfort to remove their shoes. Back inside the large room it was difficult not to be drawn to the large glass windows and heavy glass and wooden sliding doors that framed the outdoor area. Light from these windows streamed into the room. The furniture had been set up in such a way that movement around the centre was easy. There was a large unoccupied space in the middle of the room that allowed children to spill out of play areas situated around the walls. A particularly large home corner was situated near the front door that spanned out along the wall and took up one quarter of the large open space. Directly in front of the main entrance past the galley kitchen was the main mat and puzzle area. This area was defined by a large mat and edged on the side closest to the kitchen by mobile puzzle shelves. On this mat, Jane conducted whole class learning times from her chair (placed on the side of the mat) that gave

her a clear view of the room. Along the back glass windows and the wall of the teacher's office were shelves holding an array of wooden blocks. There were usually three small activity tables and one large collage table positioned on the lino floor near the cloakroom. An art trolley jutted out from the wall that housed art and craft supplies, which the children used without obtaining permission. Along the back glass windows near the cloakroom door were two interest tables that had nature based manipulative materials.

Heavy double sliding doors opened out onto a covered verandah and a cyclone ringlock fence enclosed a gently sloping grassed play area. A double gate at the side was left permanently open so the children at the new pre-primary centre could access the playground, which was now shared. On the verandah was a woodwork table mainly used for drying indoor work, next to that were two painting easels and a small matted area used at lunch times. Following down the grassed slope was a very clean looking large sandpit with a new shade cloth canopy erected across the sandpit. On the other side of the slope was a pine wooden fort on stilts with a ladder attached, a fireman's pole and suspended bridge. At the very bottom of the play area was a large sand area that had mature trees growing and housed a scramble net and swing set. Scattered about the lawn on flatter areas were the Education Department issue climbing frames and boards. During the observation period the appearance of the outdoor area changed. This was the first year that fifty children had used the playground all day. As the term went on the grass deteriorated which gave the play area a very shabby appearance.

Case Study 3 – “Glenda”

The Pre-primary

Jane and Susan’s pre-primaries both served prosperous, long established residential neighbourhoods. Glenda’s pre-primary in contrast was located in a suburb in the outer fringes of the metropolitan area. The district was predominantly residential but pockets of natural bushland remained dotted with small farmlets. This added a suburban look to an old rural area but the overall impression was that this district was poor. The principal described the area around the school as a “low socio-economic area with a high number of disadvantaged people”. Unemployment in the area was high and housing was predominantly rental, with some first homebuyers and a small proportion of state housing.

The EDWA primary school was established in 1974 and relocated to its present site in 1975. In 1980 due to a large school population the school divided into two separate educational institutions: an early childhood unit catering for pre-primary to Year two and an upper primary school from Year three to Year seven. This school was one of five metropolitan schools to pilot a “split-school” scheme.

The early childhood unit operated independently with its own administration, staff and principal. The early childhood unit comprised of four pre-primary classes, three Year one classes, three Year two classes and one educational support class. There were 265 children in the early childhood unit and when the children from both schools were outside the playground spaces were overrun.

The school site was overcrowded and looked impermanent. The early childhood buildings were squeezed into spaces among other classes, although the

early childhood unit had been in operation for over fifteen years. The administration block of the early childhood unit was a small demountable building placed on the verge of the staff car park. Three of the four pre-primary buildings were demountable buildings sharing the same small outdoor area. The two schools shared the under cover area, library, oval, car park and staff room. Spaces have not altered to cater for the growing needs of the populations of the two schools and the staff car park was overflowing, so staff cars were parked along the school verge.

The appearance of the pre-primary area mirrored the neighbourhood, one new building amongst a few old giving the appearance of a well worn area with not much sparkle. The transient nature of the population in the district was reflected in the fact that only last year, EDWA built a permanent pre-primary centre. There were usually three pre-primary centres in operation but this year because of increased student numbers and the beginning of the full-day pre-primary program a fourth pre-primary centre was added to the setting. A path led to the pre-primaries from the staff car park and entry was gained through one small gateway in a waist height ring-lock fence. The pre-primary centre studied was at the furthest point from the gate and adjacent to a major road to which there was no access. Most parents parked in the street, lifted their children over the fence and then jumped the fence to gain access to the pre- primary. The four centres all faced into a small fenced off playground in the school grounds.

Inside the pre-primary, the indoor area gave the same immediate impression as the outside, physically cramped and unattractive. On further investigation, this impression came from the child built displays that gave a haphazard look, as the

work was child produced and at child height. Windows on both sides of the room limited display space so work was not always shown to its advantage or without adding to the cluttered feel of the room. All products displayed exhibited great diversity of children's skills and abilities.

The physical limitations of a small demountable classroom were obvious with "EDWA issue" furniture, 25 children and 4 adults in the room. The teacher designed the learning areas so the traffic flow was uninterrupted and noisier play areas were together. Areas were defined by the use of shelving and large mobile pin-up boards. The room was cramped as the teacher endeavoured to include all the work and interest areas found in most pre-primaries. The layout changed according to the program's focus throughout the term. For example, the main mat area was initially placed on the block corner mat. However, due to slow packing away, there were times when the class could not assemble quickly on the mat. After teacher and assistant discussions the puzzle shelves were used as room dividers and the main mat area was then centred on the puzzle mat.

The home corner, puzzle area, block corner, bookshelves, computer table and interest tables were set up on a carpet that took up half the room. A lino floor accounted for the other half of the floor area with three activity tables, a large craft table, the writing corner and the art trolley. The teacher made an office area that housed a desk and a professional library. Every available space in the centre was used for storage including the small alcove by the door. At the end of a tiny galley kitchenette was a refrigerator, which imposed on classroom floor space. On top of the refrigerator was the only telephone for the four pre-primary centres. Messages

were often relayed by children and adults to other centres and when adults responded to these calls they were standing in the classroom speaking as pre-primary life flowed around them.

The children's cloakroom amounted to bag hooks on the verandah. Inside was a shelf with small pigeonholes in which to place hats and any work to take home. Lunchboxes were brought in on entry and placed in a cupboard under a child-sized sink. A small bathroom next to the kitchen was separated by a sliding door. The bathroom housed one adult toilet, one child sized toilet and a small hand basin however children also washed their hands in the sink in the classroom. Although a "standard issue" EDWA pre-primary demountable, the building did not meet the Australian Early Childhood Association requirements as set out in the Physical Standards Working Position (AECA, 1995), which recommends 3.25 square metres per child of unencumbered floor space and one child sized toilet per 8-10 children.

Lack of school resources and funds was reflected in the outside area shared by the four pre-primary centres. The climbing equipment in the outdoor area consisted of metal A-frames supplied by EDWA and a small wooden fort. There was little colour in this setting as the buildings were beige and the grass scant in places with a few small trees that offered shade. The hot summer and overcrowding had taken its toll on the play area, as large plots of grass were worn away leaving sandy patches. Each pre-primary centre had a covered verandah and an outdoor shed and sandpit. The four pre-primary centres did not stagger their outdoor time so there were 97 children at times in this small playground.

The four pre-primary centres faced into the playground so that two centres lying side by side with two centres straight in front of them. Seated on the verandah of the pre-primary, the view of the outdoor area was restricted because of the placement of the outdoor shed on the side of the building. The immediate area in front of the pre-primary was approximately 8 metres to the adjacent pre-primary where a space had been roped off as grass was being coaxed to grow. The outdoor area provided much less space than suggested by the AECA Physical Standards Working Position (1995). The Position Statement for outdoor areas, states that each child should be provided with 18.6 square metres with a total of about 400 square metres for each 20 children, exclusive of buildings, paths etc.

The demountable centre straight across for the pre-primary centre studied was a recent addition from a high school in the northern suburbs. On the roller door of the shed was a painted picture of a cheerless valley with a stream running down the centre. At the back of the valley was a dark cavern with a set of demon eyes glaring out. This drab painting gave an eerie feeling not normally associated with a pre-primary centre. The picture glowered across the small distance between two pre-primary centres and was in constant view of all at the pre-primary centre studied.

The pre-primary centres differed in space, resources and surrounds. On one hand, Jane's and Susan's centres were set in high- socio economic communities where the resources in the centre reflected the suburbs they served. Glenda on the other hand, worked in a socially and economically disadvantaged community where the lack of community resources were revealed in the cramped centre in which she

worked. Jane and Glenda worked on school sites while Susan's centre had recently been contracted to the local primary school.

The Teachers

Just as the sites differed so do the biographies and experiences of the three case study teachers. The three teachers were experienced pre-primary teachers, two with over ten years teaching experience and one with over twenty-five years (see Table 3, Chapter 4 for demographic details). A personal biography of each teacher follows. The teachers assisted in the construction of the biography and each approved this written account.

"Susan"

Susan spoke confidently of her work and busily tended to those around her. She attributed her independence of thought and confidence about making decisions to her schooling. Susan grew up on the family farm in the North and completed her secondary education while boarding at a private girl's school. After completing school Susan continued at a local University where she graduated in Early Childhood Education. Susan seemed to be a very confident young woman. Her confidence was conveyed in her movements and the way she spoke. In a centre containing child-sized furniture and small children her height at times was imposing. Susan was groomed in elegantly comfortable clothes. The tinkling of silver jewellery always heralded her arrival, as twenty silver bangles jangled on her left arm.

Her first appointment was a country posting in the western wheatbelt area, sharing her time between two pre-primary centres in neighbouring towns. Transferring after two years, Susan spent another four years in the country. Three of these years were in a southeastern country town with one year in the north of the state. Susan did not enjoy the year in the north. She labelled it “babysitting”, as the parents did not fully appreciate her intentions and aspirations. This led Susan to apply for a position teaching five-year olds at a private boy’s school in the city. Susan held this position for only six months, and she described her experience as “six months of anguish” after it became apparent that the school’s expectations of a formal curriculum did not match her own. The final straw for Susan was the insistence that she complete second term reports that graded the children. Susan gave all the children a similar grade in protest and resigned her position, despite considerable support from the parent body. Susan refers to this time as a huge growth experience and spent the last six months of the year in relief teaching positions until she re-joined the Education Department being placed in her current position. Susan had been teaching at this community pre-school for three years.

Susan contributed to the local District Decision-Making Council as the early childhood representative and had applied to become a member of the Western Australian Ministerial Early Childhood Council. Susan enjoyed the professional contact with the District Decision-Making Council as she described working at a community based pre-school as “quite isolating”. She was also a regular attendant at the Early Childhood Network meetings organised within the district.

“Jane”

Jane trained as a primary school teacher many years ago. After her training she had several years teaching experience in EDWA schools across Years 1–7 in the metropolitan area. In 1987 Jane and her family moved to Blackhill, a reasonably large country town in the mid–west region of the state. Jane’s husband took up a promotional teaching position at the local High School so Jane applied for a primary teaching position in the same town. She found that the only vacancy offered was in an EDWA pre-primary. Jane described her horror of the thought of working in a pre-primary. She knew absolutely nothing about the running of a pre-primary and the thought terrified her. Eventually EDWA officials persuaded Jane to take the position. Jane gathered her first understandings of pre-primary education from questioning her colleagues. Jane described her first year teaching in the pre-primary as “plodding” along with the assistant and was greatly relieved that the school administration left her alone to make her own mistakes (Interview #1, 19.3.97). After overcoming her initial fears, Jane really enjoyed teaching in the pre-primary because she said, “it was a more relaxed, fun atmosphere” (Interview #1, 19.3.97)

Jane taught at the pre-primary for five years, then transferred to another pre-primary in Blackhill where she taught for a further four years. After nine years in Blackhill Jane and her family moved back to the city so her son could have the benefit of city secondary schooling. Jane applied for a transfer and was appointed to her present position. Jane described her previous year at this preprimary as one of making transitional adjustments, not only to living in the city but teaching in a fairly affluent metropolitan school.

Jane smiled a lot. Her eyes smiled not just her mouth and her short haircut matched her elfish grin. She was softly spoken but became livelier when talking about the children in her care. She was of average height and build and always well groomed. Jane emanated a sense of warmth and friendliness that did not hint at her determination to pursue her educational objectives. The principal described her as, “A gentle woman but quite strong, she doesn’t get pushed around” (Principal Interview, 15.5.97). Over the last ten years Jane’s husband had been studying part-time to complete his Masters in Education and now his Ph.D. Jane spoke of how hard his study combined with his full time employment had been on the whole family.

“Glenda”

Older and more experienced than Susan and Jane, Glenda was a gentle, motherly person in her late fifties. Her glasses sat on top of a genuinely warm smile and she had a pervading serenity that was noticeable especially in the, sometimes rowdy, company of 25 energetic five-year olds. Glenda presented as a very thoughtful, calm person who was always interested in another person’s point of view.

Glenda was regarded as an exemplary teacher in the early childhood profession. Over the years she had been invited to present papers at local early childhood conferences and workshops. In 1996 Glenda was asked by EDWA to write and conduct inservice sessions for primary teachers re-training to work in pre-primary centres. She was a contributing member to two professional early childhood organisations, Australian Literacy Education Association and Early Years

in Education Society. Glenda was enthusiastic about teaching young children and enjoyed every opportunity to share her thoughts and ideas with other enthusiasts.

Glenda spent her childhood in England, moved to South Africa and then relocated to Australia with her husband. She spoke constantly of her two adult daughters and two grandchildren, one of whom she cared for one night a week on a regular basis. Glenda had been a mature aged student who went back to study when her children started school.

After three years of study, Glenda gained her first position, which was to establish a pilot scheme pre-primary, one of the first on-site pre-primaries in Western Australia. Since the success of the pilot scheme it had been EDWA policy to bring pre-primaries onto school sites. Glenda had been teaching for over twenty-five years with EDWA in a number of metropolitan pre-primaries. She spent twelve years in her previous school, which was in a more affluent area but wanting a change she applied for her current position in this disadvantaged area.

Even though Glenda would be considered in the twilight of her career her thirst for new knowledge was unquenchable. She was continually searching for new ideas or current literature on young children's learning and development. It was evident that Glenda enjoyed the intellectual challenge in finding ways to teach and assist young children in the centre as well as supporting their families. Currently, Glenda was spending her free time writing a science program from "Primary Investigations" using the Blank, Rose & Berlin (1978) language model. She had been asked to present this innovative program at a conference on technology sponsored by EDWA.

The Assistants

The three case study teachers worked with more than six assistants. In EDWA pre-primaries, assistants are viewed as a necessary addition to the implementation of a quality program. However, two of the teachers had variations to the normal full-time assistant. Jane worked with two part-time assistants who job-shared and observations were invited to view only one assistant at work with Jane. Glenda worked with one full time assistant and a part time “special needs” assistant who worked specifically with a disabled child. The descriptions of the assistants that were observed working with the teachers follow and again pseudonyms for the participants are used.

Mary was Susan’s assistant and had worked at this centre for five years. She worked unobtrusively alongside Susan, following her directions and assisting in keeping the centre in tip-top condition. Mary was a motherly figure whose quiet way complimented the teacher’s more demonstrative displays of affection and reinforcement. She got on and did her job, which she took to be supporting the teacher, managing the class if Susan was needed elsewhere. Susan was the second teacher with whom she had worked.

Jane on the other hand worked with two part-time assistants, both of whom had worked at the school for a long period of time. Observations were invited of Ellen, a warm and generous woman. She trained as a child care worker in the United Kingdom but her qualifications were not recognized in Australia when she emigrated many years ago. Ellen worked at the pre-primary for twelve years and was an institution at the school because nearly everyone attending the school had

been “taught” by Mrs Black. This was reinforced by the fact that Ellen lived locally and was active in the community. Ellen was on the organizational committee for the school centenary being celebrated that year.

Similarly, Glenda’s assistant Serena was very experienced and had worked at the school for an extended period. Serena was full of energy and always on the move and she was never observed at rest. She had been a school assistant for over twenty years, with one year’s experience in a junior primary classroom and as a “special needs” aide. In this school Serena worked as a pre-primary assistant for nineteen years and completed a Teacher’s Assistant Certificate offered at a local university. Serena had comprehensive knowledge of the children and their families in the school and the district as she lived locally and her children attended this school a number of years ago. This is the second year that Glenda and Serena have been working together.

Glenda also worked with a teacher aide who supported Bobby, a boy with Down Syndrome. Martha worked in the pre-primary centre two days a week. She lived locally and her son attended Year 3 in the school so she applied and gained the position, as special needs assistant. Martha concentrated on the needs of Bobby, but where possible tried to integrate other children into their play. Glenda planned for Bobby’s learning and development in a special diary in which Martha wrote evaluations at the conclusion of each day. Martha worked in the split-group language sessions as a story reader and worked well as part of the professional team.

The Children

The three classes were made up of children from different socio-economic and cultural backgrounds. The children in Jane and Susan's classes came from high to middle socio-economic families, where employment was high. The children in Glenda's class reflected the low socio-economic area in which they lived where employment was low and family groupings transient. There were also differences in the gender split of the classes. Susan had a disproportionately high number of girls in her class while the gender composition of Jane's and Glenda's classes was more even.

In Jane's class there were thirteen boys and eleven girls with the majority of children having Anglo-Saxon origins. One child had a Chilean background and spoke English as his second language. Another child had a French background but was born in Australia and spoke English and French with equal fluency. Most children in the class lived with both parents. Three children lived with their single parents. This area had a high rate of employment with most parents described as having professional or 'white collar' occupations. When Jane was asked if there were children with any special needs, she responded that, "all children have special needs" (Field notes, 12.2.97).

The children from Susan's class were from families drawn from a similar socio-economic area as the children from Jane's class. The class comprised seventeen girls and ten boys all from affluent backgrounds. Each child lived with both parents. In all but one family, either one or both parents were employed in professional or entrepreneurial capacities. All but three children were from Anglo-

Saxon origins and one child spoke Italian at home but was equally conversant in English. There were four children repeating their pre-primary year, who had been recommended to Susan from other centres. Another of the repeating five-year-olds had cerebral palsy, which had manifested in a motor impairment of his left side, but did not inhibit, to a large extent, his large motor movements or speech. The other repeating five-year-olds had been deemed immature.

The composition of Glenda's class contrasted with Jane and Susan's. There were 24 children in this class with different cultures, and varying development levels (especially in language and social skills). Glenda had identified a child with ADD, two children with severe language delays, one child with developmental delays in all domains and two children she would have assessed by the school psychologist before the end of the year. One child did not speak English (nor did his parents), and another spoke Hindi and English with equal fluency. Added to this milieu was a young boy with Down Syndrome who was integrated for two days a week accompanied by an assistant. Towards the end of first term there was an addition to the class, a girl with severe emotional problems manifested in physical violence towards others, and tantrums. The children in this class came from varied family structures and a small proportion of parents was unemployed. In this class there were fourteen boys and ten girls, the lowest number of girls in the three classes.

Conclusion

The first point to be noted is the economic differences between centres. Susan and Jane worked in centres located in high socio-economic communities where

employment was high and financial assistance substantial, so the resources at hand were abundant. Glenda in contrast worked in a pre-primary in a low socio-economic area where scant resources in the community were reflected in the school setting. In this centre the lack of space restricted movement and the whole class could not work within the centre if all learning centres and play activities normally found in a pre-primary were to be included. This centre and the outdoor area did not meet AECA (1995) standards.

Second, not only do these settings influence the educational decisions the teachers made but they are shaped by the teachers' life experiences. Of the three teachers who worked in these settings, Susan and Glenda had early childhood qualifications while Jane was a primary school teacher with no formal early childhood qualifications. Jane admitted that she had "knitted together" her perceptions of pre-primary practice (Jane, Interview #1, 19.3.97). Glenda had begun her career bringing the pre-primary and primary school closer together so was open to collegial relationships and explaining her practice. Susan's experiences showed that she valued parent input in a pre-primary program and did not take to direct intervention easily.

Third, the differences in the composition of the classes may be another contextual feature that impacts upon the planning decisions teachers made. There were no obvious behaviour problems or conspicuous developmental delays in Susan's and Jane's classes. The gender mix differed in Susan's class comprising a larger proportion of girls than the other two classes. In Glenda's class, the differences were apparent as soon as one walked into the room owing to the

observable differences in behaviour of these children. Lack of on task behaviours, speech delays, motor delays and anti-social behaviours were observable.

This chapter described the settings and the participants within them in order to give a clear image of the three case study contexts. The differences and similarities of the contexts are seen in the contrasting environments in which the teachers work. Added to these differences were the allocation of resources in the centres, the arrangement of the indoor and outdoor environments, the composition of the classes and the different work histories of the teachers and their assistants. The next chapter presents an analysis of the key components of the teachers' educational programs and the factors the teachers consider important in their planning.

CHAPTER 6

EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM

Introduction

The previous chapter built a picture of the contexts in which the three teachers work. This chapter and the following two chapters describe the teachers work, their professional relationships and views on accountability. The case studies documented the daily teaching lives of three pre-primary teachers and this chapter pays close attention to the construction, implementation and evaluation for the educational program put in place. Key components of early childhood settings, as set out in the conceptual framework (see Chapter 3) were at times used as categories in the organisation of findings and discussion. At the beginning of the theme described, the teachers' own words have been used as a means of clearly representing each teacher's voice and to highlight the differences and similarities between the teachers' work and beliefs.

Philosophy

Susan "a balance between the formal with the informal" (Interview #1, 14.3.97)

Jane "catering for individual's interests, personalities and abilities" (Interview #1, 19.3.97)

Glenda "foster productive growth in all children attending" (Interview #1, 21.3.97).

The three teachers did not differ markedly in the essence of their message about young children's learning but there were differences in the documentation of their philosophies and in the day to day implementation. For example, all three teachers wrote about the child as an individual, the type of environment to be created, their developmental philosophy and the role of the parents in the pre-primary. In the written documentation, the differences were marked in style, the language used and the detail given. Although the messages of early childhood pedagogy were similar in theme, meanings were constructed differently so their pedagogy was implemented and enacted in different ways.

Susan had written her philosophy in the form of nine aims and a classroom policy. The philosophy had a developmental emphasis that described teaching in a "non-threatening, warm, challenging and supportive" environment where the children "had time to practise until they achieve success..." (teacher written document). The aims described "catering for learning styles" and Susan spoke of using a Vygotskian approach to teaching and learning that was not represented in her written philosophy. She explained her approach as "balancing the formal with the informal and taking the children from what they know to what they don't know" and direct interventions in children's work she perceived as scaffolding (Interview #1, 14.3.97). Her interpretation of the Vygotskian philosophy illustrated the difference between a theory articulated and the same "theory in practice" (Argyris & Schon, 1974). Susan outlined her role in young children's learning as a "facilitator, guider and observer" and she went on to write that it was her role to encourage

children to become “enquirers, problem solvers, question askers and find out things for themselves” (teacher written document). In practice however, Susan tended to structure preset and compulsory activities that children rotated through on adult command. In her philosophy, Susan wrote about a curriculum where all the activities presented “would be meaningful” to the children and presented in a “relevant context” (teacher written document). The curriculum was to be balanced with directed and non-directed activities in a setting where “children can participate at their own developmental and interest level” (teacher written document), which conflicted with the adult selection of activities that all children were required to complete.

Jane’s philosophy was brief and simple. She had an uncomplicated explanation of her early childhood ethos that was presented in plain language without early childhood terminology. In Jane’s philosophy it was the environment that was to be “challenging and enthusiastic” and “cover all areas of child development” (teacher written document). Children were to be treated as individuals and extension of learning was described in extending children’s observable interests. “Learning rates” were to be catered for and mention was made of observation leading to program changes (teacher written document). Jane made a point in her philosophy of the pre-primary being seen as an integral part of the whole school yet she did not use the school development plan. The links between philosophy and practice in Jane’s classroom were difficult to make primarily because her philosophy was written in general terms and gave no detail of classroom practice. It was not clear that Jane had aligned with a formal theory of early

childhood education. She did not articulate a particular theory of practice and there were no observable indicators in her teaching to sign post a particular theoretical stance.

In contrast to Jane's simply written account of her philosophy, Glenda wrote her philosophy borrowing from models and writings of a number of authors citing evidence that substantiated her beliefs. Glenda's major goal was "to foster productive growth in all the children attending" the centre (Interview #1, 21.3.97). She identified the learning environment that she believed was "most conducive to productive growth" based on Rappaport's model (teacher written document with no reference given). This model was based upon a balance of teacher and child initiations and responses that were planned or open. Woven into Glenda's philosophy were the four basic needs of children as outlined by M.K. Pringle (no reference given) based around the child's need for love, attention and responsibility. Following this, Glenda described how the program would provide "experiences to develop and challenge the developmental, information processing skills" as described by Hainsworth et al in three areas (teacher written document with no reference given). The areas are Body Awareness and Control, Visual-Perceptual-Motor Skills and Language. The ten major objectives of Glenda's philosophy were influenced heavily by social and interpersonal skills such as "an ability to work with other children" and "developing a spirit of inquiry and openness" (teacher written document). The last section of her philosophy gave details of the social environment of the pre-primary and the role families would play in the pre-primary program.

This was a complex philosophy that had been revised over Glenda's twenty years of teaching and had changed as a result of new knowledge in the early childhood field. This was most evident in Glenda's references to cultural influences on learning and her focus on learning styles. Glenda wrote, "The environment supports a diversity of learning styles, cultural frames of reference and modes of interaction" (teacher written document). Glenda's philosophy was rich in description not only about the aspects that made up her program but what strategies she would employ to achieve those objectives. She spoke of revisiting her philosophy so that she was "really addressing it", which showed in the observable links between her philosophy and her classroom practice (Interview #1, 21.3.97).

Flowing from their philosophical stances on early childhood education are the teachers' views of their roles as educators.

Role as Educator

Susan	"educate the parents as well as the children" (Interview #1, 14.3.97)
Jane	"provide a comfortable, stimulating environment" (Interview #1, 19.3.97)
Glenda	"set them on their path to achieving their potential" (Interview #1, 21.3.97)

The three teachers were committed to enacting the roles they had constructed as early childhood educators. Susan had a clear view of early childhood education and educating the parents, as well as the children, was one of her basic premises.

“Early childhood education is the first encounter parents and child have with education, therefore it must be a two-way encounter with home and school working close together,” she said (Interview #1, 14.3.97). When speaking of her philosophy and her role as educator Susan emphasized continuity and transition from home to school. She described this transition as “children should breeze in from one and out to another, a very positive environment, which stops separation anxiety” (Interview #1, 14.3.97). Susan highlighted the many strategies she used to inform parents of the educational element of the program.

Jane described her role as a teacher as providing a comfortable, stimulating environment and teaching necessary life skills. Coupled with this was preparing the children for school, so that their transition into Year 1 was smooth. Jane believed the start to school was important and she strove to empower children with the necessary skills to “cope reasonably well without fear of failure” (Interview #1, 19.3.97). Jane believed she had a crucial role to play in the development of children’s social skills.

Glenda was expansive about her role as an early childhood educator and it was multifaceted. She began with the children and spoke of feeling the “heavy professional responsibility to set them [the children] on their path of achieving their potential” (Interview #1, 21.3.97). She articulated her role using early childhood educational terms of fostering the “competent child” and equally balancing learning areas and domains to develop the “whole child” (Interview #1, 21.3.97). Another responsibility Glenda constructed in her role, as an early childhood educator was to provide a happy workplace for students and staff. However, unlike Susan and Jane,

Glenda had projected her role outside of the classroom. Glenda desired to project her advocacy for young children out of the classroom and took an active part in school policy formation and contributed to professional early childhood organisations.

However the teachers' described pedagogies and their perceived roles as educators did not always translate into practice when planning and implementing their program as discussed in the next two sections.

Planning Frameworks and Planning Considerations

Susan “well oiled program” (Interview #1, 14.3.97)

Jane “catering for individual needs” (Interview #1, 19.3.97)

Glenda “addressing the needs of children” (Interview #1, 21.3.97)

Each teacher had a different way of planning for learning in their classroom. Susan had what she termed a “well oiled” program that was based on the use of themes (Interview #1, 14.3.97). The program did not substantially change from year to year. The year's plan completed before the year began, outlined the themes to be covered each week. Susan said, “I do a plan of the topics I do for the year so if anyone comes in they know I'm doing that theme, week 2, Term 2” (Interview #1, 14.3.97). Commercial planning guides were used in subject areas to guide curriculum content and a specialist teacher was employed for music. The physical education program took the form of a Perceptual Motor Program, which Susan stated was “one of my strong points” (Interview #1, 14.3.97). This program was implemented two afternoons a week in second term and was fully resourced and supervised by parents.

Susan had strong opinions about teachers who did not have written plans for stimulating young children's learning. She said, "I think its a bit wrong the way some teachers don't have to do programs, don't do a lot and with the loose framework of pre-school education it can be anything" (Interview #1, 14.3.97). Susan prided herself on her thorough organisation of her planning and of the learning environment. She added "I am a very organised person, everything in the centre in its right place" (Interview #1, 14.3.97). Susan and her assistant worked from a weekly planning document that outlined the activities for each day. She referred to her program as "very busy, very involved" (Interview #1, 14.3.97). The planning included directed and free play areas but a different emphasis was given to these. The adult directed table activities were compulsory and most activities at these tables were completed using an adult model or worksheet. The children were called from play areas to complete these activities regardless of the play that took place and the following incident is an example of this.

After being dismissed from the mat, the selected children went to the directed activities. Most of the other children chose the play areas. Susan moved to her table where children were asked to cut out small shapes at the top of the photocopied sheet, sort them and glue them into the right group. The sheet was then coloured in. Susan continually scanned the room and from her table she commented on different things being done. She directed children at her table and observed the boys in the block corner who were

building a house-boat. They talked excitedly as they worked, discussing how the boat should look and what supplies they would need to take on their “great adventure”. Susan consulted her list and called over three children from the block corner. A few minutes later Susan moved to the painting easel to write on a child’s painting as she went past the block corner she said to one boy left on the boat.

Susan How’s that houseboat going?

Harry But everyone’s gone.

Susan Gone to do other things I’m sure.

The afternoon session continued as the children moved through the assisted activities and then onto activities of their choice which were mainly in the play areas. The boys did not return to the block corner that day (Field notes, 20.3.97).

Jane also planned using themes but spoke of becoming more flexible over the years and was in the process of changing her planning format. She had shifted from a structured approach and she said that she was now able to go “with the flow a bit more” (Interview #1, 19.3.97). Jane spoke of her steep learning curve bought about by a change of educational philosophy as she moved from a structured primary base to a more flexible developmental mode of educational delivery. She described the transition of her teaching when she said, “If something was written down I was going to do it no matter what, we did it. If it wasn’t working we still did it” (Interview #1, 19.3.97). Jane regarded her planning format for the term as flexible

because the topic expanded or the time allocation for themes extended based on observable child interest. To operate flexibly Jane stresses that she still needed structure in her planning. She said, “I still need structure to feel comfortable with what I am doing. I can’t waltz in and have the day run smoothly if I haven’t put in the preparation” (Interview #1, 19.3.97). Jane wrote detailed written plans for the term in subject areas, which she transferred to a daily work pad. Not documented in her work was the large amount of incidental teaching that Jane said made up a large proportion of her teaching time. Her planning considerations centred on a balance between the dynamics of the group and the needs of individuals. Jane spoke of making a conscious effort to move away from closed activities that involved time-consuming adult preparation. Most table activities at Jane’s centre were compulsory for children to complete but as they were not changed daily most children completed the activities of their own volition.

Glenda argued the background of the children was the most important consideration when planning. She said, “The characteristics of Chitteringbrook hit you in the face straight away” (Interview #1, 21.3.97). Glenda collected information from many sources, which she used to inform her planning. Each week Glenda set objectives in the domains and learning areas based on what she knew about the children’s prior learning and experiences. Glenda said “I have ideas of where we are going to be but I don’t get too hung up with them because I know where the children are going” (Interview #1, 21.3.97). Like Jane and Susan, Glenda used themes but selected themes in consultation with the children. The topics the class investigated moved with child interest so the program was planned weekly to be

flexible. An example Glenda gave to illustrate the flow of topics that occurred at the beginning of the year started with a teacher-suggested topic and flowed on with child negotiated topics. The topics flowed from the colour red to “Little Red Riding Hood” to story maps, to mapping the school grounds and finally a project “Pirates” (Field notes, 6.2.97).

Glenda was proud of the flexibility of her program so grouping, timetable and environment were changed until she believed the right formula had been found. The timetable was restructured three times in First Term as the children had been more tired and irritable than Glenda had imagined in the afternoons at the beginning of the full day program. The daily timetable changed to meet the mood of the class. For example, on one occasion when Glenda was taking a listening game it was observable that the group was restless and inattentive. She did not cajole or berate them for being inattentive but stopped the game explaining to the group that they would play the game at another time. Here was how she managed the incident:

Glenda Emily, listen carefully this time to two things. Emily give a big jump and kiss the cupboard (The children roared with laughter and a few children slapped their neighbours with mirth. Glenda proceeded down her list, the children called out and interrupted the instructions). Don't interfere I've got a list (Children continued to call out especially if a child hesitated in performing the directions). You are not allowed to say. I want everyone to have a fair go. I am sorry

Dave let's try again. (Dave did not respond quickly to the directions and children called out to him again). I'm sorry everyone we can't play any more. It's the same people isn't it? We'll have another try this afternoon when everyone remembers the rules (Field notes, 9.4.97).

Glenda outlined four changes that had affected the way in which she programmed this year. The first was the acquisition of new knowledge not only about the children and their families but also of developments in the field of early childhood education. Over the last two years this had centred on the use of student outcome statements. Glenda's framework was unusual in the early childhood field, as she had combined developmental domains with student outcome statements. At the time of the field work, student outcome statements had been trialed in Western Australia and an introduction date announced but EDWA was still researching ways that pre-primary teachers could use them in their traditional developmental mode of planning. The difficulty had been blending philosophical differences that occurred when planning using learning areas or developmental domains. Glenda had designed a framework that not only combined the domains with the outcomes but the consequent work on her design allowed the pre-primary to contribute to the school Management Information System (MIS).

Glenda referred to the framework she designed as her "matrix" and this underpinned her program. The matrix had a developmental emphasis that highlighted the areas of visual-perceptual motor skills, language and thinking, body

awareness and control and affective domains. Into these domains, the learning areas were slotted using the EDWA student outcome statements Level 1. Glenda said that by using domains with learning outcomes her program was “balanced” (Interview #1, 21.3.97).

Another influence she named was the change from sessional to full time pre-primary, which gave her more time to work with the children. Added to this was the change from having one to two assistants (a part-time special needs assistant) so Glenda spent more time planning for the inclusion of her assistants in teaching roles. The last influence was a constant consideration of the children with special needs. Glenda wrote individual programs for children in the class who were identified as having their needs best met through individualised planning. These programs were developed from Glenda’s collection of data supplemented by professional reports and the action plan the school required each teacher to write for every child identified with special needs. For example, the boy identified with ADD had a plan based on assisting him with gaining the skills needed to organise himself for learning tasks. Glenda’s observations of the child had shown that he found it difficult to select a task and finish it. Therefore he was required to select a task when indoors and complete it to Glenda’s or her assistant’s satisfaction before he could move off to another area. This plan was evaluated weekly and new goals set if the previous goals achieved.

The differences between the teachers’ planning were evident in the way they planned to cater for children with special needs within the class. Glenda wrote and implemented “individual educational programs” for children, the most notable being

for Bobby, the child with Down Syndrome. Susan and Jane spoke of planning based on children's needs and interests but Glenda was the only one of the three who documented the planning. In Susan and Jane's classes children's interests were generated by teacher determined themes and community events. Planning for special needs or differences of abilities in these classes appeared to be catered for by placing different expectations on children's performance in whole class activities. Glenda spent a considerable amount of time collecting information from the children as a basis for planning and this was reflected in the program that she provided.

Resource Allocation

Susan	“unlimited budget” (Interview #1, 14.3.97)
Jane	“general resources building up” (Field notes, 25.2.97)
Glenda	“our money needs are very desperate” (Interview #1, 21.3.97)

The “haves” and the “have-nots” were delineated when viewing the financial resources in the three settings. Jane and Susan had access to healthy budgets and a simple process of teacher request and committee discussion would bring about the purchase of resources. At Susan's centre the leasing of the preschool to the education department had come with a \$15,000 windfall over three years. Substantial fundraising added to the already healthy reserves so the parent's committee funded incursions and excursions. At this centre, the parent committee paid for Susan to attend professional development sessions. Jane's school had a high profile in the community, so there was input from community sectors when asked. The council supplied sand free of charge as well as cartage for the sandpit.

The community shops such as the baker provided free dough after the children's annual class visit, so the children could make their own bread. Excursions to the post office, council library and other community businesses and centres were welcomed. In contrast, Glenda did not have access to her own parent fund raising committee and was just another teacher in the line when applying for funds from the school P&C. She was concerned with the financial burden that school excursion costs had on families in this area and so kept excursions limited. In order to supplement excursion costs and school monies Glenda had a class cake raffle once a week. The outdoor resources in this school for the four pre-primary centres to share were very limited and monies would not be forthcoming in the near future to address this pressing need.

Direct Intervention and Regulatory Compliance

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| Susan | "I can program whatever I like" (Interview #1, 14.3.97) |
| Jane | "stick by regulations as much as anyone else" (Interview #1, 19.3.97) |
| Glenda | "I haven't anyone come in and say you can't do this"(Interview #1, 21.3.97) |

None of the teachers cited any direct intervention that changed or impacted upon their program construction and implementation. However it became evident that the terms "direct intervention" and "regulatory compliance" held different meanings for the three teachers. The principal at Glenda's school spoke of directing the pre-primary teachers to come in line with contributing to the school's MIS and

reporting procedures. However, Glenda did not speak of this as a direct intervention but as something the teachers did as members of a school staff. Similarly a caution from EDWA officials to Susan warning her against entering a public debate on the future of the preschool was not considered by Susan as a direct intervention.

Similarly, there was not a cut and dried approach to the implementation of EDWA regulations. The three teachers spoke of their duty of care to the children in their classes and obtained parental and school permission for excursions. In EDWA schools (like Glenda's and Jane's) regulations dictated that the school carries out the pre-primary administration duties such as enrolments. However, at Susan's centre there had been some confusion over who would be in charge of the enrolment process after the pre-school joined the school. In community pre-schools, the teacher is paid an administration allowance to perform these tasks. After much discussion between the principal and Susan it was decided that Susan would continue to do the enrolments for now and keep her administration allowance. At this pre-school there were more children on the enrolment book than places so Susan stressed that she abided by EDWA regulations on enrolment so there was no discrepancy.

Glenda had definite views about two of the regulations to which she adhered but stressed she would work this way as a matter of principle. The first compliance was implementing the school development plan and integrating the school's chosen priorities in the construction of her program. Glenda had been instrumental this year in obtaining the priority of "Language of thinking" and although compromises had been made in her plan's adoption she was thrilled it was a whole school course of

action. She was an active member of sub-committees that met to review progress and evaluation of the priorities. The senior EDWA district psychologist brought to Glenda's attention the second issue of compliance. Glenda spoke of her duty to assist children she found with developmental or learning problems. This duty manifested in rigorous child assessment to ascertain a correct picture of the child and then documenting assistance given or courses of action planned in assisting children to reach their full potential. Susan and Jane did not cite this as an area of compliance and did not document a child's learning and developmental pathway with such detail as Glenda did.

Implementing the school development plan was a department direction in all EDWA schools yet Jane and Susan did not use and were not conversant with their school's plans. This had been the first year that the preschool in which Susan worked had been contracted to the primary school and so the preschool had not been considered in this year's plan. However Susan expressed concern about the relevance of the school development plan in the pre-school. Only ten of the twenty-seven children were following on to the parent primary school so she didn't believe the school development plan would have a significant impact on her practice now or in the future. Jane did not implement the school development plan in her program even though it was formally compulsory. It was Jane's view that working in the pre-primary did not have any effect on complying with EDWA regulations, yet she did not comply with implementing the school development plan. Jane did not have a copy of the current school development plan but could cite the school priorities of "language, reading recovery Years 4-7 and comprehension across the board"

(Interview #1, 19.3.97). The school development plan did not impact upon Jane's work in the pre-primary although the priorities were areas that she believed she normally covered in her planning.

Teaching and Learning Strategies

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| Susan | “balancing the formal with the informal” (Interview #1, 14.3.97) |
| Jane | “I've become gradually less structured” (Interview #1, 19.3.97) |
| Glenda | “don't impose on personal learning styles” (Interview #1, 21.3.97) |

The three teachers used similar teaching and learning strategies. The differences among them centred on the control of learning and the emphasis and frequency of strategies used. Susan's teaching program revolved around three table top activities presented each day that were closely supervised and directed by an adult. The three adults (teacher, assistant and parent) would be positioned at tables, with class lists and call children over to complete their activities during the morning session. Each adult directed activity had specific task objectives with a model of how the activity should be completed. In this setting the teaching techniques Susan most frequently used were directed instructions and what she described as modelling but perhaps was best described as “demonstration”. This teaching behaviour was described by Bredekamp and Rosengrant (1995) as “actively display a behaviour or engage in an activity while children observe the outcome”(p.21). Susan's

demonstrations were given at mat times and at table activities or when assisting the children to complete the product to her satisfaction. She firmly believed that the children should perform at their best at all times and this was manifested in Susan asking children to re-do table activities. She said, “Not wanting to demoralise, but to get their best work from them. I just say I want a copy and then I show them and ask which one’s better” (Interview #1, 14.3.97). When working with the children Susan reminded children of body parts or other features to be included in their drawings. This was also true of her interventions in children’s paintings where at times she would pick up the brush and help. She believed that by doing this she was implementing her “Vygotskian approach” of “extending them, otherwise they’re not really building on what they know” (Interview #1, 14.2.97). For example:

Susan (to Harry at the painting easel)

What a great picture. Is that Dad? Can I make a big smiley mouth? (she picks up a paintbrush and does that)

Susan Tom, has he got ears, a nose and a mouth? (Picks up a brush and paints in the tummy) There you go, finish it off (Field notes, 20.2.97).

Most of the children’s table work was displayed around the room or in their scrapbooks. Susan had clear expectations of how the children’s work should look. When Susan was working with children on an activity that was going to be displayed, she made the following comments to the children:

Susan (to child at collage table)

I'm putting them on the wall. Can you make the
mouth
larger and colour it in? Do you know what I mean? (Field
notes, 20.2.97)

Susan (to another child at the same collage table)

Where's your hair going? Slowly, not too close to
your eyes (Field notes, 20.2.97).

Susan guided the children with suggestions to achieve the standard required for displaying work in the classroom. The teaching behaviours directly reflected the notion of control in the classroom and Susan controlled life in the classroom.

Glenda varied the teaching and learning strategies she used according to the amount of personal support she believed each child required. When describing her teaching behaviours she spoke of "facilitating" and moved from direct instruction to guided discovery to complete independence. She said, "I don't want them to have adults clucking around them" (Field notes, 2.4.97). Glenda was a co-constructor of learning. She did not mention this as a strategy but it was a technique that she often employed by collaborating and negotiating ownership roles with the children. Children's different learning styles were taken into account when planning teaching strategies. She said, "For some of them you have to be careful you don't impose on

personal learning styles while others need your help to get them going” (Field notes, 2.4.97). One of the techniques Glenda used to cater for different learning styles was the use of grouping and partner work. She grouped children for different learning areas using ability, confidence and cooperation as criteria.

Glenda prized divergent thought highly and tried to foster independent thinking at every opportunity. This was reflected in the table activities that Glenda provided as templates were rarely used and children were asked to draw their own images and if they found that difficult they were guided to reference materials. Few activities were compulsory for all children but often activities were compulsory for some children and free for the other members of the class to choose to complete. In this way Glenda said that her program reflected the needs of the children.

The school priority areas of language and technology were reflected in Glenda’s use of teaching strategies. Glenda often used “plan, do, review” activities that linked the school priority area of technology to Glenda’s philosophy as she was committed to assisting children to plan their own learning. The area of language was centred on the use of the Blank, Rose & Berlin model (1989), a model of language development that used four levels of graded questions. Glenda assessed the children’s language levels using the Blank Short Form test and then asked questions matched to the child’s level. These questions were used as constructs or scaffolds as Glenda did not overtly direct children’s thought and activity, instead she gently questioned them about their play or experiences. At other times she used the model as a basis for matching then extending learning as the model supplies types of questions comparative to the child’s level of language.

Similar to Glenda, Jane used a variety of teaching and learning strategies, although when asked to name the strategies she used she had difficulty describing them. She mentioned, “whole group, small group, individual instruction and cooperative group learning” as strategies she employed (Field notes, 14.3.97). Jane found it difficult to label other techniques evident in her teaching such as peer tutoring, role modelling and at times, direct instruction.

The whole group times on the mat Jane used for the development of knowledge and skills in curriculum areas. At these times, Jane directed the learning mainly with information transferred from teacher to student although she encouraged child input through questioning. Incidental teaching took place throughout the day. Here was one example of incidental teaching when Jane used higher order questions to stimulate the children’s thinking in order to describe the phenomenon they were observing.

The children had made aquariums from plastic soft drink bottles. They had poured in blue water and added cut out fish, sparkles and various other items to create an underwater scene. When the children were gathered on the mat after outdoor play (where they had made their aquariums) Jane asked a number of questions. She said, “Look at this bottle. Why are some things floating and some things sinking?” The children gave their suggestions. Jane went on, “I wonder what would happen if we tip it

up and back. Who could tell me what happens?” Again the children gave their suggestions (Field notes, 6.3.97).

At indoor activity time, Jane acted as a facilitator and initiator of learning, working with small groups and individuals. She used different strategies indoors as opposed to outdoors. At outdoor time Jane stayed mainly on the periphery of the play and she intervened for safety considerations or to introduce a child into group play. Indoors, Jane used the planned activities and play areas to extend and guide learning. She worked with groups of children at an activity, gently questioning them and allowing them to reach their own conclusions. There were animated discussions at the tables, not only about the activity at hand but general discussion on related topics, or other things happening in the room.

Many of the activities presented at the tables had an adult finished model on display. The adult model was not championed as the only way the completed activity should look, as individuality and creativity were welcomed and encouraged. Here was one such incident where a small boy diverted from the model.

The assistant and a group of children were working at the collage table making birds. Children drew a bird on a piece of cardboard, cut it out and glued feathers on the body. One small boy drew his bird and asked the assistant if he could decorate it any way he liked. Her reply was lost in the noise of the centres activity. They moved together to the art trolley where the boy selected a number of

articles, which the assistant held. They conversed animatedly while standing at the trolley. It appeared as if the boy was explaining to the assistant why he had selected each article. They proceeded back to the table where the boy stayed for some time decorating his bird. The assistant did not intercede at any time. She helped other children at the table and chatted to the boy as he worked. His final product was praised by all. Many positive comments were made about how different his bird looked and his initiative was encouraged (Field notes, 14.3.97).

Jane was aware of the different ability levels of the children, which was evident in her expectations of children's work at the activity tables. At the main mat session where she described the activities for the day Jane offered alternatives to an activity that she thought could be difficult for some children. The alternatives offered either increased or reduced the level of difficulty of the skill or concept introduced.

In Jane's centre the children were invited not summoned to participate in activities at the tables. The adult at the table would periodically ask the children not occupied or playing at play areas, "Anyone like to...?" (Field notes, 25.2.97) For example, the assistant said to two girls playing in the cubby at outdoor time, "Can I interest you girls in doing a painting?" The girls talked to her from the cubby. The assistant said to them, "Oh you're too busy at the moment. Righto" (Field notes, 25.2.97). When children refused to an invitation to an activity the staff did not press

for their attendance. Most children seemed to find their own way independently to the activity tables and as the table activities and play areas usually remained the same for the day there was a sense that there was no great rush to get things done. One parent commented on this sense of time reflected in the program. She said, “She (Jane) takes time with the children. She doesn’t rush them but they still get things done” (Parent interview, 16.5.97).

The three teachers had a different emphasis on the role of play in their programs and the use of it as a teaching and learning technique. Jane spoke of “becoming less structured” in her techniques but did not name play as a technique even though it was evident in the classroom activities (Interview #1, 19.3.97). The children in Susan’s classroom were allowed to use the play areas in between completing the compulsory activities but were called from play areas to complete activities. Play areas such as the home corner or block area did not change in content throughout the term. Jane and Glenda did not usually call the children from play areas to complete table activities and both teachers at times involved themselves in children’s play. Play and explorational learning were a feature of Glenda’s program. Glenda made documented planning decisions about children’s play, their use of the play areas and play resources included in the centre. She also used play as an evaluative measure through documented observation.

Another aspect to the way the teachers taught was the use of grouping. Indeed Glenda used grouping as a teaching and learning strategy.

Grouping

Susan	“boys and girls together...random” (Interview #1, 14.3.97)
Glenda	“Grouping is my survival strategy” (Interview #1, 21.3.97)
Jane	“ children learn from their peers” (Interview #1, 19.3.97)

The teachers used grouping children for different reasons. Glenda used grouping children to complement her teaching strategies. Apart from whole group times such as fruit, mat sessions and lunch the children worked in a variety of structurally different groups based on criteria dependent on the learning area and outcomes. Glenda grouped the children for language activities based on the Blank et al model (1978). She said “I believe someone said to me, children learn language from adults and practise it with their peers. I believe you have to specifically teach language skills so that’s one way they are grouped” (Interview #1, 21.3.97). At story time the four language groups were separated with an adult storyteller leading the group. For music and physical education, the children were grouped according to ability and confidence. Glenda grouped the children in implementing an indoor/outdoor program because of the small confines of the classroom and the lack of social cohesion within the class. She split the class into two groups, changing these groups in first term so all the children had time to spend in small groups getting to know each other. The grouping for the indoor/outdoor program was flexible and mainly structured around the children’s social interaction. Glenda monitored these groups and changed them frequently throughout first term. She

varied the groups within the half class split times using a mix of homogenous and heterogeneous groups.

In contrast Jane had not grouped children but had been considering group allocation this year. In previous years she had grouped children for news telling. This year she was dividing the children up into groups to diversify their social networks. In doing so, she explained that she was observing and documenting the play areas the children used and with whom they predominantly interacted. When this was completed Jane would construct groups with children who normally did not interact with each other. The groups would be rotated through a number of activities in the afternoon sessions. She thought this time consuming set of observations were important because, "children learn... different things from different peers" (Interview #1, 19.3.97).

In Susan's class children were grouped for news telling and for the perceptual motor program. Susan said that these groups had been formed to give an even mix of boys and girls. Groups were never formed on the basis of academic levels. At fruit time the children sat in small groups. The child whose parent was on duty would have the honour of going first to select five friends. Once that group had departed from the mat Susan would select another child to choose five friends. This would continue until there were five or six children remaining on the mat. Susan would dismiss them to the last table as she moved from the room.

Glenda called grouping the children her "survival strategy" and in a way she used it as a teaching strategy (Interview #1, 21.3.97). Knowing the children as she did, Glenda used grouping to make the experience more conducive to learning. The

indoor/outdoor program allowed Glenda to change the groups to promote social cohesion and working with half the class allowed the teacher and assistant to more easily attend to children with special needs. Jane spoke of using small group work to increase the children's social networks but that had not transpired. Susan used a random mix of "boys and girls together" when she used groups for news-telling and PMP activities (Interview #1, 14.3.97). Jane and Susan did not use grouping as a technique to complement their teaching and learning strategies.

Child Assessment and Reporting

Susan "a lot of communication between parents" (Interview #1, 14.3.97)

Jane "see what progress they have made" (Interview #1, 19.3.97)

Glenda "monitoring progress" (Interview #1, 21.3.97)

The three teachers' assessment of the children in their class could be represented on a line with Susan at one end, Jane in the middle and Glenda at the other end. Susan did not document the assessment of the children in her class other than keeping a few concept checklists accompanying the commercial curriculum packages she used. All the adults working in Susan's centre used checklists to mark down which child had completed the activities. The children would be "tested" through questioning and if they could answer correctly the concept next to their name would be ticked off (Interview #1, 14.3.97). If they did not know the answer Susan spoke of questioning them intermittently during the term. Apart from this Susan's records of children's development and learning rested on the use of

scrapbooks. Identical scrapbooks of work samples were kept for each child and each entry carried a photocopied caption describing the learning that was to take place when completing the activity. At the first term parents' night when Susan explained her program to the parents she had called these scrapbooks "an accountability measure for me and nice for you [the parents] to see" (Field notes, 11.2.97). They were used to showcase children's work with visiting professionals who came to discuss a child's progress with Susan and sent home at semester break with a parent comment sheet. It was Susan's opinion that when clear communication occurred between parents and the teacher there was no need to document observable incidents. The example she gave to illustrate her point was a child who was crying in the sand-pit. Susan said, "I could have noted that down but I knew her mother had gone to Bali" (Interview #1, 14.3.97). Therefore, anecdotal records were completed if there was a problem, as she said she would much rather put time into "setting up wonderful displays" (Interview #1, 14.3.97).

Jane also kept scrapbooks containing the same work samples for each child accompanied with an explanation of what learning took place when completing the activity. At intervals throughout the term, Jane included a rating scale with completed activities. Apart from this Jane's assessment of children's progress centred on an individual record sheet. Jane had constructed this sheet to contain the knowledge, skills and values that she held as important for a pre-primary child to obtain during this year of non-compulsory schooling. This was completed at random times and general comments were made of observable events at the bottom of the sheet. Jane identified children who needed assistance from the individual

record sheets and planned to spend time with that child in an informal way. She said, "If a child shows a weakness in a certain area I would spend some one to one with them in a small group. Not in a formal way but as they were doing their work" (Interview #1, 19.3.97). Jane also spoke of "testing" the children on concepts and skills as they were doing their work or at a table with a contrived activity that was based on demonstration of particular knowledge or a skill. This "testing" added to Jane's knowledge base about the child but also altered the learning experiences or topics she introduced.

The child assessments made through "testing" altered the content Jane planned to teach. In one testing situation Jane found that all the children knew the primary colours. She said, "Not that I'm ignoring colour and shape but I'm not doing it in the same way I had planned" (Interview #1, 19.3.97). Child assessment techniques did not change during the year. Jane constantly reviewed work completed by the children and focussed on particular skills or concepts if she thought appropriate progress had not been made.

Unlike Susan and Jane, Glenda had created a system where every piece of data collected went to make a complete picture of the "whole" child. Information was recorded on individual assessment sheets that Glenda had designed and used when talking to parents, colleagues and child health professionals. The assessment sheet was kept in the beginning of each child's record file outlined the intended student outcomes for the term slotted into the four domains with the added areas of literacy and numeracy. Assessment from information collected was evaluated and added throughout the term.

Glenda used a variety of formal and informal assessment techniques. The informal techniques consisted of observations, questioning and the collection of work samples for the children's files. All staff wrote anecdotal records and often completed a focussed observation of a child Glenda had targeted for a particular reason. The more formal techniques included the Marion Blank Short Form test (no reference given), the Swansea Checklist of Language Skills (no reference given) a Speech Pathology and Language Referral Checklist (no reference given), the D.Harboard rhyming task (no reference given) and First Steps Performance Indicators (EDWA, 1994) in oral language, spelling, reading and writing for literacy and language assessment. The numeracy information was collected using the BOEHM Concept test (no reference given). To gather data in the Visual Perceptual Motor Skills and Body Awareness and Control domains Glenda assessed children using the "Step In Step" test, the Beery Test of Motor Integration and the Word Bingo and Draw a House items from the School Entry Evaluation scale (no references given). Information about the affective domain was collected using the U.W.A. Evaluation Scale (no reference given).

It was common to see Glenda or Serena with a checklist in hand, used to note skill development with a rating scale. For example, Serena was working with a group of children on a compulsory activity to reproduce a cut and paste picture depicting three jellyfish on a rock. Serena's main objective was to observe how the children organised the picture spatially. The checklist in her hand had the headings, "number knowledge 1 2 3, use of space and personal organisation" (Field notes, 19.2.97). The children were to be rated under these headings and Serena had spoken

at length with Glenda in the non-contact time about the 1 to 4 rating and what each rating entailed. On the checklist Serena had written herself a note, “1 to 4 professional judgement, notes where necessary” (Field notes, 19.2.97).

The child assessments in this school went beyond the classroom and fed into the MIS which allowed tracking of students with special needs. The pre-primary teachers had outlined carefully how each learning area was to be assessed and rated. Glenda assessed all children but gave particular focus to the children for whom she had written individual educational programs. In this way, the programs changed with the needs of the children as dictated by Glenda’s continual assessment of the goals set.

The three teachers passed information informally about children’s progress in much the same way. All teachers made a point of talking to the parent on duty about their child’s development. Apart from this, teachers and parents conversed at various times such as pick up and drop off times and the teachers made themselves available for parents concerns or queries. Glenda was the only one of the three that noted in her weekly plan to talk to particular parents by pointing out work or addressing a query she had about a child’s development at entry or exit times. She spoke of engineering the entry and exit routines so parents had to come into the room to drop off and collect their children. An example she gave was “sowing the seed” with one parent who did not want her child to attend a specialised language class next year. Glenda said, “So when I talk to the mother I have to keep giving her the same sort of information so it builds up a really clear picture for her...” (Interview #1, 21.3.97).

Differences in passing information onto the school or colleagues by the pre-primary teachers reflected three influences. The first influence was the teacher's views about their role, the second was the teacher's notions of reporting in early childhood education and the third was the influence of the principal. Susan's views about formal reporting of student progress were illustrated when she spoke of her ordeal at an independent boy's school when she would not comply with the principal's demand of grading the pre-primary children. When speaking about accountability Susan said that teachers were threatened because they believed that accountability was not aimed at the pre-primary records but at bringing about formal reports with "ticks and crosses" (Interview #1, 14.3.97). Therefore, in keeping with Susan's view on reporting she pasted general developmental comments into the back of the scrapbook that was sent home at the end of the year.

Jane also used a developmental report pasted into the back of the scrapbook at the end of the year. This was a pictorial developmental checklist that was ticked if the child had achieved the skill or acquired the concept. The physical, social-emotional, cognitive and language domains were represented in the report which was made up of twelve boxes with pictures and a related learning outcome. For example, a picture of a ball accompanied a box containing the words "catches ball and throws ball" (teacher document). The box was ticked if the outcome had been demonstrated and at the bottom of the page Jane wrote what she described as something "fun" about each child (Field notes, 25.2.97).

At Glenda's school reporting on pre-primary children was formalised and the principal required two progress reports to be given to parents twice a year. The

detailed information collected formed the basis for the mid-year and end of year formal reports to parents and was used in the school MIS. It was not common practice for pre-primaries to feed into the MIS system mainly because pre-primary teachers do not traditionally rate children in the same areas or ways that primary school teachers have done so. Therefore, the four pre-primary teachers at Glenda's school had spent considerable time developing a "moderation". The "moderation" outlined how the MIS data was to be collected in each learning area in the pre-primary and a description of each rating used. Teachers rated each pre-primary child's performance in each learning area on the basis of the information collected. The ratings for each class in the learning areas were tallied and displayed in percentage form each semester. Children deemed "at risk", in a particular learning area were highlighted with a red dot and children identified as "gifted and talented" were highlighted with a yellow dot.

The principal had been insistent that the pre-primary classes feed into the MIS and had found it "mindblowing" that the pre-primary teachers offered no formal report to parents (Principal interview, 27.2.97). Glenda had been a prime mover in working with the other pre-primary teachers to construct the "moderation" aligning the developmental nature of assessment in the pre-primary to the formal structures of the MIS and school reports. Therefore a first semester report had been constructed that related progress in developmental domains. The report had three sections: social emotional skills, language and thinking skills and physical skills. The second semester report was more formal and progress was reported in the learning areas illuminating "achievement". Accompanying this report was an

information page for parents published by the Auckland Kindergarten Association entitled “what do I learn?” This page contained a summary of the skills and knowledge that children need before they can learn to read, write and work mathematically. Glenda had insisted this be included to highlight the developmental nature of young children’s learning an aspect the second semester reporting format did not highlight.

The three teachers had similar viewpoints about passing information onto Year 1 teachers. They believed the information that they sent was not used or regarded as not necessary. Glenda sent detailed records to the Year 1 teachers that contained First Steps continua, results of formal tests, the child’s record sheet and some annotated work samples. The passing on of information about the child’s development and learning was a matter of principle for Glenda as she said, “I send it to the Year 1 teachers and what they do with it is their business” (Interview #1, 21.3.97). Jane had previously completed First Steps continua and written a brief report for the school. However, at this school she was told a report on each child would not be necessary and the First Steps continua were not used. At the completion of the previous year, the Year 1 teachers had asked Jane for a brief descriptive comment on each child and assistance in dividing the Year 1 classes into two. Jane said she gave them this assistance but they did not heed her advice.

Susan had changed her methods of passing information to other schools since coming to this centre. Previously, at the end of the year, records were sent to the children’s new schools but Susan believed the teachers didn’t look at the records. She said, “If the teacher gave me that (the records) I make my own opinion anyway.

They forget half of it after six weeks especially at that age; they go into a totally different environment. What they do for me they may not do for another teacher” (Interview #1, 14.3.97). Susan said passing written records on was no longer necessary, as she would telephone the Year 1 teachers and discuss the children with them. This new practice had stemmed from a negative experience of which Susan spoke: “I had a bad experience in my first year here. The children all went to one particular school (and) all regressed. What the teacher thinks is good and what I think is good is just irrelevant. I was just wasting my time” (Interview #1, 14.3.97).

Program Evaluation

Susan	“enthusiasm of the kids” (Interview #1, 14.3.97)
Jane	“evaluation of the children” (Interview #1, 19.3.97)
Glenda	“constant think sessions” (Interview #1, 21.3.97)

Each teacher’s evaluation of her program was completed differently. Susan evaluated her program by reflecting on what had been successful or unsuccessful. She referred to her program as being “down pat” so changes were minimal from year to year (Interview #1, 14.2.97). A measure of success of the program was drawn from “the enthusiasm of the kids, the work they are producing and the eagerness of the parents” (Interview #1, 14.2.97). Jane gathered information from two sources when evaluating her program. The first was her observations of the children’s progress that she jotted down in a monthly program review. Secondly, she relied on feedback from parents. Like Susan, Jane believed her program was effective if the parents gave her feedback about the children’s enjoyment of

experiences at the pre-primary. Jane used this information to make changes to her program. Glenda on the other hand used a cyclic process to evaluate her program similar to the “plan, do, review” activities she used in her class. Her reflection on her program was intensive and her evaluations detailed. The information Glenda collected was used on an ongoing basis and in an organised way. Glenda made reflective notes daily and weekly about the children, the learning experiences, resources, teaching and learning strategies and the environment. She evaluated the four domains and Student Outcome Statements planned with mention made of individual children, skills to be further evaluated and methods to be used. Added to these evaluations was the constant monitoring of children’s progress and information noted as given by the assistants, which shaped the changes that Glenda made to her program.

Quality Assurance and Self Reflection

Susan	“just variety” (Interview #1, 14.3.97)
Jane	“always looking for a better way of doing things” (Interview #1, 19.3.97)
Glenda	“sheer hard work” (Interview #1, 21.3.97)

All the teachers believed that their pre-primary programs were of high quality, which matched the feedback that the teachers received from the parents and the principals at their associated schools. However, how they assured that quality and reflected on their practice differed. In Glenda’s opinion cyclical evaluation and self-evaluation were essential to assure quality and she wrote program evaluations daily

and weekly. For self-reflection Glenda used two written guides she had collected in her career. One was entitled “Prompts for reflection” (no reference given) and it contained a long list of 17 points that teachers could check in their reflection. The points revolved around student autonomy and positive interactions in the classroom. The other reflection tool that Glenda used was “The student teacher evaluation guide” from a university teaching practice booklet. This document was written as a guide for teaching students in reflection of their practice and it included focus points to consider in discrete program areas such as learning and teaching strategies and planning. Glenda continually revisited these tools and reviewed her philosophy constantly to make sure she said, that she was “really addressing it” (Interview #1, 21.3.97).

Susan and Jane did not make any written evaluation or assessment on the quality of their program. Jane said she was endeavouring to find new ways of working in her classroom and “getting the best out of the children...” (Interview #1, 19.3.97). It was Jane’s opinion that quality was best achieved when seeking new ideas, so that teachers did “not get into a rut” (Interview #1, 19.3.97). To source new ideas Jane attended local district network meetings and spoke to other early childhood educators but she had not sought professional development from other sources.

Susan believed she enhanced the quality of her program by offering new experiences that made her program exciting. She cited changing books, puzzles and displays and having incursions and excursions every three weeks as important

elements in program quality. Susan said, "I like to think that the parents come in once a week and always see something new happening" (Interview #1, 14.3.97).

Glenda believed that professional development had a part to play in the quality of a program and the ways in which teachers reflected on their work. Choice of professional development centred on the needs of her class and extension of her self-development. Glenda attended three professional development sessions in first term. A story telling session with Mem Fox (a children's author), a technology conference and a session taken by a Canadian psychologist on classroom management techniques. After the sessions Glenda offered to present her new knowledge to the staff at staff meetings. Glenda spoke of the stimulation and excitement that the professional development sessions gave her, along with renewed vigour to implement new ideas in her program.

Quality assurance was an issue that the principal at Glenda's school was keen to promote. The school had begun to consider the more formal aspects of performance management as promoted by EDWA and strategies for "Monitoring the Quality of Education" had been addressed by the school staff and some were now in practice. The main strategy involved each teacher meeting with the principal twice a year to discuss the report or action plan the teacher had devised addressing the school priorities. "The Monitoring the Quality of Education" school made report had three main sections. In the first section the teachers outlined their objectives for achieving the three school priorities and in the second section they noted their action plan for each priority. The third section was devoted to "monitoring" and in this section the teacher answered three questions regarding monitoring, evaluation and

analysis of information and the demonstration that appropriate strategies were being used to improve student learning outcomes. The principal spoke of the detail that Glenda wrote in her plan that was quite unlike any other teacher's plan in the school, which relate to Glenda's disappointment that changes made to the EDWA Performance Management structures did not directly appraise a teacher's performance. She said, "teachers had a professional responsibility to evaluate their performance and address the needs they have" (Interview #1, 21.3.97).

Jane believed the principal was not in a position to make educational judgements about her program as he had not seen her planning documents and had not visited the pre-primary during the observation period. Jane believed he was uncomfortable in the pre-primary environment and if he did have an opinion of her program it would be based on what she had told him. In contrast, the principal spoke of visiting the pre-primary. He said that the indicator of a quality pre-primary program was how the children related to the teacher. He said, "Of course you look and see how the kids relate to her and probably that is one of your most important behaviours. They seem to think she is marvellous" (Principal interview, 15.5.97). The principal described his role in the pre-primary program as being "the complaints department" (Principal interview, 15.5.97). Jane reinforced this view by saying, "if he's not getting any complaints he's happy" (Interview #2, 27.8.97). She thought the lack of support and interest in the pre-primary program from the school staff and administration would drive her from the school eventually. She said, "I get sick of it. No-one knowing or caring what you do" (Interview #2, 27.8.97).

Susan had not undergone any performance management by the principal at the new parent primary school. Susan thought there was a lack of incentives for pre-primary teachers to demonstrate the quality of their program. Lack of recognition for the hard work that she had done in Port Dawn was the major factor behind Susan only staying less than one year in the North. She said, "I only lasted a year because I was doing all this extra work and it was like baby sitting and you can only do that for so long" (Interview #2, 27.8.97). It was important to Susan that parents recognised her work made a valuable contribution to children's education.

Conclusion

There are a number of points to be emphasized about these teachers' educational programs. First, is the match or mismatch between espoused philosophy and the practice observed in the teachers' classroom. Susan, spoke in the interview of her Vygotskian approach and wrote in her philosophy that the children should be "enquirers, problem solvers, question askers and finding things out for themselves" (teacher written document). However, in practice Susan directed the children to compulsory activities where adult models were reproduced. Unlike Susan and Glenda, Jane described the difficulty she had in assigning terms to describe her early childhood pedagogy as she said her knowledge had not come from formal training but was built on asking colleagues and trial and error in her practice. Jane said that her planning considerations were based on "catering for the needs of individuals" although she was not observed implementing a systematic assessment regime to inform her planning. In contrast, the links between Glenda's espoused and written philosophy were evident when observing her work. Her comprehensive philosophy

outlined in this chapter was based on creating a place conducive to each child's educational journey. Glenda described and was observed using a large number of assessment techniques to assist her building complete pictures of children to support their learning. Glenda was also the only teacher of the three to write individual education programs for particular children in her class.

Second, the teaching and learning strategies the teachers used reflected the roles they assigned themselves as early childhood educators. Susan was observed to use directive and demonstration techniques and she described her role as "educating the parents as well as the children" (Interview #1, 14.3.97). She assigned herself a pivotal role and her directive teaching techniques reflected this role. Jane, and to a greater extent, Glenda used scaffolding techniques to guide and support young children's learning. The roles they assigned themselves however differed. Jane articulated her role as "to provide a comfortable, stimulating environment" (Interview #1, 19.3.97) whereas Glenda described her role as "setting them on the path to reaching their potential" (Interview #1, 21.3.97). These different roles mirrored the way in which these teachers worked. Jane provided an environment conducive to her role and assisted children in their endeavours in the classroom. Glenda worked to create comprehensive appraisals of children so she could plan to assist them in the role she assigned herself in their education.

Third, there were wide variations between the three teachers in the areas of child assessment, reporting and passing assessment information on to others. At Glenda's school the principal directed the pre-primary teachers to report on child progress and to contribute to the school's MIS. However, this was something that

Glenda had remarked she would do as a matter of principle. She was the only teacher of the three who reported formally and sent written information onto colleagues. Susan spoke of ringing the Year 1 teachers while Jane described the Year 1 teachers at her school as not wanting any information from her about the children. Susan did not keep child anecdotal records as a rule because she described knowing the children and she said her time could be better spent “setting up wonderful displays” (Interview #1, 14.3.97). She did, however, produce scrapbooks and sent them home at the end of the year and she described this as an “accountability measure” (Field notes, 11.2.97). Jane kept individual child records and scrapbooks of work samples. This book was sent home at the end of the year with a developmental pictorial checklist pasted into the back.

Fourth, self reflection, program evaluation and quality assurance were aspects left to the individual teachers to assess. Although Glenda had a formal interview twice a year with her principal to review the implementation of the school priorities, matters such as quality and program evaluation were not discussed with the principal. Of the three teachers Glenda was the only teacher to use formal tools for self-reflection and she dissected, examined and made future plans for all aspects of her program. Jane and Susan relied on the parents for feedback about the quality of their programs as neither of them had confidence in their principal’s opinions. Susan was guided by what she knew children enjoyed and by offering “variety” (Interview #1, 14.3.97).

The fifth point touches on the factors that were either controlled or uncontrolled by the teachers but influenced the teacher’s decisions when

constructing and implementing their educational programs. For example the case descriptions of the teachers showed that access to resources impacted on program provision. On one hand, Glenda spoke of applying to the school P&C like other teachers in the school for funding for resources but her submissions had to be in terms of acquiring resources to enhance the implementation of the school priorities. Susan and Jane, on the other hand, said they had access to their own fund raising committees and endorsement for the purchase of resources or to fund excursions was usually rubber stamped by the committee. Another factor uncontrolled by the teachers was the direct intervention of others in the teacher's program. At Glenda's school, the principal spoke of directing the pre-primary teachers to implement a formal reporting format in line with the current school system and the teachers were involved in school development planning. Jane and Susan could not cite any direct interventions in their work.

This chapter has described aspects of the educational programs the teachers have constructed, implemented and evaluated in their classrooms. The next chapter describes the three teachers' professional relationships.

CHAPTER 7

PROFESSIONAL RELATIONSHIPS

Introduction

The last two chapters have built a picture of each setting, the people within them and the program enacted in the work place in order to view the interplay of the contextual features that may impact on the teacher's work. This chapter focuses on the interactions and relationships that teachers enact in these settings to understand how teachers explain their work to others. The list of people with whom each pre-primary teacher interacts is long, because professional relationships are an integral part of the daily working lives of the teachers. Not only are relationships essential to teachers' work but successful relationships are seen as a hallmark of quality early childhood programs (Katz, 1995). In this chapter, the teachers' relationships with those with whom they work and interact are described. At the end of the chapter, the distribution of power is examined in each of the three settings, as it became apparent that distribution of power in the classroom influenced the teacher's relationships with others.

Assistants

In each centre the assistants aided the teacher to implement their educational program, however each teacher placed a different emphasis on their working relationship with their teacher assistant. The three teacher assistants were observed performing similar duties but were assigned different roles by the teachers in the

processes of constructing, implementing and reviewing the pre-primary program. The differences centred on the amount of responsibility given to the assistants in relation to dealing with the children and their influence on the program.

Jane worked with two assistants who shared the one position. However the teacher invited observations of only one of the assistants because the other assistant did not want to participate in the study. Ellen, Jane's assistant, was experienced, lived locally and was considered part of the school's living history as she had worked in the pre-primary for a number of years. It was Jane's opinion that a teacher assistant in the pre-primary had a diversified role. She said, "An assistant is a support person, a supervisor, a teacher, a person that children can approach for whatever reason, as a resource, someone you can discuss the children with" (Field notes, 6.3.97). Ellen offered observations of children in the classroom and Jane accepted them but did not document them. Jane said, "The assistants are very good at observing, picking out difficulties, interests and abilities of the children" (Interview #1, 19.3.97). For example, in one instance Ellen pointed out to Jane that a girl at an activity table was swapping her hands when using a paintbrush. Jane and Ellen discussed what Ellen had observed and then Jane asked Ellen to intervene by swapping the brush to the child's other hand, because the child had been observed using her other hand predominately (Field notes, 6.3.97). In planning and constructing the program, Jane invited Ellen's input with activity ideas and if Jane used Ellen's ideas she alerted children to this fact during the explanation of the activities of the day. This was one such time.

The children were gathered on the mat and Jane described the day's activities. She said, "Last time you painted the pet. Today we want to finish it. Paint inside first (she holds up model), and then go around with one colour. It's Mrs Black's activity." Jane turns to Mrs Black, "Is that...?". Mrs Black answers, "Yes." She moved forward to explain further and point to the model that Jane was holding. She demonstrated to the children how they completely encircle the pet with one colour and then another as they fill up the page. When she had finished Jane nodded and said, "Thank you Mrs Black." Jane continued on to describe the rest of the day's activities (Field notes, 6.3.97).

Jane and Ellen worked well as a team and their easy banter set a classroom tone of cooperation and friendship. Ellen supervised not only activities where she was stationed but intervened when necessary in the interactions around her, without Jane's direction. Jane held the responsibility for whole group direct teaching times and program decisions.

In Susan's centre the delineation of the teacher assistant's role was clear. Susan was the teacher and Mary was the assistant. Susan believed her role was to be the facilitator and leader of the educational program. Mary's duties were to support Susan and to prepare the program as designed by Susan. In this way interactions between the two centred on the work of the children, the preparation of activities and the changes to the physical setting of the centre. When Susan was with the

children in large group situations, Mary was busy elsewhere in the centre. Susan maintained that if Mary interacted and watched what she was doing, “it was time we need to make up. I never have her sitting watching. I can’t see the point” (Field notes, 4.3.97). Mary prepared activities constantly when she was not working with the children. On the non-contact time on Wednesdays and Fridays, Susan would leave Mary a list that Mary would work through. Mary understood what was expected, as she would move to implement what Susan asked of her before the conversation was finished or she would materialise at the right moment to hand Susan an activity model or assist with packing away. Often Susan wouldn’t need to finish her sentence, for example:

Susan (to Mary as she is moving into the office to answer the phone) I’m going to answer the phone just make sure they don’t...”

Mary nodded and supervised the room in Susan’s absence (Field notes, 26.2.97).

Mary did not intervene in re-directing children for discipline purposes and interacted with children when she called them to her table. It was not Mary’s role to have input into the construction of the program as Susan had identified the topics to be covered at the beginning of the year. Mary did the majority of outdoor supervision but did not regularly interact with children at this time.

In contrast with the other two teachers, Glenda used her assistant, Serena, in a number of different roles especially teaching. Glenda described Serena’s role as

“maximum teaching and maximum everything else”(Field notes, 19.2.97). They spent time together on the “non-contact day” (a day a week the children do not attend, used for planning and preparation) discussing the educational program and Glenda’s reasons for her program construction. Glenda relied on Serena to carry out the planned program and assist in the evaluation of the program. To many assistants this would be a daunting task but to Serena it was a role she took on with pleasure. Glenda and Serena had a team teaching approach although it was recognised by both that Glenda held the professional responsibility for the class. Serena’s teaching duties included: supervising activities with half the class at indoor and outdoor times, implementing structured language sessions as devised by Glenda and teaching the physical education program. As well as teaching at various times during the day, Serena undertook the list of duties performed by a pre-primary assistant such as the preparation of activities and cleaning of the centre.

The contact between Glenda and Serena through out the day was limited. In the morning the indoor/outdoor program did not give them many opportunities to interact. Serena appeared to know Glenda’s thinking and often did not have to be asked to step in when Glenda moved off to do something else, for example when the children were sitting on the mat eating their morning tea. Serena and Glenda were having a conversation about a boy who was suffering from asthma.

Serena

Dad said he had his nebuliser this morning so there is nothing we can do.

Glenda I'll just look at his card. I don't like
not having anything here to help him. I'll just
call home.

(Glenda moved towards the phone and Serena with no
direction from Glenda stepped onto the mat to sit in Glenda's
chair). She spoke to the children,

Serena You are all sitting well. Don't forget
what happens next. If you are finished you put your
box away, have a drink and then read books until Mrs
Holcroft is ready (Field notes, 13.2.97).

Part of the weekly evaluation was a review of Serena's assessments and observations of the program and particular children. Once the weekly program was reviewed, Glenda sought Serena's direct input and comment on a basic weekly program that Glenda had planned. Together they would fill in the activities to be implemented and Serena commented that planning this way allowed her to view the objectives Glenda had planned for the activities. Serena took notes in her own planning book and from this devised a list of tasks to be completed on the non-contact day and during the week. Serena constantly referred to Glenda's weekly planning sheet that was displayed on the fridge when setting out learning experiences.

Teaching Colleagues

Unlike the daily interaction with their assistants, the three case study teachers' interactions with teaching colleagues were less frequent. Susan and Jane only interacted with the primary teachers at school staff meetings. Given that this was Susan's first year affiliated with the primary school, staff interactions were a new aspect of her corporate school life. Susan had attended a few staff meetings and the professional development days held at the school. It was apparent that Susan thought her time could be better utilized in the centre attending to the needs of her program. Susan did not view the practices of some of the school staff as appropriate and highlighted the fact that many students in her centre were going onto other non-government schools. Susan also cited geographical distance as a contributing factor to her isolation but Jane who was based at the school also felt distanced from the staff. Jane spoke of wanting to make connections with her colleagues but spoke of a reticence of staff members to be involved in the pre-primary. Jane described how she had tried to ask advice from colleagues at different times about educational matters. She said, "I've tried a couple of people but they are just not interested in the pre-primary at all" (Interview #2, 27.8.97). She spoke of trying to forge links with the Year 1 teachers but they had not been interested. This year in first term Jane had taught groups of Year 1 children in the afternoons (before the pre-primaries had started full days). Jane felt a sense of collegiality at this time however once the pre-primary children commenced full day sessions, contact with the Year 1 teachers had ceased.

At staff meetings, Jane said that where necessary she projected an early childhood point of view. She described how the pre-primary had been ignored in the School Development Plan although the priorities could be modified to suit the pre-primary children's needs. She said that the school "assumed things (priorities) were not relevant" (Interview #1, 19.3.97). It was Jane's opinion that pre-primary teachers had to make a special effort to be heard in the whole school context. Jane thought that pre-primary teachers attending school planning meetings had to be more vocal. She said, "We have to be more vocal than other staff members until we are seen as part of the school" (Interview #1, 19.3.97).

In contrast, Glenda was an integral member of the school staff and had regular contact with her teaching colleagues. Glenda had constant dialogue with the other pre-primary teachers and the school staff, as she believed that it was part of her accountability to keep the staff in the school informed of what she was doing in the pre-primary centre. She encouraged them to visit, explained her program and passed on any new information she thought might interest them from conferences and workshops. Glenda was an Advanced Skills teacher and she firmly believed that part of her role was to share her professional expertise with other teachers. It was Glenda's opinion that the other pre-primary teachers did not add much to the whole school dialogue before she came so she made a special point of trying to draw them into discussions at staff meetings. Glenda spoke of philosophical differences at times when working closely with the primary school staff. She said, "I won't sacrifice my enthusiasm for the job, or sacrifice my own standards or what I believe is good practice if what I'm hearing back I don't believe professionally. I say, Yes,

but...” (Interview #1, 21.3.97). Glenda understood that others found her drive daunting and spoke about listening to other people’s points of view. She said, “If you are not careful you sound as if you know it all” (Interview #1, 21.3.97).

Planning with the primary staff did not always run smoothly, however. At the beginning of the year the school had implemented a continuity policy to ease the transition of the pre-primary children into Year 1. The pre-primary teachers were required to work in the Year 1 rooms in the afternoons before the full day sessions began. Glenda spoke of the lack of planning by the Year 1 teachers in recognising and utilising the pre-primary teachers’ expertise. The Year 1 teachers decided that the pre-primary teachers were to give a “crash course of whatever the children needed” for half an hour after lunch in the pre-primary. Glenda spoke of the time wasted moving between the rooms and the problem of not being sent the same children every day so there was no continuity of work established. She believed that what had transpired did not follow the plan decided on at the first staff meeting and the plan would be reviewed again. Glenda said, “we had a big talk at the staff meeting but obviously we didn’t communicate” (Field notes, 19.2.97).

All three teachers were concerned to put forward an early childhood point of view in the whole school context. The difference was that Glenda spoke up about whole school issues but Jane and Susan confined their comments to what directly affected their work. In Jane’s words the staff “assumed things were not relevant” (Interview #1, 19.3.97) to the pre-primary context, yet she had not argued for relevant priorities nor modified the current priorities for implementation.

Principals

The relationships the teachers shared with their principals reflected in part the teacher's integration into the school and the principal's desire to understand the teachers work. Jane, who felt isolated and overlooked by the school was professional in her limited dealings with the principal. She spoke many times of being ignored or forgotten by the school but continued to issue invitations in order to involve the principal in the pre-primary program. Jane believed that there was a lack of discussion on early childhood issues in this school compared to her previous position. The principal acknowledged this by labelling himself the "complaints department" for parents (Principal interview, 15.5.97). It was Jane's opinion that the principal would only be able to make a performance appraisal of her work based on what she had told him. She said he would have to research early childhood pedagogy in order to make an assessment of her program but "he doesn't want to make the effort to learn about early childhood..."(Interview #2, 27.8.97)

Susan and her principal were working on their new relationship. Both had been used to their role of chief decision-maker in their respective settings. The principal's plan had been to visit the centre every two weeks but this had not transpired. When they did converse much of their discussions were centred on maintenance and school issues. The principal spoke of initiating meetings between the Year 1 teacher and Susan so they could not only share general information but philosophies on teaching. It was apparent from all interviewed that they felt these philosophies differed somewhat.

At Glenda's school, the principal was an integral part of pre-primary life. He worked in all classrooms every two weeks and knew the pre-primary program well. Glenda and the principal had a busy working relationship because he monitored the integration of the school priorities, record keeping and reporting of children's progress closely. Glenda conversed with the principal on a daily basis as he was often in Glenda's classroom asking advice or discussing a new idea that she had presented to him. For this reason he was well aware of how Glenda's program was devised and the outcomes she was striving to achieve. He supported Glenda in the classroom and this is one example observed.

Outside the small demountable administration space an angry voice and the sounds of a child sobbing could be heard. The angry voice was saying, "You just can't do that. It's not on. You keep your hands to yourself." The door opened and Dave (the principal) entered with an angry look on his face clasping the hand of a young girl who was sobbing. Dave passed me bringing the little girl behind him, he spoke angrily to her as she sobbed, not loudly just reinforcing that whatever she had done was totally unacceptable. He opened the door to the adult bathroom and said more kindly, "Wash your face and hands. Then we will go to my office." The girl obeyed, and still sobbing they moved down the corridor down to Dave's office and out of earshot. On returning to Glenda's classroom, Glenda explained that the young girl (who was new that week) had physically attacked

Glenda after being reprimanded. She had slapped Glenda hard in the face, just as the principal walked in the door. Glenda explained that he chose to deal with disciplining the child. Glenda spoke of feeling relieved and supported by Dave's course of action as it allowed her a moment to compose herself and explain what had happened to the class in a calm manner (Field notes, 9.4.97).

This principal was the only one of the three principals interviewed who showed an understanding of early childhood pedagogy when he described Glenda's philosophy as "coming from a domain perspective rather than learning areas" (Principal interview, 27.2.97). The other two principals were not involved in the pre-primary program and visits to the centres were infrequent.

Parents

- | | |
|--------|---|
| Susan | "a high level of involvement" (Interview #1, 14.3.97) |
| Jane | "a source of information about the child" (Interview #1, 19.3.97) |
| Glenda | "parents an integral part" (Interview #1, 21.3.97) |

The three teachers spoke of the importance of keeping parents informed of the happenings in their centres. Susan believed it was important to keep parents informed of the program as she said, "lack of knowledge breeds discontent" (Interview #2, 2.7.97). She used newsletters, special parent days, colourful displays and written information around the room to pass information to parents. In her

centre, parents were encouraged to spend ten to fifteen minutes on entry, reading books and doing puzzles with their children. This was a time when many parents would ask questions about their children's progress and Susan made herself available to talk to parents informally. If parents had any questions Susan answered them at this time.

The parents played an integral part in implementing Susan's program. Susan distributed a duty roster at the beginning of the term. Parents or an adult substitute were asked to come on a designated day approximately twice a term for the morning session. Younger siblings were not encouraged on roster, as parents were utilised in preparing and managing table activities. Susan kept the parent on duty busy because she thought, "if parents don't think they are busy they think they are not needed" (Field notes, 3.3.97). Parents on duty were given specific tasks and Susan was observed telling the parents about the activity in order to reinforce the teaching points. For example:

Susan

Lisa, if you could help here please?

We are making babies eventually. The children have to cut these body parts out. If you could talk about legs and if we don't have knees we can't bend. The same with arms. Then paper clip them together and write their name on them. Here's the list just tick off who's done them (Field notes, 20.2.97).

In second term the Perceptual Motor Program began and parents attended a compulsory roster to assist throughout the term on Tuesday and Thursday afternoons. Susan visualised the centre as a very social place for parents with special days or parent evenings a highlighted part of the program.

Jane related in a different way to the parents as she was quietly spoken and began interacting with the children when the parents arrived. This was a child centred program and there was no doubt that for Jane, the children came first. Jane spoke to parents if they sought her, but she preferred that parents asked her questions about their children at the conclusion of the session. The parent interviewed reinforced this when she said, "She (Jane) spends most of her time with the children but she is available" (Parent interview, 16.5.97). Jane used similar information techniques as Susan but also used parent interviews as a source of information exchange about the child.

At Jane's centre, the duty roster was fairly well supported and Jane encouraged the parents to come twice a term for the morning. Jane would seek parents who did not come in during the term and invite them to come at some time. She used parents with particular skills in the learning program and the parent interviewed thought that Jane's "receptiveness" to what parents could offer was special (Parent interview, 16.5.97). Hot cross bun cooking, an excursion to the pizza parlour and having a baby bathed at pre-primary were examples Jane gave of using the parents in the program. Jane spoke of giving the parents frequent invitations to the centre to be involved in the program. The parent interviewed gave the example

of an invitation to attend the pre-primary café that had been set up after an excursion to a local pizza parlour owned by one of the parents. The theme culminated in a café day when the parents were invited in for afternoon tea to be cooked and served by the students. She said that in these situations Jane allowed herself to “be on show” which gave the parents greater insight into the workings of the centre. The parent described being able to see how the children behaved and how Jane interacted with them, “without it being a formal parent/teacher thing” (Parent interview, 16.5.97).

Both Susan and Jane had a parent information night in first term (attended by the researcher) where the pre-primary teachers spoke of their philosophy and their expectations for the year. The two meetings had similar themes but Susan spoke more formally about her expectations of the children and the role parents would play in her program. Jane’s meeting was more informal with parents asked to interrupt with questions at any time. At both talks an information booklet written by the teachers about the centres was distributed, which included information such as holiday dates, session times, school and centre phone numbers and information about the rosters. Jane’s booklet also included a small section outlining “Things you can do to help your child enjoy pre-primary” (teacher document).

Glenda spoke in terms of assisting parents in the pre-primary setting and she did this in three ways. First, she tried “to be supportive as possible” in order to be “in touch with how they are feeling” (Interview #1, 21.3.97). Stemming from this was Glenda’s push to assist parents to overcome difficulties that she perceived they had in approaching and being involved in the school community. Therefore Glenda

changed the way she introduced her philosophy and program to the parents. Instead of her usual parent's night Glenda invited three mothers or caregivers at a time to an informal lunch over the first few weeks of term, which allowed for an informal information exchange between teacher and parents in a non-threatening situation. The success rate of this scheme had been high with 90% of mothers accepting the invitation and Glenda said this was a much larger number than would attend her usual parent talk. The duty roster at this centre was voluntary and Glenda spoke of preferring informal parent "get togethers" which usually culminated at the end of a project (Field notes, 21.3.97).

Second, Glenda wanted to act as a mediator between professional agencies and the parents. This had been successful in a number of cases and particularly with a child Glenda had suspected had ADD. Third, Glenda wanted to alert parents to children's progress and to any problems she detected in a child's learning and development. It was evident that Glenda worked hard to give parents a clear picture of their child's learning and development. In interview situations Glenda used her "matrix" when explaining a child's difficulties to parents. By using the "matrix" she described being able to highlight all the facets of development and learning the child had achieved while isolating the problem and presenting the information to parents in a positive way.

Glenda left the level of interaction in the pre-primary program to the parents but she said she sought them out if they had not spoken to her. She had engineered the entry and exit routines so that the parents had to enter the room. She said, "I just hate this business when the child's name is called out, off they go" (Interview #1,

21.3.97). During the morning, Glenda made explanations to parents about her actions and learning points in the program. Here is one example:

It was the mat session and Glenda paused in the middle of an activity with the whole class and spoke to the parent on duty.

Glenda We use these songs for all our number work and by the end of the year we have great number knowledge (Field notes, 19.2.97).

Apart from speaking to parents informally on duty or at entry and exit times, information about the program was provided in a number of ways. One window facing out onto the verandah had a short program explanation, entitled “We are learning” (Field notes, 19.2.97). This explanation outlined the aims for the term in domain and subject areas. Fortnightly newsletters containing news of the happenings of the program were sent to parents. At times, Glenda was observed scribing comments addressed to parents on the back of children’s work. For example, Glenda had been working with a girl with poor fine motor manipulation who was persevering with cutting out. Glenda smiled at the child and said, “Let me tell mum and dad how great you’ve been.” Glenda spoke as she wrote on the back of the cutting out, “Jessica was able to cut from X to X without help. Well done” (Field notes, 13.2.97). Glenda also reported formally to parents about their child’s learning and development. She was the only teacher of the three who offered two formal written reports on children’s progress.

Even though the three teachers used similar information techniques they related differently to the parents. Susan related to the parents as an audience, a body of people that she could educate by exhibiting to them the power of a pre-primary curriculum. She expected the parents to be committed to their child's education by attending the compulsory rosters and participating in the many social fundraising engagements organised by the parent's committee. Susan spoke to the parents in terms of their child's achievements and focus was often on the production of work and classroom displays.

Jane related in a quiet way to parents. She spoke of using them as a source of information about the child, which she tapped at parent interviews. Jane sought parents out if she perceived a problem with a child's development but apart from that interactions were brief conversations at child entry and exit times. She did not go out of way to impress parents but unobtrusively carried out her work in the centre. Glenda viewed the parents as a vital information source about the children in her care and an integral part of her program. She said, "I always feel the program suffers a bit if you don't have parent help" (Interview #1, 21.3.97). In this way, Glenda related to the parents as collaborators in her quest "to assist each child to reach their potential" (Interview #1, 21.3.97).

The Teachers and Others

There was a constant flow of visitors to each centre ranging from salesmen to student teachers and visiting child service professionals. In Susan's centre, child service professionals and student teachers were observed at work. Three visitors came at different times to observe Michael, the child with cerebral palsy. A teacher

from the disability services section of the Education Department came to speak to Susan and observe Michael. Then, two weeks later a teacher and a physiotherapist from the Cerebral Palsy Association came to liaise with Susan and observe Michael. To each of these people Susan spoke at length during the session about Michael's improvement and her role in his development. Michael's scrapbooks that contained samples of his work were shown to each of the visitors. Susan stressed to each that she had firm guidelines and would not accept anything that she believed were below his best endeavours.

Student teachers and university supervisors visited Susan's centre intermittently during the observation period. Susan spoke of her firm commitment to her profession by helping to instruct student teachers as she said, "I believe you have to train the teacher, I have always had prac students. I see some teachers come out and think mmmm..." (Interview #1, 14.3.97). During first term, two teaching practice students attended at different times. Attending the centre in second term a final-year teacher education student was observed completing her long ten-week assistant teacher practice. Susan articulated firmly to the student what she wanted to achieve with regard to the children's learning during this time as the program had been planned. Susan had planned her program and the student asked to offer additional suggestions for activities. The activities would be discussed and Susan would outline the activity's limitations then assist the student to integrate the activities to the existing program.

In Jane's centre the school photographer and the community health nurse visited during the observation period. When the photographer visited to arrange an

appointment time, Jane had to be called away from a mat session. Jane was friendly even though the unannounced visit had come at an inconvenient time. Jane acted in a professional manner with all visitors observed in the centre and made explanations about her work when asked. The school nurse was another unannounced visitor and expected to be accommodated without notice. She wished to start her child assessments immediately, which meant withdrawing the children four at a time from the class. Below is an account of how Jane handled the situation.

The door opened and in poured children and parents. They entered, divesting themselves of fruit and then bags. All sat on the mat completing puzzles, with Jane nestled in amongst them. A woman in a nurse's uniform holding a brief case walked through the door and stood at the end of the mat. She caught Jane's eye and Jane excused herself from the children and stood up. The nurse simply said, "You don't mind?" Jane smiled and said "No of course not." Jane gestured to the office and turned back to the children. The nurse wandered into the office and cleared Jane's desk. Ellen called pack away time and the remaining adults assisted the children to pack away the puzzles. The parents left and the children settled themselves on the mat. The school nurse came up to Jane and they had a brief conversation that could not be heard by others. When the conversation ended Jane took her position on her chair in front of the assembled children and began the morning mat session. The school nurse wandered over to where I was sitting and inquired as to what I

was doing. I replied. The nurse told me how she had just made a huge mistake. She had wanted to get started straight away testing the children's hearing and had been discussing the morning format with Jane. Jane had asked her if she wouldn't mind waiting twenty minutes until the mat session was over. The nurse rolled her eyes and leaned closer to me and said, "I asked her if it was very important? Fancy telling someone their work isn't important!" The nurse went on to say how Jane had told her why the mat session was important to the day's proceedings. If Jane had been disturbed by these comments it wasn't obvious from her interactions with the nurse throughout the course of the morning (Field notes, 25.2.97).

Glenda communicated with professionals from a variety of child services, such as speech pathologists, occupational therapists and psychologists. Glenda used the information given to her by these services, reinforcing her commitment to assist each child in the attainment of their true potential. This information Glenda said would be used "so I can design a program to cater for those needs" (Interview #1, 21.3.97). There were children with specific language difficulties in this class so Glenda had forged an open line of communication with district speech pathologists. By using the Marion Blank model (which Glenda commented was a commonly used Speech Pathology technique) in her language activities and assessment, Glenda was able to communicate with speech pathologists in their own terms. She said, "One of

the reasons I use the Marion Blank model is it slots straight into speech pathology. Most of them use it" (Interview #1, 21.3.97).

Glenda was eager to discuss the children, her individual programs and the children's progress with other professionals. She sought new ways to assist children in their development and learning and enjoyed the interaction with people who could assist her with this. Here was an example of a time when a psychologist came to observe and discuss the work Glenda and her staff were doing with Bobby, the child with Down Syndrome.

He arrived on the steps of the pre-primary with a backpack slung over his shoulder, looking casual but holding an officious clipboard with a file announcing Bobby's name. Glenda looked up, smiled, looked back to the children she was talking to and excused herself and moved toward the man at the door. This was Bobby's psychologist from Disability Services who had come to liaise with Glenda. Glenda initiated introductions to the adults present in the room. The psychologist started the conversation by discussing Bobby's toileting and appeared impressed to learn that Bobby had signed twice to go to the toilet at the pre-primary. Glenda outlined her program for Bobby and showed him the planning book with daily objectives, which included toileting procedures. Glenda showed him a recent strategy she had used successfully to encourage Bobby' use of the toilet. She had taken Polaroid pictures of Bobby on the school

toilet, which were used to reinforce toileting procedures found in the planning book. The psychologist noted this technique down and asked if he could pass this strategy onto other teachers. Glenda nodded and smiled. They moved into the small toilet area (the only space available to them to be able to stand apart from the children who were on the mat with Serena) and discussed at length, aspects to be strengthened in Bobby's program and outcomes to be achieved. The psychologist left agreeing to ring Glenda about his meeting with Bobby's mother. When he enquired when would be a good time, Glenda suggested before school. He grimaced and said, "How early is that?" Glenda smiled and said, "Anytime before 8.30." He nodded, frowning, but then smiled and left (Field notes, 2.4.97).

This episode was the beginning of Glenda's constant dialogue with Bobby's psychologist. This relationship gradually involved Bobby's mother whom Glenda supported through her program.

Children

The three teachers had congenial relationships with the children in their care but the relationships manifested differently. Susan was vocal and enthusiastic about children's work, commending them on their achievements. She always referred to herself as Miss Barter when talking to the children. Her verbal interaction with children centred on asking children to stop and think about the standard of work they were producing. Susan had particular expectations for the children and would not

accept work she thought was below that child's capacity. She said, "I have standards, parents don't want their children pushed they want them extended" (Interview #1, 14.3.97). For example, when working at an activity that involved identifying triangles by colouring them different colours, Susan addressed each child separately, making a comment about work standards:

Susan (to child 1) I think your work is beautiful. (Gives a stamp)

Susan (to child 2) Slowly, slowly Michael it's not a race. (Stamps his work) Now I'm going to show you. (Susan picks up a pencil and colours the different triangles). Now do you understand?

Susan (to child 3) Now can you press harder? (Susan picks up a pencil and colours hard on the edges of the triangles and then colours the legs) Keep going. (Later when child 3 has finished) Come and show me your work, beautiful. Much better (Field notes, 26.2.97).

In Glenda's classroom there were lots of opportunities to talk and to share ideas and experiences. At mat times even though Glenda held the floor the children

were encouraged to offer their thoughts and experiences. Turn taking was encouraged but there was no definitive action against those who spoke out of turn. Often two or three children spoke at the same time and Glenda controlled this by intently staring and nodding at the child she believed should hold the floor, usually the one with their hand up. At other times when questions were asked directly of one child Glenda would verbally reinforce the question when another child answered out of turn. If a child kept being disobedient Glenda spoke very quietly and firmly, often apologising for their lack of manners to the offended child.

Glenda took great pains to explain things that happened during the course of the day. She explained rules and the need for them, the activities and often what learning they would enhance. Glenda described her explanation to the children for doing the BOEHM Maths test. She said, "I told them I was doing it so I could find out what they knew and then I would know what things to teach them" (Interview #1, 21.3.97). Glenda also described explaining to the children why they should participate in music. She described saying, "When you join in with singing and listened carefully to the music it would help you be good readers because you will hear the sounds and be able to hear them" (Interview #1, 21.3.97).

Explanations and directions were worded simply and Glenda often kept the class waiting for considerable time as she patiently explained directions sometimes for the third or fourth time or until the child understood what she required. The children appeared to take these explanations in the good faith they were intended and were not afraid to ask for clarification. Here was one example of Glenda's explanation to the class and then one child how to perform a galloping action.

Half the class was seated around the edge of the mat listening to Glenda. She had explained that when selected the child should gallop around the mat as Glenda sang a song with a trotting beat. She demonstrated the trotting action and showed the children in slow motion how legs moved when galloping. Glenda selected one child who galloped around the circle and then another child who demonstrated the same skill. The third child selected looked up at Glenda and said softly, "I don't know how?" Glenda took her by the hand and demonstrated the action again. The child shook her head. Each time the child said she couldn't, Glenda changed her explanation so that at one time she was holding her hand and they moved together. When that didn't work Glenda placed her hands on the child's legs and physically helped her to move. Glenda took five minutes to patiently take the child through the action. Once the child began to gallop Glenda sat back in her chair and sang the song. There was a look of triumph on both Glenda's and the child's face, as the child galloped around the circle (Field notes, 2.4.97).

Equal balance was given to the social domain in Glenda's explanations, as it was a problem for many of the children to express their feelings in a positive, socially acceptable way. She frequently explained to the class why children reacted or felt the way they did. For example, on one occasion she explained to the group that one child's mother was in hospital and he was staying with a foster family. She

ended her explanation saying, “So Sjon if you are feeling sad and upset, don’t hit and say nasty words, you come and see me and Mrs Newton” (Field notes, 9.4.97).

Glenda spoke of valuing child input into the program and was teaching children to listen to and accept others ideas. An important step towards the attainment of this goal was building the child’s self esteem and belief they had an important contribution to make. One way she described of fostering this was to allow children to decide what activities they would do and how they would complete them. Glenda spoke of involving them in deciding what direction the theme would move and in that way catering for their interests and their wants. Creativity and child ownership of work were encouraged, as there was little of recreating the teacher’s model.

Jane, like Susan, was the leader of the learning but was quieter in her interactions and spent time questioning and guiding learning. She centred her attention on the children usually bending down or kneeling down when conversing with them. Jane spoke of making each child feel that they had something important to contribute to discussions and conversations. The parent interviewed succinctly captured the essence of Jane’s relationship with the children when she described Jane as “not treating the children as adults but as intelligent beings” (Parent interview, 16.5.97). This was reflected in her considered responses to children’s conversations and the courtesies that she extended to all by not letting other events interrupt her conversations. If an adult came to speak to Jane when she was conversing with a child, she would not give the adult her attention until the

conversation with the child had finished. When the conversation had ended Jane would excuse herself from the child and turn to the adult. Here was one such time:

A teacher from the school walked in the back door and stood and surveyed the room. She noticed Jane working at an activity table with a small number of children so she walked up to the table. Jane was aware of her presence but continued her conversation with a child seated next to her. Jane took a few minutes to conclude her conversation with a child. She then excused herself to all at the table and got up to speak to the teacher (Field notes, 6.3.97).

Communication was valued in Jane's classroom and this was reflected in a section of the timetable called "sharing time." At this time Jane invited children's reflections on events or activities happening around them. She also used this time to share books or other items children had brought with them.

The pre-primary teachers in all three centres used positive reinforcement but in different ways. Susan used stickers and stamps to promote good work habits and she frequently rewarded the children with endearments for the work they had done referring to them as "darling" and "gorgeous". At other times she would call them "good looking roosters" and ask for "big hugs". Following are some examples of her directions, which were often softened by the use of some type of descriptive adjective.

Susan Alexandra ring the bell,
precious (Field notes, 26.2.97)

Susan Will you put the photo on my
desk, gorgeous girl? (Field notes,
20.2.97)

Susan Tom come up here, darling
(Field notes, 20.2.97).

In Glenda's classroom all staff could be heard giving constant praise for work at the tables and for social courtesies the children showed each other in the classroom. At the end of the day when the children were gathered on the mat Glenda gave stickers or small certificates to children for various achievements. The achievements ranged from creativity awards to social courtesy awards, each individually tailored to the child.

Jane used stickers and stamps occasionally but the substance of her positive reinforcement was her comments to children. Jane stressed the positives in her interactions and often included her feelings about a particular incident. For example, when a child had completed an activity with Jane, she said to him, "I'm so pleased with you. You did that really well. Did that make you feel happy too?" (Field notes, 28.8.97). Another technique Jane used to bolster self esteem was the "star of the day." When a child's parent was on duty they were called "star of the

day” and were allowed to sit on a chair with a star on it to complete their activities. They could also use this chair at fruit time to sit next to their parent as the children sat in a large circle on the mat. The “star of the day” was the fruit monitor, selected friends to assist him in handing around the fruit and was the leader or first in line for any special task.

Following on from the description of the teachers’ relationships with the children is the discussion of the distribution of power in the three classrooms. When observing the teachers at work, the differences in their methods of control were marked and altered the way in which their relationships manifested with others.

Distribution of Power

Susan	“Definite routine and firmness” (Interview #1, 14.3.97)
Glenda	“The Golden Rules” (Field notes, 19.2.97)
Jane	“She still gets where she’s going. She never seems to raise her voice.” (Principal interview, 15.15.97)

The different ways in which the teachers shared power with those who participated in their pre-primary programs reflected their understandings of their accountability and responsibility roles. Susan assumed full responsibility for the construction, implementation and evaluation of the program she put in place. She did not appear to share the construction of the program with her assistant, the parents or the children and did not perceive the school priorities as impacting on her practice in the future. This was manifested in the decision-making processes made by all in her classroom everyone looked to Susan for guidance. Susan directed the

activities of all, which were preset and compulsory and all worked to her instructions. Susan had clear management strategies and the children understood her expectations. There were no obvious behaviour problems and Susan was not heard to raise her voice in anger. It was Susan's opinion there were no behaviour problems because of the social maturity of the children and the high ratio of girls in the group. She also thought a lot of praise and rewards such as stamps were important. If Susan wanted the children's attention when they were working inside she would ring a small bell. The class would stop what they were doing immediately and put their hands on their heads.

Susan gave firm clear directions that conveyed her expectations of their behaviour. Here was one example.

(Ryan has come to Susan to complain about something. His speech was unintelligible).

Susan Ryan, big boy. We look at each other and speak properly. You are a big boy now and I won't have that voice. If you use that voice I will ignore you. We need to smile at pre-school (Field notes, 20.2.97).

The only altercations witnessed during the indoor program concerned the number limit of four children allowed in the block corner at one time. Sometimes Susan stepped in to redirect children. Other times she spoke to them about

cooperating and left them to sort out the problem and moved to a distance where the children could see she was still watching. One such instance occurred in the middle of a morning session:

(Three boys entered the block corner; they had been busy at table activities. The boys started to pull out some blocks).

Child 1 Did Miss Barter say you could go in the block corner?

(The three boys put the few blocks back and walk over to the teacher).

Child 2 (to Susan) Can we go into the block corner?

Susan Tom, you can come and work at my table. The others can play with the blocks.

(The two boys rush excitedly back to the block corner and begin building. After a few minutes there are six boys talking excitedly and loudly in the block corner. Snatches of the conversation are heard around the room).

Children but we're only allowed four...

(They try to decide who should go. Susan wanders over and speaks from one side of the block shelf).

Susan Who would like to play the new game
 with Mrs Brown?

(Three children moved off to play the new game.

Susan went back to the table activity she was supervising). (Field notes, 11.3.97).

Jane shared the construction and implementation of her program but assumed full responsibility for program direction and educational decisions. In the classroom Jane related to parents, children and her assistant as though they all had a contribution to make and their ideas should be considered. If children did not want to participate in whole group activities Jane never chastised them or insisted they perform the whole group activity. She respected their decision.

Jane's program ran smoothly and any discipline appeared to happen effortlessly. Jane would move to position herself in any situations to dispel any conflict before it arose. If that was not possible Jane would move to the area of conflict and assist children to come to their own conclusions about what should be done. The parent interviewed commented on the way Jane handled a difficult situation involving her daughter.

Her daughter had developed separation anxiety after the arrival of a new baby in the family. One day her daughter, Tessa was very aggressive towards Jane she kicked and punched her when she wanted to leave at entry time with her mother.

The parent told Tessa that she could go home with her mother once Tessa apologised to Jane. The parent commented that during the altercation Jane was “positive at all times...she was firm she didn’t allow Tessa to win but at the same time she didn’t crush her” (Parent interview, 16.5.97). Jane did not stay with them but worked with the other children and would come back and offer Tessa alternative ways to apologise. For example Tessa could write her apology down. The parent praised Jane’s approach. She said, “She just let Tessa know that it wasn’t appropriate behaviour and she wasn’t happy with her, but it was the behaviour she wasn’t happy with not Tessa” (Parent interview, 16.3.97). After an hour of sitting on the mat with her mother, Tessa apologised. The parent said, “Jane accepted it beautifully” (Parent interview, 16.3.97). In the parent’s words, Jane told Tessa, “I am really looking forward to seeing you tomorrow.” The parent described this comment as making it “easier for Tessa to slot back in” (Parent interview, 16.3.97). The parent went on to describe how she believed that Tessa’s and Jane’s relationship had actually been strengthened by this incident. She said, that Jane “is so positive and so good and this subsequently made their relationship develop because of the way she handled it” (Parent interview, 16.5.97).

Glenda’s interactions with other people in her setting appeared to happen effortlessly but were planned. She considered the input of others (e.g. children, parents, assistant and colleagues) and went to considerable lengths to weave their ideas into the program she created. Power and responsibility in the daily classroom life were shared with all who participated in the program. The children could select, instigate, create and interact with whom and what materials they wished at certain

times of the day. Glenda's use of control techniques in the classroom centred on the "Golden Rules" and there was much behaviour that she chose to ignore so that attention was not taken from the lesson at hand. Here was one such incident.

The class was assembled on the mat watching Glenda write "The End" in an arc to finish a class made book. Glenda had her back to the class when one child called out loudly, "She said a naughty word". The class turned to look at the perpetrator. Glenda did not respond so the child repeated her call to Glenda. Glenda went on writing. A boy turned to the caller and said, "Give her one more chance, just give her one chance because she's my friend. She won't do it again." The child in question and her friend moved themselves to the rear of the group. Glenda turned to face the class having ignored the incident and spoke of the task at hand (Field notes, 9.4.97).

Glenda used a raised voice at times but it was not loud. She commanded absolute authority if the situation arose and direct interventions occurred when "Mr Minchin's Golden Rules" were broken. The rules focussed on respect for other people, their property and to have fun at school. Glenda's disciplinary comments

were centred on the “Golden Rules” attributed to Mr Minchin (the principal) and were displayed in the classroom for all to see. Examples of Glenda’s disciplinary comments were:

Glenda We don’t want to disappoint Mr
Minchin (Field notes, 13.2.97).

Glenda One of the Golden Rules, never
interfere with any-one else’s work
(Field notes, 13.2.97).

Glenda Children we have a bit of
trouble in here this morning with Mr
Minchin’s Golden Rules, about keeping
your hands and feet to yourself (Field
notes, 13.2.97).

In Susan’s centre the rules for the classroom were also displayed on the wall. They were presented in the form of characters, for example, “Mr Walk” or “Mr Happy.” One rule read, “Mr Quiet is always welcome at our pre-school.” (Field notes, 20.2.97). At most times when children went against the rules they were reminded in terms of the Mr Men character. For example, a child running to the

bathroom was stopped by Susan and told, “We have Mr Walk at our pre-school not Mr Run” (Field notes, 3.3.97).

Glenda constantly described the positive features of children in the class. She said she had trained herself to use more positive reinforcement so she was continually illuminating the positive behaviours she was trying to encourage. Similarly, Jane spoke of positive directions. When Jane redirected children because she did not approve of their behaviour or actions she would put her comments in a positive way. For example, a child dropped a book in the middle of the floor when another activity caught his attention. Jane said to him, “Hugo, where do you put the book when you’re finished?” (Field notes, 25.2.97). Jane was not observed raising her voice but everyone listened when she spoke. The parent interviewed confirmed this when she said, “She’s quite strict, there are firm boundaries ...but without any of the unpleasantness or loud voices” (Parent interview, 16.5.97).

Conclusion

These three teachers interact quite differently with assistants, parents and children. The teachers formally assigned different roles and responsibilities to their assistants. Susan’s assistant was used as another pair of hands to prepare and support the program Susan had constructed. On the other hand, Glenda and Jane used their assistants as resources to assist in activity selection and as a knowledgeable other to confer with on student learning and development. While all the teachers assumed the ultimate responsibility for the program the main difference in the relationships between the teachers and their assistants was that Glenda fully utilised the teaching skills of her experienced assistant. The relationships with their

colleagues and principals was an interesting area of investigation as it showed the difficulties that some pre-primary teachers perceive they have when working in a whole school context. On one hand, Susan was building a working relationship with her principal and did not associate with the school staff. Like Susan, Jane felt isolated from her colleagues and described the lack of support and interest from her principal. On the other hand, Glenda had a principal that worked in her classroom, supported her efforts while Glenda worked hard to be seen as an integral member of the school staff.

Successful relationships with families involved in a pre-primary program are a hallmark of quality and all three teachers described their relationships with the parents as successful. Yet they were all observed to be different. Glenda viewed the parents as collaborators and used a variety of techniques to include them in the program and keep them informed of their child's development. Jane did the same to a lesser extent and Susan viewed the families as an audience to show what a structured pre-primary program could achieve. Both Jane and Susan did not report children's progress formally nor pass records onto Year one teachers.

The teachers all worked towards establishing positive working and social relationships with the children in their class. The main difference was observed in the sharing of power in these relationships. How these teachers shared the power in relationships in their classrooms could be depicted on a continuum with Susan on one end, Glenda at the other and Jane in the middle. As described in this chapter, Susan directed the planning and implementation of the program and the proceedings of the day. Jane treated the children as knowledgeable and showed them the same

civil courtesies she extended to adults. She involved her assistant in the planning and evaluation of the program. Glenda in keeping with her philosophy was endeavouring to promote independent and flexible learning through her dealings with the children. In her relationships with parents and her assistants, Glenda promoted their input in the program.

This chapter described the professional relationships of the teachers and the distribution of power in their classrooms. The next chapter presents a discussion of the teachers' views on pre-primary teacher accountability.

CHAPTER 8

THE TEACHERS' VIEWS ON ACCOUNTABILITY

Introduction

This is the final chapter that compares and contrasts issues taken from the individual case studies of the three teachers. It presents the teachers' definitions and perceptions of pre-primary teacher accountability. Added to this is a description of the teachers' perceptions of the stakeholders in their accountability process. Finally, there is a discussion of how the teachers' perceptions of accountability leave them equipped to deal with mandated policies.

Definitions

The three teachers' definitions of accountability were similar in theme although Jane said it was not a term she used in her work. Susan defined accountability in this way, "In my terminology it is how you would tell parents why you are doing things" (Interview #1, 14.3.97). It was her understanding that if parents had a negative experience with a pre-school teacher it was because they could not see what she was doing and thought the program "was all play" (Interview #2, 2.7.97). Susan gave an analogy of people questioning a doctor when they prescribe tablets, yet teachers expect parents to "willingly send their children to us for eight hours a day with no accountability" (Interview #2, 2.7.97).

Jane believed that everyone should be accountable for the work they did. She defined accountability as, "informing others of what I do, why I do it and how I do

it” (Interview #1, 19.3.97). According to Jane it is these explanations that encourage teachers to think about what they do in the classroom and so leads to changes in their educational program. Jane did not use the term “accountability” often in her work although she commented that teachers use terms without realising that they did. The language Jane used when talking about accountability centred on the use of her written records such as programs, daily work pad and child records.

Glenda, by her own admission, had a wide view of accountability as she believed that it was a multi-faceted issue that teachers needed to address directly. This was a topic on which Glenda was particularly articulate as she spoke at length on accountability in early childhood education and in her own words was able “to detail” her account of all it encompassed (Interview #2, 27.6.97). To define the term accountability Glenda used the words, “professional responsibility”, which was not limited to teaching in the classroom but incorporated the many aspects Glenda believed made up a teacher’s educational life (Interview #2, 27.6.97).

Perceptions

In this section, only Susan and Jane’s comments are presented as Glenda articulated her perceptions of accountability in terms of each stakeholder. It was Susan’s opinion that early childhood teachers were afraid and threatened by the notion of accountability. Susan described the sense of threat teachers felt, as they believed accountability implied formalising child assessments. Traditionally she said the pre-school kept records but accountability meant a much more academic process such as a report with “ticks and crosses” (Interview #1, 14.3.97). Parents’ questioning the teacher’s decisions is another reason Susan gave to explain the threat

teachers felt from accountability. According to Susan accountability was a “big question” for many pre-primary teachers and many of them were not accountable. She gave the example of programs where the children “glue boxes all day” if the teacher offered explanations then “at least the parents would know why” (Interview #1, 14.3.97). According to Susan, it was these explanations that many teachers found threatening “in case they [the explanations] were questioned” (Interview #1, 14.3.97). She said that parents could question her about the program, but she expected them to “acknowledge her own level of professionalism” and to accept that at the end of the discussion she made the professional decision (Interview #1, 14.3.97).

Susan believed that accountability was “a big question” for pre-school teachers (Interview #2, 2.7.97). There were many pre-school teachers who Susan thought were not accountable at all. She thought that the EDWA’s decision to direct community pre-school teachers to write their own school development plans for their centre had gone some way to rectifying this. However, with the new structure, Susan’s school development plan had been put aside and under the auspices of the pre-school’s contract, she was to embrace the local primary school plan. Susan had great reservations about the validity of this plan or future plans when most of her children did not attend the parent school the following year. Susan spoke of recognising “her own level of professionalism” and having to decide if the school’s priorities were relevant to the needs of the children in her class (Interview 1, 14.3.97). When describing her implementation of the school’s priorities, she said, “I’ll do the bare minimum to acknowledge the development plan... but if I believe

that maths and language are far more a priority than technology in the classroom, then I'm going to do it" (Interview 1, 14.3.97).

Accountability was not a subject that had been discussed in school meetings in Jane's presence. She related that the school had been involved in EDWA's professional development on performance management and accountability. At the professional development session Jane said that teacher accountability had been addressed in two main themes. The first was that accountability should be viewed as something that would benefit teachers, and secondly, that it should not be a threatening topic. The procedure that EDWA prescribed for teacher accountability (as recounted by Jane) was that teachers should discuss informally what they wanted to be accountable for, with administration staff. This professional development had not altered teacher accountability practices within the school. Jane said that two terms had gone past since the professional development and nothing had been discussed in staff meetings about teacher accountability. According to Jane, pre-primary teacher accountability was undergoing a gradual change brought about by pre-primaries coming onto school sites and children attending a full day. The previous perception held by pre-primary teachers, parents and staff was that the pre-primary was separate from the school. Jane held strong beliefs that pre-primary teachers had to be more vocal than primary teachers for recognition in the whole school context.

The Stakeholders

Glenda was articulate on the topic of accountability and her explanations centred on describing accountability in terms of the stakeholders. When

interviewing Jane and Susan they did not mention stakeholders so when they had exhausted their discussion the idea of stakeholders was mentioned and their opinions sought. The teachers had different views on the hierarchy of stakeholders in the construction of their accountability and the following subsections describe the teachers' views. The stakeholders are discussed in the prescribed order of importance for Glenda, the initiator of the "stakeholder" conversation.

The Children

Glenda placed the children first as the major stakeholders in the accountability process. Jane and Susan on the other hand named the parents first, reasoning that they were the adults who had more to do with the centre than any one-else. In relation to accountability to the children Susan, Jane and Glenda had different notions. Susan thought that explaining how she was accountable to the children was a "hard one" (Interview #2, 2.7.97). The prime strategy she described was explaining the reasons for doing the activities to the children. Susan would explain how the activity was to be done, what learning would take place or how the activity fitted into the overall theme. If an activity was to be taken home Susan reiterated how she would reinforce the concepts that had been covered in that activity because "she wanted the parents to know about the learning" (Interview #2, 2.7.97). A couple of times during the year Susan would review the scrapbooks with the children in order to make them aware of their own development. However, Susan said the children had to "be accountable" as well (Interview #2, 2.7.97). She believed that the children had certain responsibilities to make the most of opportunities presented to them. Susan said, "They can choose not to do an activity

but if they don't do it we're not doing it again. So I mean, there are some things they have to do but I said to them, you can not do this activity but its not coming on again, so it's up to you" (Interview #2, 2.7.97).

Jane thought that the word "responsibility" should be used in her accountability relationship with the children (Interview #2, 27.8.97). Jane said she felt conscious of her responsibility to provide the children in her care with a good education. She wanted to provide the children with all the necessary skills to make a smooth transition in to Year 1. Her explanations to the children about the learning program centred on her discussion of the learning outcomes of the activities.

Glenda highlighted the fact that she was accountable to the children in her classroom first and foremost. She said that she demonstrated her accountability to the children by "being caring, listening, responding to their needs and addressing the whole child's development" (Interview #2, 27.6.97). She gave the example of a young boy in her class who was unhappy and very angry at the world so Glenda supported him, letting him know that "they were glad he was in their class" (Interview #2, 27.6.97). Glenda believed that early childhood teachers needed to "celebrate" children's efforts and praise their attempts (Interview #2, 27.6.97).

Glenda described her responsibility to identify children with developmental problems or learning difficulties and the local school psychologist told Glenda that she was responsible to do this by law. At Chitteringbrook Early Childhood Unit, teachers were to construct and continuously update Individual Educational Programs (I.E.P.) for children with special needs and Glenda did this in rigorous detail. She believed that part of her professional responsibility to the children was to be able to

discuss their development on equal terms with other professionals and in this way she could use the information given in planning for that child.

The teachers' views about their accountability to the children reflected in some part the teachers' view on the pre-primary year. Susan saw it as year in which she supplied five year olds with great experiences and to assist with school readiness (Interview #2, 2.7.97); Jane, as a year that was a precursor to formal education, valuable for what it had to offer the next year (Interview #2, 27.8.97); and Glenda saw it as another year in a child's education, moving them along from where they entered her program and celebrating their successes along the way (Interview #2, 27.6.97).

The Families

The parents and families were the first stakeholders in Susan's and Jane's accountability process. Similarly, Glenda thought that accountability to parents was a major focus in her program and was articulate in the description of the accountability relationship she shared with them. Glenda said that parents had a right to expect their child "to be happy and safe and dealt with kindly at school" (Interview #2, 27.6.97). She outlined her responsibility to report "honestly and openly" about children's progress in domains and learning areas (Interview #2, 27.6.97). It was Glenda's policy to make parents feel welcome in the classroom and so apart from the duty roster she described regular invitations to come into the classroom for afternoon tea. Parents were invited to a meeting to receive the school reports twice a year. These meetings provided an opportunity to explain the report to the parents. Glenda believed that supporting parents whose children have been

identified with special needs was a large part of an Early Childhood educator's accountability to parents. She talked of "being supportive as possible" and of being a person with whom parents could share concerns (Interview #2, 27.6.97). Glenda was conscious that for some families she was the first contact outside of the home so she worked hard on establishing relationships with families.

Jane believed that her accountability was firmly linked to the parents, as the parents were much more aware of what happened in the pre-primary than her school colleagues. The parents had a daily physical presence in the pre-primary and Jane used specific techniques to keep them informed of their child's development. She said, "when they step into the room they can see what's happening, the informal chats, the newsletters and the work the children take home" (Interview #2, 27.8.97). Jane also used the scrapbooks of work samples as a source of explanation about the learning activities to parents. The notion of feedback came into Jane's explanation about her accountability relationship with the parents. The parents gave Jane feedback about her program, what the children had enjoyed and their thoughts of the program she offered. Jane considered positive feedback to be the measure of a successful program. She said, "It's been a success when the kids go home and talk about it" (Interview #2, 27.8.97).

Like Jane, Susan maintained that the most important stakeholders in the accountability debate were the parents. She grouped the principal and EDWA "on the next rung down" (Interview #2, 2.7.97). Susan described parents as, "very significant others" (Interview #2, 2.7.97). It was her belief that her expectations for the children matched those of the parents. She said, "I think all parents are happy as

long as they know their children are learning. That's all that counts" (Interview #2, 2.7.97). Susan was strongly committed to keeping parents informed about what was happening in the centre. In Susan's experience problems occurred when "parents don't understand what is happening" (Interview #2, 2.7.97). Therefore parents were informed in a number of ways, such as, the children's scrapbooks, the newsletters, informal chats, parent meetings and in Susan's words, "displays, lots of displays" (Interview #2, 2.7.97).

School Staff and Colleagues

Glenda was the only one of the three teachers who specifically spoke of her accountability to work colleagues and staff at the school. This may be because Glenda was the Senior Teacher at the school and as such believed she should encourage teachers to have an active professional life while sharing her expertise with others. She said, "I am not accountable to them in terms of their practice but accountable to them to help them change their practice" (Interview #2, 27.6.97). Glenda was conscious that not all teachers wanted her assistance and so spoke of alerting the staff to new ideas and then leaving them to seek her out if they wanted more information. At other times, she said she would be more vocal when she saw something as an educational imperative such as insisting on "Language of Thinking" as a school priority.

Glenda believed that it was important to keep the school staff informed of what she did in the pre-primary and she invited them to view work in progress. She spoke of being positive in her comments to the school about children and their families but at the same time she believed she had to alert the school to any difficult

situations. Taking part in school planning and policy decisions was one of Glenda's professional responsibilities. This was an area of accountability that Glenda believed early childhood educators needed to show their initiative and speak out in a whole school context about what they believed. She described initiatives proposed by other staff members with which she did not agree and spoke of planning strategies to initiate change based on collected evidence. Glenda also spoke of providing a "happy" workplace, which she believed was an important part of her accountability to her colleagues (Interview #2, 27.6.97). She described the active roles of her assistants and said that it was her responsibility to make sure that the classroom was a nice place in which to work.

Susan mentioned her colleagues indirectly when describing her accountability to EDWA. She spoke of trying to create links with the school, for example she had insisted that one of the staff meetings be held in her centre. At another time she had tried to pass on her knowledge of "Letterland" to the junior primary classes through the principal but this had not happened.

Jane also thought she was more accountable to the parents and the children than to the school administration or colleagues. Jane put this down to the fact that she had daily contact with the parents and children and little or no contact with the school staff.

The Principal

The three teachers had varied responses in relation to their accountability to the school principals. Jane did not consider herself accountable to the principal for two reasons. First, the principal did not have an interest in the pre-primary program.

A number of invitations to attend special days and events had been ignored or rebuffed and visits from the principal were rare. Second, the principal's knowledge of Jane's program came from what Jane told him. It was Jane's belief that the principal would have to conduct research into early childhood education in order to make an informed opinion of her program. Jane spoke about her accountability to the principal, she said, "I just feel like, if he doesn't get any complaints about me, he doesn't want to know. So I really don't feel that I am accountable to him" (Interview #2, 27.8.97).

Glenda's accountability relationship with the principal was described as a constant conversation. As she said, "I tell him" (Interview #2, 27.6.97). She had daily conversations with the principal, not only about her work but other school issues. Glenda spoke of taking an "active role in staff meetings, MIS and the School Development Plan" (Interview #2, 27.6.97). The principal was invited regularly to the classroom and Glenda sent children to his office to show him their completed work. In a formal accountability interview for Performance Management appraisals the principal discussed with Glenda her detailed plan for achieving the school priorities. Apart from this Glenda told of her responsibility to prepare and show the principal the children's reports and portfolios.

Susan classed her accountability to the principal and EDWA in the same category. She believed that there were disadvantages of being off-site, as the principal did not visit often. Her paper work was ready for him to see at any time but she thought that he hadn't been interested. She said, "I think I am accountable and at the drop of a hat if he wanted to see something I could show him but he's got to tap

into that” (Interview #2, 2.7.97). Susan thought that the key role the principal played in her accountability process was to be informed if the class left the pre-primary centre.

The Early Childhood Profession

Glenda said the issue of accountability was important for the profession as she said, “we need to talk about it with others, justify what I am doing” (Interview #2, 27.6.97). For this reason Glenda had an “open door” policy so that she could discuss with anyone what was happening in her classroom. Glenda believed that teachers should keep themselves up-to-date with current trends in early childhood education so that children’s needs were being addressed in the optimum way. Jane briefly mentioned being responsible to her profession. She said, “You have to sell your profession as worthwhile” (Interview #2, 27.8.97). Susan and Jane did not mention the early childhood profession as a stakeholder in their accountability descriptions.

EDWA

Jane did not identify her employer as being a key stakeholder in the accountability process. She named EDWA after discussion of accountability to herself, the children, the parents and other pre-primary staff (remembering the principal was not a stakeholder). Jane said, “I suppose you are accountable to the Education Department” and then laughed long and hard. She said, “They might like a mention” and broke into laughter again (Interview #2, 27.8.97). Jane described the difference in the accountability process at Calderwell. At Jane’s previous school she felt much more like an EDWA employee as EDWA policy changes or innovations

were presented by the principal and discussed by all the staff. At Calderwell no EDWA issues with connection to the pre-primary were discussed. She said that she was unaware of any changes and that was “Why I don’t think I am accountable to the Education Department as much as I used to... there is no-one sort of out there” (Interview #2, 27.8.97).

Glenda thought her accountability to EDWA was indirect in terms of adhering to the School Development Plan and implementing new initiatives such as the new Curriculum Framework and First Steps. She was the only teacher of the three to undergo any type of reporting of performance to the principal but had been perturbed when EDWA had not designed teacher accountability around an appraisal of the teacher’s performance in the classroom. Glenda spoke of “department requirements” which she described as their creed, statements about education that she tried to honour. She described how she read the EDWA literature and revisited documents at various times, such as the “squiggle” documents on school development planning. In a more global sense Glenda spoke of her accountability to mirror an EDWA push in science and technology because that was an area lacking in expertise in our economy.

Susan said of her accountability to EDWA, “I think we are becoming less and less accountable. I put EDWA and the principal in the same box” (Interview #2, 2.7.97). Susan’s contact with people from EDWA was limited. Last year a few early childhood officials from EDWA had visited to negotiate the contract with the primary school. Susan said, “they don’t want to see your programs they just want to look at the superficial” (Interview #2, 2.7.97). The District Superintendent

occasionally bought visitors to the centre and Susan believed that she “was accountable in that respect” (Interview #2, 2.7.97). It was Susan’s belief that EDWA would only become involved in the program if something went wrong. She said, “they are quite happy until something goes wrong” (Interview #2, 2.7.97).

“To Yourself”

Glenda was adamant that accountability to oneself was a very important issue. This incorporated her personal well being as she said, “teachers are no good in the classroom if they are not taking care of their own well-being” (Interview #2, 27.6.97). It was Glenda’s opinion that teachers had a responsibility to care for themselves so they could be active participants in classroom life. Another aspect of her own accountability to herself Glenda described as her “own personal standards” (Interview #2, 27.6.97). It was these standards that teachers measured themselves upon and Glenda spoke of these standards as “most important.” She described her standards as “high” and that she constantly measured her self against them (Interview #2, 27.6.97).

Jane spoke of being accountable to her self and said she was “being paid to do a job” (Interview #2, 27.8.97). Accountability to herself Jane described was measured by her perception of her ability and performance in designing and implementing her pre-primary program. She spoke about going about her work, “to the best of my ability...always evaluating what you are doing and making changes accordingly” (Interview #1, 19.3.97).

To Susan, accountability to her self manifested in the personal knowledge that the teacher held when making an educational decision that might be questioned by

others. The illustration of this point Susan gave was a time when a parent questioned Susan's action of asking children to re-do activities. The parent said, "you are crushing my child's self esteem." Susan said she replied "I know where you are coming from but you have got to understand I know how they can work." In this respect Susan spoke of her "accountability to herself" (Interview #2, 2.7.97).

Others

When asked were there any other stakeholders in the accountability process, Jane suggested "the community" (Interview #2, 27.8.97). Calderwell Pre-primary was very much a part of the community and this was shown in the community support throughout the school. Jane described the community as having a "good community spirit, like a town on its own" (Interview #2, 27.8.97). This support was generated by the parents, who Jane described as "innovative ... who aren't afraid to push their own ideas" (Interview #2, 27.8.97). Jane suggested that this push encouraged the school staff to "do a bit more than they do or would do normally" and so played a part in the accountability process (Interview #2, 27.8.97).

Into the Future

It would seem that the backgrounds of these teachers may leave them unequally poised for an educational environment that is likely to increase the accountability requirements on schools and teachers. Glenda may welcome such a move, Jane may have difficulty responding in a meaningful way without direction and Susan may resist it. Glenda had a self imposed accountability system in her classroom practice and was well able to articulate the reasons for her educational

decisions which she did regularly in the wider school community. She perceived the school performance management as part of her accountability process and embraced it, providing immense detail in her formal interviews with the principal. However, it was Glenda's belief that the current EDWA performance management system should assist teachers to evaluate their teaching performance, something she would welcome.

Jane and Susan were divided from the school administration and their colleagues. This division could leave them unable or unwilling to implement EDWA accountability measures and they were not called to account for their practices by the school principal. They both viewed the parents as the main stakeholders in the accountability process and measures of their program's quality rely on parent comment. Both Jane and Susan were yet to undergo any type of performance management and had strong views on their principal's competence in this regard. These teachers would need assistance in embracing an accountability process and a performance management system implemented by the primary school personnel.

Conclusion

This chapter has presented the teacher's views on accountability. Although teacher's definitions and the words they used to describe accountability differed, there were elements of similarity in theme. The three teachers however, differed in their ranking of accountability stakeholders. Susan and Jane argued that the parents were the primary stakeholders as they were the adults most involved in the program. However, Glenda rated accountability to herself and then to the children as her first

priorities. Accountability to the principal and to EDWA was a vexed question for Jane, as she believed she was not accountable to the principal. Susan allocated the principal and EDWA the same position as less important than the parents. Neither Jane nor Susan engaged with school development planning and did not implement the school priorities. Glenda held different views about her accountability to the principal and EDWA and this was illustrated in her accountability experiences at the school. She described herself as an active school member who was accountable to the staff, the principal and EDWA. The teachers' understandings and experiences of accountability leave them unevenly balanced to deal with accountability in the future.

The next chapter presents a discussion of the issues of accountability that were uncovered from the themes discussed and further investigated using a questionnaire administered to practicing pre-primary teachers.

CHAPTER 9

SURVEY

Introduction

The previous four chapters have described themes from the individual case studies. Chapters 5 and 6 outlined the contexts and gave a detailed analysis of the educational program constructed, implemented and evaluated by the case study teachers. Chapter 7 presented the professional relationships of the teachers and in Chapter 8 the teachers' views on accountability were discussed. This chapter provides analysis and discussion of the issues arising from the questionnaire administered to 106 metropolitan EDWA pre-primary teachers. The salient themes that emerged from the data are presented and discussed using statistical and descriptive illustrations.

The Survey

The questionnaire (which can be found in Appendix 4) was designed to incorporate a mix of tick the box, rating scales and written descriptive answers to allow for degrees of opinions and to ensure that all questions were not closed. As described in the methodology in Chapter 4, the questionnaire was trialed twice, refined and then handed to a panel of early childhood and questionnaire experts for final audit. The questionnaire was sent to 106 pre-primary teachers in three EDWA metropolitan regions. Of this sample more than a hundred, 67 surveys were returned. The numerical responses were analysed using SPSS Version 7.5 and the descriptive answers were clustered into themes.

The intention of the survey was to illuminate and investigate issues and tensions uncovered in the case studies. The questionnaire was sent out

subsequent to data collection in the three teacher's pre-primary centres. The 23 items were clustered into roughly three themes of describing accountability and rating of stakeholders, program construction and evaluation and finally school development planning and performance management. The data have been presented as frequencies to simplify the representation of data in tabular form and for ease of interpretation. The descriptive answers have been used to illustrate the tabulated data.

Results

What Terms Do Teachers Use When Talking About Accountability?

The literature on accountability (discussed in Chapter 2) revealed that accountability was a multifaceted construct on which there was a range of conflicting views. Similarly, the three case study teachers' definitions varied.

In the questionnaire, teachers defined accountability mainly in terms of teacher "responsibility". Many of the definitions clustered around the theme of "responsibility" but did not include teacher appraisal or other formal demonstrations of teacher accountability. This was a contentious point in the accountability literature where the question of accountability without a form of evaluation is debated (Jones, 1977; Kogan, 1986). The following examples of teachers' definitions from the questionnaire illustrate the underlying theme of responsibility without justification. One teacher wrote, "Accepting responsibility for the education and well being of every child." Another defined accountability as, "You are responsible for what you do." While another simply scribed her definition as "Responsible for."

However, other definitions given in the questionnaire touched on the themes of "explanations", "justifications", "being answerable" and "personal

professionalism”. In the definitions clustered around these themes, teachers defined accountability in terms of being able to justify their program and the outcomes for children’s learning. At times stakeholders such as principals and parents were mentioned, however teachers usually referred to stakeholders as “others”. Here are two examples of definitions from the questionnaire that touched on the issues of justification and explanations. A teacher defined accountability when she wrote, “It is my professional responsibility to provide explanations and justifications of any actions, plans, decisions I make regarding the education and the care of the children in my class.” Another wrote, “Being able to explain what you do, why you are doing it and what you hope to achieve.”

The questionnaire showed that the term accountability was typically understood as referring to teaching contexts and most frequently used by teachers when interacting with others in the teaching profession. A large majority of the teachers surveyed used the term accountability in their work and mostly to colleagues (54), principals (50) and their teaching assistants (51). Less than half of the teachers surveyed (31) indicated they do not use the term accountability when talking to parents. The majority of teachers affirmed the use of “professional responsibility” (51) when speaking about accountability, while others used the terms “program” (47) and “record keeping” (45). Interestingly, just over a third of teachers (26) used the term “school development plan”, the EDWA vehicle for school accountability, when discussing their accountability.

When the case study teachers defined accountability they spoke of giving explanations to others for professional decisions or actions. The questionnaire, therefore, probed issues about teacher explanations. The majority of teachers

surveyed (59) indicated that parents were generally the major recipients of explanations. About the same proportion of surveyed teachers indicated that they made general explanations to the principal (56), followed by explanations to the assistant (53) with just over a third of teachers (26) giving explanations to the children in the class. However, there was a difference in the frequency of explanations as represented in Figure 5. This graph shows the differences between explanations made generally as opposed to explanations made in the last week to stakeholders. Contrast was shown in the frequency of explanations made generally and weekly to stakeholders such as the principal, the parents and colleagues. For example, the majority of teachers indicated they had made explanations to the principal but only under a third (22) had offered explanations to their principal this week. General and weekly explanations to the assistant remained fairly consistent and compared to all stakeholders, many teachers (52) indicated that the assistants received the most explanations weekly. This finding mirrored the case studies where teachers were observed discussing aspects of the program on a daily basis with their assistants. Explanations to children also remained fairly constant.

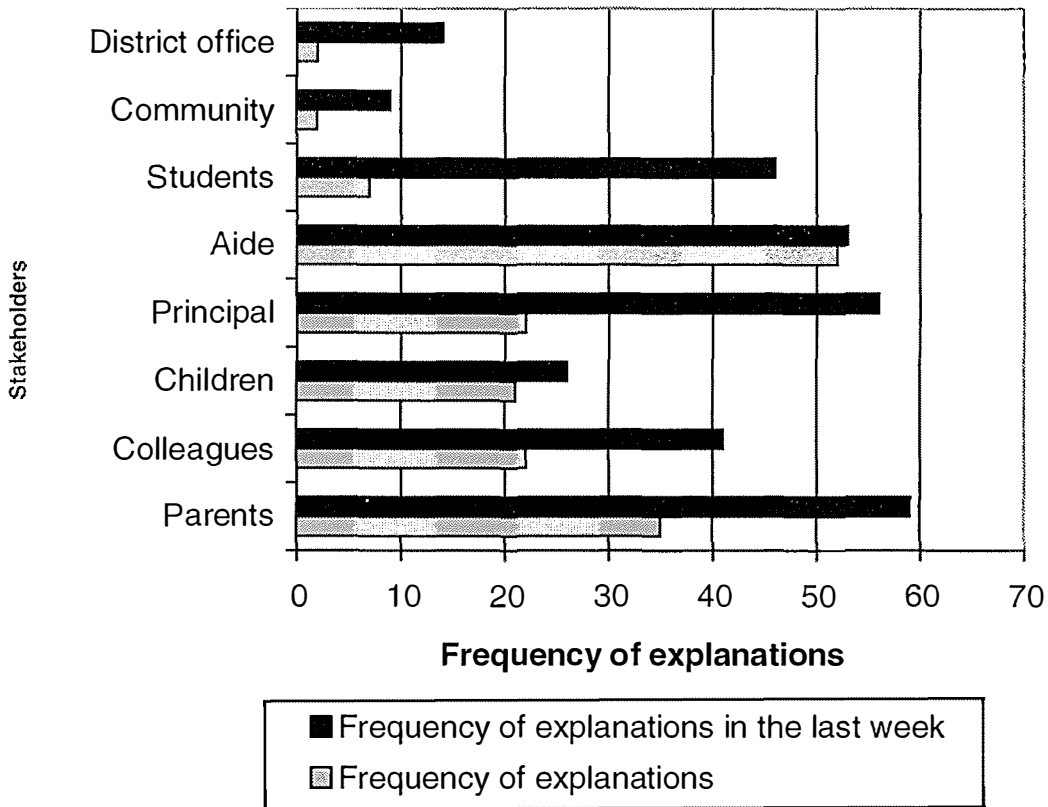


Figure 5. Frequency of explanations to stakeholders

How Do Pre-primary Teachers Rate Accountability Stakeholders?

The questionnaire presented the surveyed teachers with a list of stakeholders to rank in order of their significance in the accountability process. The list of stakeholders had been identified by Glenda and agreed upon by Susan and Jane (see Table 6). Nearly all of the questionnaire respondents (64) indicated that they were most accountable to themselves. Similarly, the large majority of the questionnaire respondents (61) identified the families of children as a significant stakeholder in the accountability process. This finding reflects the belief that successful relationships with the families of the children in the class are viewed in the early childhood literature as one of the hallmarks of a quality early childhood program (Katz, 1995; Queensland School Curriculum Council, 1998; RSA, 1994).

Table 6

Rating of accountability stakeholders (N= 67)

Stakeholders	Not Accountable	Minimally Accountable	Significantly Accountable	Missing
Self	0	3	64	0
Parents/Families	0	5	61	1
Principal	0	9	58	0
EDWA	2	11	54	0
The profession	1	15	49	2
Children	6	12	49	0
The community	4	26	35	2
Teaching assistant	7	25	35	0
Colleagues	11	26	29	1

A large majority of surveyed teachers (58) ranked the principal as a significant stakeholder followed by the teachers' employer EDWA (54). When reviewing the case study teachers' views on their accountability to their principal and EDWA it is not surprising to find that other teachers ranked them in importance around the middle of the list. Following the ranked list according to the teachers' responses, "colleagues" rated last and "the profession" rated above teachers' accountability to "children" in their class. A remarkable aspect to these responses is that accountability to the teacher assistant rated lower than the teachers' accountability to the community. Therefore, these teachers did not perceive their accountability to their assistant as Glenda did when she argued that it was her responsibility to make the pre-primary a good place in which to work.

To Whom Did Teachers Offer Explanations and Why?

A significant proportion of surveyed respondents (57) indicated that there was no need to offer explanations about their program and over half (41) replied

that they made explanations only when asked. Added to this, a quarter of teachers (16) surveyed indicated that they offered explanations and information because parents expected it. Surprisingly, only a couple (2) of the teachers, replied that they made explanations or offered information about the program in order to foster a clear understanding of their teaching philosophy. Yet, nearly all respondents (64) have parent meetings at the beginning of the year to explain their program. Further, more than three-quarters of teachers (51) surveyed indicated that they had other parent meetings during the year. In terms of accountability, it was remarkable that all but one respondent did not perceive that explaining or providing information was part of their professional responsibility. Nearly all of teachers (60) indicated they advocated for children by providing information or explanations about their program. These findings reflect the statements found in the AECA Code of Ethics (1991) where one of the statements relates to advocacy for children. However the Code of Ethics (AECA, 1991) does not include a statement calling for early childhood educators to account or provide explanations for their educational decisions. Indeed most teachers indicated that giving explanations was not part of their “professional responsibility”.

Table 7.

Reasons why explanations were given to stakeholders (N=67)

I provide information or explanations about my program:	true
To advocate for young children?	60
There is no need?	57
Only when asked?	41
Because the principal expects it?	32
Because parents expect explanations?	16
To foster a clear understanding of my philosophy?	2
As a part of my professional responsibility?	1

What Explanation Techniques Did Teachers Use?

Questions 5, 5a, 8 and 8a probed when and how explanations and information were given. In question 8 teachers ranked in order of importance the techniques they used to make explanations or give information about the program. Teachers used most of the seven techniques identified from the case studies and were fairly evenly spread in ranking them (see Table 8). Generally, the technique used most by teachers to provide information was “informal chats” followed by “notes home”. A reason why the school newsletter was not used primarily as an explanation technique may be because pre-primary teachers sent their own notes home. “Parent or carer” interviews were the least used technique and the one of the more formal techniques. “Informal chats with parents” was perhaps the most informal and the most frequently used technique both generally and in the week prior to completing the questionnaire as indicated by the majority of teachers (58).

Table 8.

Techniques used generally to provide information (N=67)

Note. 1= most used technique 7 = least used technique

Information Techniques	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Used but not Ranked	Missing
Informal chats	17	22	7	7	2	4	2	6	0
Talks to parent groups	12	6	6	8	6	13	6	6	4
Notes home	10	7	16	8	5	6	2	5	8
School newsletters	8	4	3	4	3	12	18	3	12
Written information in room	7	8	13	10	7	8	6	5	3
Information booklet	5	7	8	9	17	5	6	6	4
Parent / carer interview	3	6	7	14	18	7	3	6	3

In the week before the questionnaire was applied more than half the teachers indicated that they used written information around the room (45) and notes home (41) as techniques for providing information, which mirrored the methods most frequently used by the case study teachers. The responses showed that although teachers ranked talks to parents second to informal chats, they did not occur with the same frequency.

When constructing an understanding of the explanations or accounts of teachers' work it is important to describe the factors that may effect their educational decisions. The factors that teachers consider when constructing and implementing their educational program and the framework they use are two issues discussed in the following section.

What Issues Do Teachers Consider When Planning?

The case study teachers frequently used the term "program" to describe their planned work. Each case study teacher had a different planning approach and

considered different issues when planning. These differences were probed in the questionnaire.

Questionnaire respondents were asked to describe the major issues they considered when planning the pre-primary program. The surveyed teachers' explanations were varied not only in content but also in expression. Answers were given in a couple of words or lists containing the issues they considered, while others wrote in descriptive sentences. Teachers described factors such as "social interaction", "Year One readiness", "fun", "success", "parental requests" and "individual needs". When presented with a list of issues that had emerged from reviewing the case studies, the majority of surveyed teachers (62) cited "children's level of development" as the most important issue (issues and data presented in Table 9). The phrase "children's level of development" was not dominant in surveyed teacher's descriptive answers instead they used the phrase "children's needs". No other issue was ranked as highly as "children's level of development" with the issues of "children's previous learning" and "results of child observations" ranked lower in importance.

Table 9

Rating of factors considered important when programming (N=67)Note. 1= very important to 5= not important

Item	1 very important	2	3	4	5 least important	Missing
Children's level of development	62	3	2	0	0	0
Children's previous learning	47	10	8	2	0	0
Results of child observation	46	15	4	1	0	1
Information from child services	35	18	10	1	1	2
Home background of children	33	16	14	3	1	0
Resources available	18	30	18	0	0	1
Areas of teacher strength	18	28	17	2	2	0
EDWA regulations	17	21	22	6	1	0
Socio/economic status	15	28	16	5	2	1
What has worked before	12	29	19	5	1	1
School development plan	12	22	25	6	2	0
Number of children in the class	12	18	22	9	6	0
Themes	8	19	23	12	5	0
Age of the children	7	18	27	11	2	2
Principals/colleagues expectations	7	18	28	11	2	1
Parents expectations	6	27	28	5	1	0
Position in family of children	1	5	26	22	12	1
Gender of children	1	16	19	16	15	0

There are a number of interesting features in the ranking of these factors.

First, the five highest ranked issues could be described as developmentally appropriate responses to issues of teacher planning. These issues would build a picture of the child, their capabilities, interests and prior experiences.

Construction of such a picture is a well documented starting point for early childhood planning (DECS, 1996; EDWA, 1998). Further, it was interesting that

“results of child observations” which in the literature is regarded as an accepted early childhood issue that significantly informs planning was only ranked as very important by under three quarters (46) of surveyed teachers. Second, just over a half of the respondents (35) ranked the information given to them about children from services as a very important factor in their planning. If teachers planned with the “children’s needs” as their priority then information supplied by other child professionals could be expected to rate as an issue to be considered in their planning. Third, the school development plan was cited as a very important factor influencing teachers’ planning by a small number of teachers (12). Yet accomplishment of the school’s priorities is the hallmark of school accountability according to EDWA.

The issue of “children’s home background” was the fifth most frequently ranked answer (33). One colleague rang me after completing the questionnaire to say that the impact of the children’s home background on her planning would differ with regard to which school she was teaching in. She gave the example of her previous school in a lower socio-economic area where the home background of the children had a considerable impact on her planning. She pointed out that now teaching in an economically privileged district, she did not consider the home background of the children to significantly influence her planning. This thinking was reflected in the case studies. The resources available to the case study teachers as provided by the school community impacted on the provision of the pre-primary program. The factor of “home background” on planning had been more considered by Glenda in her approach to her clientele, whereas for Susan and Jane it was not a significant issue they mentioned.

The case study teachers said that there were no direct interventions in their programs yet Glenda's principal suggested that the pre-primary join the school's assessment and reporting program had been at his insistence. Of the teachers surveyed, nearly a third (20) replied that their principals had direct input into program decisions. Other sources of direct input acknowledged by the surveyed teachers were mentor teachers, colleagues, tandem partners and teaching assistants. Only a small number of teachers (6) in the sample mentioned the direct impact of the school development plan on their program. These answers may reflect the hit and miss implementation of the school development plan by pre-primary teachers as viewed in the case studies. Alternatively, they may reflect the notion that only a few teachers see the school development plan as a direct intervention.

What Planning Frameworks Did Teachers Use?

Teachers indicated through their accountability definitions and use of related terms that their written documentation played a part in accounting for their practice. Not only was it difficult to find evidence of a shared language of accountability it was difficult to uncover a common framework for planning. This was illustrated in the case studies and further illustrated in the questionnaire. While the three teachers used "themes" in different ways, Glenda was the only one who did not describe this as her planning framework. Unlike the other two case study teachers, she had constructed a framework that incorporated the student outcome statements with developmental domains. The type of planning framework teachers used was probed in the questionnaire.

In the questionnaire nearly all the respondents (66) affirmed that they used some type of framework for planning their work. The most frequently used

framework that the teacher's (25) cited was that of "themes", while under a quarter (15) used "domains" (see Table 10). A small number of respondents indicated the primary use of Student Outcome Statements (4) and subject areas (5). The dominance of planning using themes and domains rather than subject areas reveals a challenge for pre-primary teachers in using the new curriculum framework. The curriculum framework is a tool that is argued will increase teacher effectiveness (Curriculum Council, 1998). This challenge is highlighted when nearly a quarter of teachers (16) do not use subject areas or nearly a third (21) student outcome statements in their planning.

Table 10

Ranking of planning frameworks (N=67)

Note. 1 = the most frequently used framework

Framework	1 most used	2	3	4	5 least used	Used but not ranked	Not used
Themes	25	11	8	3	1	13	6
Domains	14	15	7	3	0	11	17
Subject areas	5	15	15	7	2	7	16
Student outcome statements	4	4	8	11	7	12	21
Projects	2	6	3	9	6	5	36

When working with Jane and Glenda they remarked that much of the incidental teaching was not noted down in their planning documents. This issue was investigated further as the case study teachers had described using their program as an accountability reference. If a teacher's written program was to be used to demonstrate accountability, to what extent do other teachers document all their work? The questionnaire revealed that just over a third of teachers (26) agreed that there was a lot of their program not represented in their written documentation. While nearly half (32) indicated that there was not much that

was not represented and a small proportion (8) replied that there was none. This means that well over half (40) of surveyed teachers indicated that there is little or no part of their program not represented in their documentation. This is an interesting finding considering the large proportion of surveyed teachers (57) that described their programs as “mediating”. A pre-primary program described as “mediating” implies shared decision making with the children and a semi-structured approach to educational delivery. One teacher with over forty years experience in the pre-primary year wrote under her answer, “It would be a brave teacher who could risk saying none.”

Teachers in the case studies and those surveyed indicated that their planning frameworks differed in structure and composition. Given these differences how do teachers explain what they do in a way that generates understandings of their programs’ quality to others? The next section describes the techniques teachers use to assure program quality and make explanations to others about the quality of their program.

How Do Stakeholders Assure Program Quality?

In Australia, the recent publication of early childhood program and curriculum documents frequently have addressed “best practice” (e.g. DECS, 1996; EDWA, 1998; Queensland School Curriculum Council, 1998). In the last decade, the theme of quality in early childhood programs has been well documented (Dahlberg, Moss & Pence, 1999; Katz, 1992,1995). Therefore, it was not surprising to find that nearly all the teachers surveyed (66) indicated they evaluated the effectiveness of their program. Teachers signaled a vast array of evaluation techniques in their written descriptive responses so it was difficult at first to cluster their descriptions around central themes. Four themes emerged

and teachers indicated that they made program evaluation assumptions in terms of one or more of the following: What worked and didn't work, evaluation of objectives or outcomes, type(s) of child assessment, techniques used and discussion with others.

Answers aligned to the first theme described program evaluation in terms of the activities or experiences the children encountered. Teachers evaluated the effectiveness of their program by the success or failure of planned activities. Teachers wrote, for example; "Write what has worked, not worked" or "Is it working for me?" and finally, "I am an experienced teacher I know what works." In the second theme, answers were based on the evaluation of objective and outcomes. It was surprising to find that there were very few responses associated with this theme. Only a small number of teachers (7) in the sample indicated they evaluated the effectiveness of their program through the appraisal of objectives and outcomes.

Lists or one or two word descriptions made up the teachers' answers in the third theme of assessment techniques. Many of the descriptions in this theme comprised of one or two words describing how teachers made effectiveness assumptions about their work. For example some teachers simply replied, "children's reactions" or "observations" while others gave detailed lists of assessment techniques such as "Anecdotal, skills acquisition and samples, folder and progress booklets" and "Observation, discussion, reflection, testing, work samples."

The fourth theme encapsulated the majority of the descriptive responses (24) that of "discussion with others". Most of the answers described discussion with one person usually noted as the assistant, parent or principal. For example:

“Through oral communication with staff” or “Talk to assistant” while others wrote, “Extensive discussions with other pre-primary teacher” and “Discussion with assistant/parents”.

A point that emerged from the evaluation of the descriptive answers to this question was that only a small proportion (11) of teachers made mention of writing down their effectiveness appraisals. Most responses showed the informality of program appraisals. Two examples follow. One teacher wrote, “Not formally (written) instead evaluate through the children’s responses, participation and level of skill development etc”. Another described her method, “Mentally, if something works or fails it tends to stick in your mind”. Even though most teachers did not describe documenting their appraisals they did make explanations about the quality of their program to others.

The case study teachers mirrored the diversity of answers given from questionnaire respondents with regard to the explanations of quality appraisals to stakeholders. Of the surveyed teachers, nearly half (29) indicated they were most likely to share the results of their program evaluations with their colleagues and the same proportion of teachers (29) sharing results with the principal. Over half of the teachers surveyed do not show or were not asked to share with the principal the results of their program evaluations. Who therefore oversees the implementation of quality pre-primary programs in metropolitan EDWA pre-primary centres?

It was interesting to note that parents, who the majority of teachers cited as the main stakeholder in the accountability process, were not equally represented in receiving information about program evaluations. Over a third of surveyed teachers (26) indicated that parents were shown or heard about the pre-primary

program evaluation. Finally, just over a quarter of teachers (18) indicated they shared the results of their program evaluation with the children in their class. However as many teachers indicated that program appraisals were made in the form of child assessment, information about program appraisal may have been represented to stakeholders in a different form. Following this theme, the next section outlines child assessment and reporting information to stakeholders.

What Techniques Do Teachers Use to Assess and Report Student Progress to Stakeholders?

In the case studies it was shown that the teachers used different strategies for collecting, using and passing on information about the children in their care. Therefore, one of the areas of questionnaire inquiry was to document the techniques teachers used in child assessment and how they reported this information. The majority of teachers surveyed (64) indicated they kept written records on children and ranked a list of assessment techniques identified from the case studies (see Table 11). Clustered together, as the most used techniques were anecdotal notes (14), work samples (13), skill checklists (13) and observations (12). First Steps, a language and literacy assessment technique based on developmental continua, was used as a primary assessment technique by only a small proportion of teachers (4). Teachers made little use of standardised and teacher made tests.

In terms of sharing child assessment information with the stakeholders, nearly three quarters (48) of questionnaire respondents indicated that parents were the most likely to hear or see about the child assessment information. About two thirds (43) of principals were shown the information while over half (39) of the teachers indicated their colleagues were shown this information.

Parents were the main recipients of assessment information about the child matching their identification by teachers in the questionnaire as the principal stakeholders (other than teachers themselves) in teacher accountability.

Interestingly, while less than half of the principals shared program evaluation information with their pre-primary teachers over half (43) are alerted to child assessment information from the pre-primary.

Table 11

Ranking of assessment techniques (N=67)

Note. 1 = most used 7 = least used

Assessment technique	1 most used	2	3	4	5	6	7 least used	Not used	Missing
Anecdotal records	14	11	6	15	4	1	0	11	5
Work samples	13	15	11	8	6	0	1	12	1
Skill checklist	13	13	13	10	4	1	0	11	2
Observations	12	13	14	10	5	0	0	10	3
First Steps	4	4	8	7	15	4	1	8	16
Standardised tests	0	0	1	1	2	7	8	2	46
Teacher made tests	0	0	1	3	6	13	4	6	34

Questionnaire responses indicated that the sample was split in sending reports home. Just under half of the respondents (31) indicated that they did send reports home at some time in the school year. Of this sample (31), nearly a quarter (13) of teachers indicated that they sent reports on direction from the principal and a small proportion (7) on direction from colleagues. One teacher wrote, “Although principal would like to get this underway – large disagreement over format as to what would be appropriate.”

The reasons supporting this sample of surveyed teachers’ opinions was best summed up by four of the questionnaire respondents when they scribed

comments in the margins of the questionnaire. One teacher when describing the report she sent home wrote and underlined, “sample collection that is non-worrying”. Another teacher wrote of the reasons she was against reporting from the pre-primary, “For the reasons of a) competition between children (pressure by parents) b) “branding” children at such a young age c) it will be a sad day when children are seen to be failing pre-primary.” The third commented, “Teachers must not be pushed into formal reporting on children at this stage.” Another comment in the margin from a fourth teacher read, “We need to have a clear framework and guidelines to report to parents about their child.”

Surveyed teachers indicated that just under a third (21) of principals sight reports or records about the children. This is noteworthy when previously it was found that nearly two thirds (43) of principals had sighted child assessment information. Over three quarters of teachers surveyed (57) indicated they send reports or records about children to Year One teachers. Of this number (57) over a third of teachers (26) indicated they sent First Steps continua yet only a small proportion (4) of the total sample had previously indicated that they used First Steps as a primary assessment technique (see Table 11). Over a quarter (18) of this sample of teachers sent work samples and under a quarter (16) indicated they sent skills checklists. When respondents were asked if they believed the information sent to the Year one teacher was useful, most teachers (49) indicated it was, which perhaps was not unremarkable but for the number of scribed comments next to this question. Teachers wrote comments such as: “I don’t think many use it!” or “Depends on the Year one teacher.” While others wrote, “If they look at it!” and “Yes, but I am told she only wants First Steps continua and will only read my information at the end of Term One” or “We did send

continua but interest not there.” One way of linking the pre-primary to the school is the application of whole school priorities through the school development plan.

How Do Pre-primary Teachers Engage with the School Development Plan?

The case study teachers all claimed to participate in school development planning however their input at staff meetings differed as did their implementation of the plan. Therefore, it was no surprise that nearly all respondents (57) affirmed that they participated in school development planning. Interestingly, nearly two thirds of surveyed teachers (40) when asked specifically, indicated that the plan affected the way they taught. However, earlier in the questionnaire when teachers ranked a list of factors that influenced their planning only a few (12), considered the school development plan an important issue (see Table 9). Even though nearly two-thirds (40) of teachers indicated it had an affect on their teaching over a third (23) of teachers surveyed were not implementing their school’s development plan.

Some surveyed teachers perceived that the school development plan was a way to formalise pre-primary programs in order to be more accountable. To highlight her concern a teacher wrote, “ I worry that the pressure to become more accountable is leading to more formalised programs, more Year One.” Another teacher described her principal as having “Little understanding of early childhood education and developmentally appropriate practice and views us as moving towards the Year One classroom and becoming more formalised now we are full time.” The teacher’s perceptions that their colleagues and more

importantly the principal did not have an understanding of early childhood education permeated the issue of pre-primary teacher performance management.

What were the Pre-primary Teachers' Experiences of Performance Management?

In the three case studies only one of the pre-primary teachers believed that she was managed properly. Glenda had worked through the four elements of the performance management process with her principal as outlined in the "Policy Framework for Performance Management" (EDWA, 1996). Further investigation through the questionnaire revealed that many teachers had the same concerns about performance management as Susan and Jane. Just over half of the teachers surveyed (36) indicated that they had undergone some type of performance management. On further inquiry, nearly a third of these teachers (22) had undergone a performance appraisal through an interview with the principal. Some (10) cited attending professional development as their performance management. A small proportion indicated appraisal through a temporary teacher return (4) and teacher portfolio assessment (2).

An issue that proved to be emotionally charged was the teachers' perception of the principal's ability to make performance management decisions on their work. Susan and Jane in the case studies voiced emphatically their opinions that their principals could not make performance management decisions on their work. In the questionnaire, about half (32) of the teachers surveyed echoed the sentiments of Jane and Susan. Interestingly, a small percentage (6) indicated "yes and no". One teacher wrote next to her yes and no response, "yes – he's my principal and no- hardly sees much or spends time here to make an informed decision. This is a huge concern of mine."

The descriptive reasons given by surveyed teachers for making the negative assumption on the principal's ability to make performance management decisions fell easily into two themes. The descriptions clustered around the first theme, depicted the principal without an early childhood educational background or experience. One teacher wrote on the questionnaire, "Accountability can only be effective when the person who you are accountable to, knows and understands what is happening both in theoretical and practical terms." Another teacher wrote, "principal feels we do a babysitting service. As long as everyone is happy, he's happy to let us do as we think best. Doesn't have any idea of pre-primary philosophy or research." This comment echoes Jane's opinions about her principal. The second theme rested on the premise that the principal showed no interests in the pre-primary program and never visited the centre. One teacher wrote, "The principal never visits the pre-primary, never speaks to the pre-primary children, never looks at the pre-primary program. Shows very little interest in what we do in general."

The reasons teachers gave when indicating that the principal could make decisions about their work were placed into four themes. The first theme was the pre-primary assessment program fed into the school's MIS or the principal was aware of the children's academic progress. One teacher's answer indicative of this theme is, "Because of the progress of children and the fact that the Principal checks records etc." The second theme related to the principal seeking advice by conferring with more knowledgeable others in the early childhood field in order to make decisions that related to the pre-primary program. The third theme described the principal as having early childhood experience. The final theme of answers described the principal as genuinely interested in the children's welfare

and the teacher's development. Related to this theme one teacher wrote, "Because he is an excellent and well informed principal and educator – aren't I lucky?"

One teacher commented on her questionnaire that she would prefer appraisal by a third party, the district superintendent. She wrote: "I miss the days when the superintendent came to your class, looked at your planning, records, teaching skills and chatted with all the kids (this was when I was in the country) I think that it's a more real way of making teachers genuine about accountability and such visits provide nice feedback that is real. I think it is too easy to write on feedback sheets to the principal that you're doing it all, so he can show them to the superintendent when he comes through."

Many pre-primary teachers did not implement the school development plan, the EDWA vehicle for accountability and had not been performance managed. Therefore, what do pre-primary teachers consider important indicators of their accountability and performance management? Teachers in the questionnaire were asked to agree or disagree on aspects that should be considered when making a performance appraisal on their work in the pre-primary (see Table 12). Most items that could be described as reflecting aspects of DAP or "best practice" in early childhood education were met with nearly all the teachers' approval.

Table 12
Items teachers consider important when making performance appraisals (N=67)

Item	Yes
The atmosphere of your centre	65
Teacher relationships with children	65
Developmental appropriateness of your program	63
Teacher relationships with families	63
Planning, preparation and delivery of your program	63
Qualities of best practice observed	62
Self evaluation of your work	61
Accomplishment of your work aims	60
Successful professional relationships	57
Records kept on children	54
Teacher explanation of decisions made	53
Success of pre-primary children in Year one	37
Accomplishment of school priorities	36

Three points should be made about the ranking of these items. First, that the top ranking item was “atmosphere of the classroom”. This would be a difficult item for which to account, as the perception of atmosphere would be influenced by the viewer’s pedagogy, experience and the context of the setting. Second, the strong ranking of the relationships with the child and their parents reinforces the importance that pre-primary teachers place on linking with families. This was reflected in the placement of families as one of the primary accountability stakeholders. Third, the strong influence of DAP can be seen in the third item ranked near the top of the table. Yet, the “accomplishment of the school priorities” for which they are currently appraised was seen as an inappropriate indicator. The two items that indicated a split in the sample were “accomplishment of the school priorities” and “success of the children in Year

One.” Indeed the majority of teachers throughout the investigation did not discuss their accountability in terms of accomplishment of school priorities. This is a concern when school and teacher accountability in EDWA schools is tied to the accomplishment of school determined priorities. Another issue of concern was the lower ranking of the item describing teachers making explanations for their decisions, when teachers in the case studies and the definitions of accountability in the survey described accountability in terms of explanations to stakeholders.

In the survey section on performance management some teachers wrote of their concern about who would appraise a teacher’s accountability. They described the difficulty of a uniform review. As one teacher pointed out in the questionnaire, “I feel assessment on performance is very subjective and would vary from teacher to teacher and school to school. In year levels we have tests to compare over the class, state and nation.” Others described their uneasiness of being held accountable for an educational program that others at the school did not value or understand. One teacher wrote, “I think one of the most important issues is our credibility with other teachers and the principal. Our work doesn’t appear to be either understood or valued by other staff”. Another teacher wrote, “There has to be a better understanding of what we are achieving and how we are achieving it by our colleagues and administration staff...”. Further concerns rested on what form the accountability review would take.

How Would An Accountability Review Be Structured?

Some teachers in the questionnaire had concerns about the structure of an accountability review, arguing that the importance of developmental learning and the context of the pre-primary needed to be shown. A point made by a few

teachers in the questionnaire related to the purpose of accountability measures. The teachers offered differing opinions on the uniformity of teacher accountability measures. One teacher wrote “An across the board formula for assessing/addressing accountability in the pre-primary.” In contrast, another teacher wrote, “I believe accountability is an individual thing ...discussed between the principal and the teacher... not handed down from EDWA in a standardised form.” Accountability measures using the words of two surveyed teachers needed to show “the value of our efforts” as well as the “importance of developmental learning and the unique situation of the pre-primary children.” Added to the complexity of how accountability would be demonstrated, one teacher wrote of the difficulty in documenting the area of social – emotional development. She wrote, “Social growth is often difficult to program and monitor into little boxes. The most valuable things we do are often the most difficult to monitor.”

Linked to the structure were the concerns from two of the surveyed teachers as to the purpose of the accountability measures. They argued that accountability measures should not be a regurgitation of information about the pre-primary to the principal instead they described accountability information being used purposefully for the benefit of the program. This argument was illustrated by one teacher’s comment when she wrote, “I consider accountability important as long as its not used for taking information back to the principal – rather it would or should be used information or required information and stored for a reason.”

Conclusion

The main contribution of this chapter was the identification and discussion of issues that arose from the questionnaire. These issues illustrated the difficulties pre-primary teachers encounter when attempting to frame their accountability in the pre-primary context and connect with system accountability processes. These findings reinforce and extend those found in the three case studies.

In the case studies, the teacher's definitions of accountability varied but there were common themes. The variation in definition and frequency of the terms the teachers used in the case studies was matched in the survey. Like Jane and Susan, most of the surveyed teachers used the word "responsibility" when referring to their accountability but it was "responsibility" without the need for explicit justification. Tied to the survey definition of accountability was the notion of giving explanations for professional decisions and practice. The method of explanation most used by surveyed teachers was informal conversations with parents and again this tool was common in the case studies. In addition, the survey highlighted the case studies findings that the parents were the stakeholders most likely to receive explanations about the program.

The ranking of the stakeholders cemented the importance of parents as the primary stakeholder as shown in the case studies. The ranking by surveyed teachers of the parents as a primary accountability stakeholder reflects the strong connections that pre-primary teachers have with families. Surveyed teachers ranked EDWA, the teachers' employer fourth in a list of nine stakeholders, which reveals a gap between the teacher and the education system. This gap was

illustrated in the case studies of Jane and Susan who were isolated in different ways from the school and both deemed the principal unable to make assessments of their programs. In the survey, the principal was ranked before EDWA and after families but the survey revealed that many teachers did not have confidence in the principal as manager or educational leader in the pre-primary. For Jane, the principal was not a stakeholder as he did not spend time in her classroom and she questioned his ability to view her work meaningfully because of his lack of early childhood experience. Jane's perceptions were echoed in the surveys. As reported, one respondent wrote, "my principal...hardly sees much or spends time here to make an informed decision." If most teachers in the case studies and surveys do not view the principal as a competent manager and no review of their work is undertaken, who is ensuring effective programs are in place?

A large proportion of the surveyed teachers mirrored Susan and Jane's casual implementation of the school development plan, which raises questions about pre-primary teacher accountability within the school. The teachers, as EDWA employees, were required to implement the plan but many teachers, although involved in planning the school development plan, indicated it was not a prime consideration in their planning. Aspects of early childhood development and prior learning were the highest ranked factors teachers considered when planning.

One of the perceived pressures of accountability indicated by the surveyed teachers was the push to formalise the pre-primary program and reporting procedures. Surveyed teachers were split over sending written reports home to parents. They also reported disagreements with principals as to the format and reporting structure. In the case studies, Glenda's principal had spoken of his

surprise at the pre-primary teachers not using school reporting formats. Susan had described her resignation from a previous position over formal reporting procedures being forced on the pre-primary and was most concerned about this trend. The case studies and survey results revealed that reporting in the pre-primary year is an area of concern for teachers. Many teachers such as Jane and Susan want reporting formats to retain the developmental pedagogy they use in their planning and teaching, and Susan believed this was threatened by institutional influences brought about by working in a whole school context. Assistance may be needed in the area of reporting, as the implementation of the curriculum framework may change how teachers report children's progress. Similarly, the curriculum framework may change the planning frameworks teachers use. The survey revealed that teachers used a range of theme and domain based planning frameworks, which is inconsistent with the curriculum framework. Moreover, as the case studies of Jane and Susan have shown the wide variation among teachers' planning frameworks means the planning documents are relatively weak accountability tools.

CHAPTER 10

THE FOCUS GROUPS

Introduction

This chapter is the last link in the chain of evidence addressing pre-primary teacher accountability. It extends and confirms the conclusions drawn from the case studies and questionnaires, by reporting the view of 145 pre-primary teachers in a series of focus groups. The focus groups were used to refine the accountability framework that had been constructed using findings from the case studies, survey and review of scholarly texts. This chapter reports and discusses the issues that teachers raised when viewing the accountability framework, completing a member check and in general discussions.

The Focus Groups

The intent of the focus groups was to verify survey results, strengthen the accountability framework and to collect teacher's accountability stories and experiences. A total of 145 pre-primary teachers, 6 principals and 4 early childhood curriculum advisors participated in the seven focus groups that covered four EDWA metropolitan regions. The EDWA District Officers determined the size of the focus groups and although some groups had large numbers, the teachers typically worked in small groups to maximise discussion opportunities. The sizes of the groups and the themes of discussions varied (see Table 5, Chapter 4).

The themes of discussion in the focus groups generally concentrated on issues related to the section of the framework introduced to the group (see Table 5, Chapter 4). The teachers in the focus groups were asked to complete three

written tasks (see Appendix 7 for tasks). The teachers were asked to review a section of the framework, by writing on the framework section any issues or problems with points included or the language used. The teachers were then asked to circle the two most appropriate information gathering techniques for each point. Finally, teachers were asked to complete a member check to verify the main findings of the survey. At the completion of the individual tasks, teachers were asked to join a small group and reach consensus on which was the most important point in the section they viewed. This debate was used as a starting off point for whole group discussion. Access to two focus groups predicated the presence of a small number of principals. In these focus groups the principals were asked to read the framework and answer a number of written questions (see Appendix 7 for questions). Following this, the principals joined the group for general discussion, which was facilitated by the moderator.

The quantitative data were analysed using SPSS Version 7.5 and the stories, comments and written descriptions made by teachers were clustered into themes where notes of similarities and differences were made. The four main themes that emerged from analysis of both the numerical and descriptive data from the focus groups are used to organise the discussion that follows. In each section the issues that arose are discussed and where possible teacher's voices were used to highlight teachers' perspectives and experiences of accountability.

The Language of Accountability and Practice

In the small group discussion task the teachers were asked to persuade the group to reach a consensus on the most important point in the section of the framework they were reviewing. Unsurprisingly, given the results of the case studies and questionnaires it was apparent that teachers used differing terms for

accountability. For example, when asked the reasons for the lack of a shared definition, one teacher in Brown, Focus Groups 1 (see Table 5, Chapter 4 for focus group demographics), said that the lack of a common language was a result of the previous preschool system as there was “no formal accountability before.”

Not only did the language of accountability differ but so did the interpretations of common terms of early childhood practice. In most sessions, the small group discussions on the framework were animated but consensus on one main point was reached only once in Black Focus Group 1. It was during these small group discussions that teachers found they did not agree with each other’s interpretations of common terms. One of the common terms of practice that was interpreted differently was “developmentally appropriate practice”. In Brown, Focus Group 3 after a discussion that touched on this term one teacher said, “It was obvious that we had different ideas and not really a shared language.” This reflects the case study of Susan, who espoused Vygotskian pedagogy but had a quite individual interpretation of these ideas and the context in which she worked influenced this theory in practice.

The survey had shown the varied language of accountability and differences in principal and pre-primary teacher perceptions of accountability. The findings of the member check used in the focus groups reinforced this view. Over two-thirds of the teachers agreed (43) or were unsure (36) that there was a mismatch between their thoughts on accountability and what the school expected them to demonstrate. This led to probing the perceptions of accountability as held by teachers and principals in Red Focus Group 1. From discussion it was evident that teachers and principals did not share the same perceptions of accountability.

Principals in Red Focus Group 1 argued that performance management was different from accountability and the ensuing discussion showed that teachers believed it was an integral part of the accountability process. Indeed EDWA (1996) in the “Policy Framework for Performance Management” state that “Performance management is a means of demonstrating accountability and provides good opportunities for growth and development” (p.i). It would appear that teachers and principals have taken a position that recognises only one aspect of the definition. Teachers also spoke of principals not understanding or valuing early childhood terms. In the Brown, Focus Group 3, one teacher spoke of the mismatch of language between her principal and herself. She said that she used terms associated with early childhood domains when describing her planning and “the principal thought it was a bit lacking”.

The questionnaire results had shown that teachers used their explanations to stakeholders as a form of their accountability. This finding led to probing explanations as a form of accountability and this issue is discussed in the following section.

Explanations as a Form of Accountability

The teachers in the survey indicated that parents were the main recipients of explanations and the most used technique to provide information was “informal chats”. Probing these results further in the focus groups, a member check item asked teachers to confirm if they thought informal chats with parents were their main form of accountability. The member check revealed (see Appendix 9) that almost half (63) thought that talking to parents was their main form of accountability but conversely, nearly as many teachers (61) disagreed with this notion. One teacher in Black, Focus Group 1, when explaining her

reasons for disagreeing with this finding, said, “How could people put accountability in chats with parents? Parents wouldn’t know what they were looking at?” Another teacher in Black, Focus Group 2 disagreed that accountability could take place in an informal situation. She said, “informal chats are not a form of accountability, formal interviews are.”

The teachers in Brown, Focus Group 3 were asked why they thought the surveyed teachers had indicated that parents were the major recipients of explanations. A few teachers in this group offered reasons for this. One said that parents were “in the room daily, they asked and you said.” Another teacher in the same group proposed that “you just explained what was going on because you were there”.

Rating of Stakeholders

In the survey, teachers had ranked the accountability stakeholders (see Chapter 9, Table 6) and nearly all of them (64) ranked themselves first. This response was investigated in the focus groups, firstly in the member check that sought to validate conclusions drawn from the survey data and secondly through discussion. Answers to an item in the member check revealed that about two thirds of the teachers (91) in the focus groups believed they were most accountable to themselves (see Appendix 9). Commenting on the survey results, one teacher in Brown, Focus Group 3 explained this phenomenon when she said, “We think we know more about early childhood education and a child’s learning so we see ourselves as the professionals... because we perceive others around us don’t understand.” However, another teacher in Red, Focus Group 1 proposed that teachers answered in this way because, “basically because we have to live with ourselves, have to be happy with ourselves.”

Over two-thirds of the focus group teachers (106) ranked the parents as the most significant stakeholders second to themselves. When asked to explain why they thought surveyed teachers had ranked the parents as the second highest stakeholders, teachers in Red, Focus Group 1 argued it was, “a carry over from the preschool days” when teachers and parent committees oversaw the running of the centre. Another teacher in Black, Focus Group 1 proffered the view that “we are more accountable to the parents because they are the guardians of the child.” It was interesting to note that teachers in both focus groups in the Black district when discussing the items in the member check spoke of being surprised that children were not the first ranked stakeholders. When it was related that the child was ranked behind the principal then EDWA and was on the same ranking as accountability to the profession there was laughter and murmurs of disbelief. This item was not challenged in any other focus groups. The focus on the child was reinforced in the types of issues teachers considered when planning.

Planning Considerations

The survey showed that “the child’s level of development” was the pivotal issue teachers considered when planning. This finding was reinforced through the member check when all but two of the focus group teachers (132) indicated that “the child’s level of development” was their main consideration for planning. The point that the majority of teachers indicated as most important in the section on Child Development and Learning centred on the use of play in the program (see Table 13). Nevertheless, in the framework section titled Early Childhood Curriculum teachers were divided between two items with a developmental emphasis (see Table 13). These items, were item 2, “An inclusive curriculum caters for all children and all domains” and item 4,

“Teacher’s design and implement developmentally appropriate experiences within and across disciplines built on their knowledge of the child’s development, previous learning and experiences.”

Table 13

Most frequently selected item for each section of the framework

Framework Section	Item	Most accepted individual response
Child Development and Learning N=22	2. Play allows children to engage with materials, the environment and other people which is central to effective early learning.	7
Early Childhood Curriculum N=18	2. An inclusive curriculum caters for all children and all domains – cognitive, social-emotional, physical and aesthetic.	6
	3. Teacher’s design and implement developmentally appropriate experiences within and across disciplines built on their knowledge of the child’s development, previous learning and experiences.	6
Teaching for Meaningful Learning N=18	1. Teachers create a supportive learning environment (Indoors and Outdoors) where children can explore, take intellectual risks and discuss different approaches, responses and understandings of tasks and activities.	11
Assessment and Reporting N=18	1. Assessment is authentic, ongoing , suited to age group and celebrates student progress.	7
The Whole School Context N=20	4. Teachers are active team members of a coordinated approach to teaching and learning in the early years so that transition and continuity, monitoring progress and intervention are ongoing.	14
Educational Partnerships N=18	5. Teachers communicate and work effectively with parents and families to inform and enhance support for children’s learning.	9
Building Professional Relationships N=18	3. Teachers are open to new ideas and continually refine practices that reinforce their creativity, stimulate their personal growth and enhance their professionalism.	11

The survey showed the range of issues that teachers take into account when planning. How though, do teachers know that planning has been effective and how do they ensure the quality of the program? The answers in the survey to such questions showed the informal nature of teacher's evaluations of their own performance and that of the program. For assurances of quality work many teachers described relying on verbal feedback from parents or discussions with others such as their assistant. Further clarification from practising teachers on the issue of quality assurance was sought in some focus groups and the findings are presented in the next section.

Program Quality

The issue of quality assurance was raised at the focus groups where principals were present in order to get some principal's perspectives and teachers' views. The principals were asked how they made quality assurance decisions about the pre-primary program at their school. One principal in Green, Focus Group 1 remarked that he knew that the pre-primary program was of high quality because "the children were happy". In this same group, the teachers agreed that the happiness of the children was not a "true quality" program indicator. Another principal in Green, Focus Group 1 said that the student outcome statements were a useful tool in assessing quality in the pre-primary. In a show of hands in this group, only one teacher was presently using the outcome statements, which were still in draft form at the time of this meeting. In Red, Focus Group 1, principals reached a consensus that principals had to trust teachers to make correct educational decisions. This last opinion raises questions about who ensures that effective pre-primary programs are in place.

One way of viewing a successful program would be through reporting child progress and development, which is discussed in the next section.

Reporting to Stakeholders

Reporting formally on the information collected about the progress of pre-primary children is a contentious issue in the field. The three case study teachers had different notions on the structure and frequency of written reports. These notions were reflected in the survey where teachers noted their alarm at using formal reporting structures. A teacher in Brown, Focus Group 3 when reviewing the “Assessment and Reporting” section of the framework, voiced a strong opinion about the trend of formal reporting in the pre-primary and other teachers in the group echoed their agreement.

The item selected as most important by most of the focus group teachers who reviewed the “Assessment and Reporting” section of the framework was, “Assessment is authentic, ongoing, suited to age group and celebrates student progress” (see Table 13). It was apparent from the survey and comments in the focus groups that some principals and teachers disagreed on reporting format and content. It may be that principals have a different view as to what constitutes relevant information from assessment and what should be included in a report. This point was highlighted when a focus group teacher described the difference of opinion between herself and the principal on what was relevant assessment information. She wrote on her member check, “Not sure of principal’s expectations of pre-primary school’s MIS collection of data does not make much reference to pre-primary and sometimes different to what I consider important in data collection.” Differences of opinion between teachers and their principals

became apparent when discussing the school development plan and pre-primary teacher accountability.

Pre-primary Teacher Accountability and the School Development Plan

The survey found that teachers rarely implemented the school development plan, but why was this so? As reported previously, an item in the member check sought to clarify whether there was a mismatch between the pre-primary teachers' thoughts about accountability and what the school expected them to demonstrate. Teachers in the focus groups were fairly split between agreeing (43) there was a mismatch, disagreeing (52) and being unsure about this question (36). However, these figures illustrate that over two thirds of teachers are unsure or agree that they do not know what the school expects of them in terms of demonstrating their accountability.

Teachers in the last focus group were asked to account for the high percentage of teachers indicating they were unsure about this question. One teacher said that she was unsure because accountability had not been discussed with the principal. There were a number of scribed comments on the member check next to this item that echoed the same sentiments. One teacher wrote, "Unsure – because the exact expectations are not clear. I want them set out in black and white." Another wrote, "Unsure – school development days on this topic never mention K (kindergarten) and P (pre-primary)."

Issues of school development planning arose in Black, Focus Group 5 while the teachers reviewed the sections of the framework entitled "Whole School Context" and "Educational Partnerships". In this group a pre-primary colleague described her experience implementing the school development plan. One of the school's priorities was the school's discipline policy and the school

staff had drafted a discipline policy that she deemed inappropriate for young children. She was concerned that she would have to implement this inappropriate school priority both in and out of her classroom, as the pre-primary children used the school playground at recess and lunch times. This spurred her to present to the staff at the next planning meeting the reasons why the punishments for misdemeanors were inappropriate. She spoke of her nervousness, the research she did to put facts and theories to the staff not early childhood rhetoric and of her belief that as part of the school staff she needed to feel comfortable when implementing school policy. Her presentation sparked discussion and at the end of the meeting the policy was changed for children in the junior primary years. From this anecdote, discussion about implementing the school development plan ensued and teachers confided that they were not vocal at school development meetings and did not implement priorities they saw as inappropriate for pre-primary children. However, a few teachers in this group argued that the pre-primary teacher should not take part in school development planning. One teacher summed up this argument by writing on the framework section of Educational Partnerships: “To become involved in these activities would divert time from our main focus.” This was a sentiment echoed in the questionnaire where a few teachers expressed their concern with the time taken implementing accountability measures, which diverted them from spending time from interacting with children. One teacher wrote, “It can be extremely time consuming when time could be spent with the children more.” Yet, in the section of the framework titled “The Whole School Context” a large majority of teachers indicated that the most important item was number 4. This item read, “Teachers are active team members of a coordinated approach to teaching and

learning in the early years so that transition and continuity, monitoring progress and intervention are ongoing” (see Table 13). Many pre-primary teachers were comfortable to be seen as a team player on the staff, affirmed by the point selected as most important in the Whole School section of the framework. However, they were not comfortable to be a team player when issues of performance management were discussed, as many urged that for a number of reasons the principal was ill equipped to make appraisals of their work.

Performance Management

Performance management was an issue concerning the case study teachers and most of the pre-primary teachers consulted in the questionnaire and focus group stages of this inquiry on accountability. One of their most pressing concerns was the role of the principal as performance manager.

The Principal as Performance Manager

The issue of principal as “performance manager” was addressed during the focus groups as surveyed teachers had indicated their concern in this area. Just over three quarters (100) of the teachers that participated in the focus groups agreed that the principal had to be more involved in the pre-primary program in order to make performance management decisions (see Appendix 9). However, in discussions on this topic one teacher in Brown, Focus Group 1, said that she had responded by disagreeing to this statement because, “It wouldn’t matter how involved he was, he still wouldn’t know what he is looking at.” Final debate of this topic rested on the focus groups teachers’ perceptions that the principal did not want to be involved in the pre-primary, with a minority suggesting that the principal’s involvement was based on the principal’s personality. One teacher

summed up the common opinion across the groups when she said, “principals need to be inserviced for early childhood education especially for performance management.” In Black, Focus Group 2, the discussion became quite heated about principals’ lack of expertise in the early childhood area and the district curriculum officer suggested that teachers needed to initiate contact with principals. She went further to suggest that the pre-primary teachers could make small presentations at staff meetings about the importance of the work of the pre-primary teacher. The accountability framework could be used as a tool for the purpose of making presentations to staff and discussion of the teachers and principal’s views about the framework follow.

The Accountability Framework

The focus groups served three main purposes. First, to confirm and provide descriptive reasons for the major findings of the survey. Second, to add teacher’s stories and experiences of accountability issues. Finally, the focus group teachers worked to strengthen and enrich the accountability framework. A large number of teachers in the focus groups commented that this framework would be an empowering and useful tool. They were encouraged that the framework would assist them in making connections with the school principal and primary staff when talking about their work.

The teachers on the whole agreed with the items in each section. Across the focus groups, 10 teachers out of 145 disagreed with particular items in the sections. Surprisingly, the item that drew the most dissension was in the first section on Child Development and Learning. Five teachers totally rejected item 6 that said, “Teachers are articulate in stating their evolving educational philosophy, knowledge of child development and early learning principles”(see

Table 14). The reasons three teachers gave focussed on the notion that articulation of their philosophy was not relevant to the section of Child Development and Learning where the child was the focus.

Table 14

Items rejected in the framework

Framework Section	Item Rejected	Number of teachers rejecting item
Child Development and Learning N=22	2. Positive attitudes to learning, optimism, self esteem and a sense of personal identity need to be fostered.	1
	6. Teachers are articulate in stating their evolving educational philosophy, knowledge of child development and early learning principles.	5
Early Childhood Curriculum N=18	0 items rejected	0
Teaching for Meaningful Learning N=18	No items rejected	0
Assessment and Reporting N=18	1. Assessment is authentic, ongoing, suited to age group and celebrates student progress	1
	7. Reporting in the pre-primary classroom reflects the developmental nature of young children's learning	1
The Whole School Context N=20	No items rejected	0
Educational Partnerships N=18	2. Teachers incorporate community needs in the program.	1
Building Professional Responsibility N=18	2. Teachers evaluate results and seek input from a variety of sources.	1

For each section, teachers were asked to select two artifact collection methods that would be the most informative and easy to use (see Appendix 10 for refined framework). The teachers all went about this task diligently and at times found ideas they wanted to take back to their classrooms. The teacher in Brown, Focus Group 3 (reported previously) that mentioned the principal thinking her planning in domains was a “bit lacking” was excited to find a technique to highlight the careful thought that went into her planning. The teachers voiced positive opinions about the framework as the artifact collection techniques focussed on easily accessible information. However, some of the principals said they thought it would be too time consuming for teachers to use. One principal wrote, “This would be too heavy a workload for teachers.” Others thought the framework a great idea for performance management conversations. A principal wrote, “It would give the teacher an opportunity to present a portfolio where we both have common understandings.” But another principal wrote of little time to give to such conversations, he wrote, “Time for such discussions is limited...which is always an issue”. The principals were divided on their opinion of the usefulness of the framework and the following comment offers a reason for this. One of the principals thought it would be a good supplementary tool as they were bound to implement the school development plan that oversaw accountability and played a role in the performance management of all teachers.

Teachers from time to time throughout the focus groups raised the issue of context. The importance of context was a prominent discussion point in Black, Focus Group 5. Teachers in this group reviewed the sections, “Whole School

Context” and “Educational Partnerships”. The teachers considered that the context in which the pre-primary was set would make some of the items in these sections difficult to achieve. For example, teachers in one discussion group said it would be difficult to achieve some items in “Educational Partnerships” in a pre-primary centre “where you don’t see the parents at all”. Teachers in another discussion group agreed, that achieving items in “The Whole School Context” was contextually based as it depended on relationships with staff and the principal.

Conclusion

The main contribution of this chapter was the identification and discussion of issues that arose and were investigated throughout the focus groups. There were a number of issues exposed from the survey that were investigated and clarified using a member check, framework tasks and group discussions. These issues when placed together illustrate the difficulties pre-primary teachers encounter when attempting to frame their accountability and make useful contributions to the accountability debate in the whole school context.

One issue was the divergent nature of the language of accountability and common practice. Different descriptors and personal constructions of the notion of accountability were factors that impeded a shared language of accountability. The focus group discussions at times revealed a lack of a shared language of practice between pre-primary teachers. Added to a lack of shared language, is a gap of meaning between principals and pre-primary teacher’s use, and interpretation of terms such as accountability. The lack of a shared language of accountability and practice between teachers and their line managers, the

principal, illuminated the problem of pre-primary teachers contributing meaningfully to the accountability debate.

Another issue highlighted in this chapter was the high rating the pre-primary teachers gave themselves as the primary accountability stakeholder. The notion that the teachers considered themselves the most knowledgeable and therefore were most accountable to themselves was an explanation put forward by one teacher. The focus groups also confirmed that parents were rated highly as stakeholders. In the corporate vision of school accountability, principals may place themselves as the primary stakeholder in a teacher's accountability. Preprimary teachers however placed parents as the second major stakeholder exemplifying the strong link between pre-primary teachers and the families of children they taught.

The focus group teachers confirmed that the influence of developmental early childhood pedagogy was strong. They overwhelmingly confirmed that the "child's level of development" was the most influential issue they considered in their planning. This could be an indication of the pervading influence of the DAP philosophy. The adherence to the developmental pedagogy may account for the lack of uniform implementation of school priorities that do not reinforce a developmental focus.

The school development plan has not assisted pre-primary teachers in making connections with the school. Many teachers spoke of not implementing priorities they viewed as inappropriate while others thought such tasks took their time away from the children. In terms of the school development plan as an accountability vehicle for teachers, many pre-primary teachers did not participate. A large proportion, that was two-thirds of the teachers, indicated

they were unsure or had differences of opinion with the school about their accountability.

The issue of principal as performance manager was hotly debated in many groups. The member check confirmed the survey teachers' view that the principal had to be more involved in the pre-primary program in order to make performance management decisions. Focus group teachers were of the opinion that principals needed professional development and support from EDWA to improve their early childhood pedagogy and knowledge of pre-primary practice.

Another major discussion point for teachers was reporting on children's progress in the pre-primary. Aspects in this discussion centred on reporting format and the question of reporting on academic achievement or child development. In the future, the issue of reporting child progress, in terms of outcome based learning in learning areas will serve to highlight these differences of opinion.

On the whole, the teachers expressed an interest in the accountability framework as a tool that could assist in connections with the school. However, the small group of principals expressed their reservations, as the school development plan was the articulated vehicle that all teachers were bound to use. Most items in the sections met with teacher's approval and there were no recommendations for any term or language changes. The teachers expressed the view that the information gathering techniques were appropriate and accessible.

The next chapter presents a discussion of the findings of the study and proposes recommendations and further lines of inquiry.

CHAPTER 11

DISCUSSION

Introduction

This study began with impatience for change: impatience, because EDWA pre-primary teachers to date had not been able to articulate and demonstrate their accountability in early childhood terms within the government school system. Pre-primary teacher accountability at the school and policy levels did not take into consideration the specialist nature of early childhood teaching. This study uncovered a number of issues that need resolution in order for pre-primary teachers to articulate their accountability in ways others will value and understand. Pre-primary teachers employed in the government system are asked to implement outcome based learning and construct programs based on a mandated curriculum framework. Without specific guidelines to assist pre-primary teachers to articulate their practices the differences between the role of the pre-primary and the school years may disappear. Undifferentiated, pre-primary programs may come to look like those found in the state government primary schools.

The first chapter of this study examined the issues that have made accountability in the pre-primary year a topical subject. For example, the globalisation and marketisation of education, the focus on accountability at all levels and the increased scrutiny of the early years of school are factors examined. The conclusion of the first chapter took the form of a statement of aims and research questions. A review of literature addressing themes such as accountability, early childhood curriculum and quality practice followed in Chapter 2. Chapter 3

presented the conceptual framework, based on an ecological approach using and adapting Harms and Clifford's model (1993). This approach allowed an examination of factors that influenced pre-primary teacher accountability through concentric layers of interacting systems. The methodological underpinnings of the research and details of the steps taken were outlined in chapter 4. Chapters 5, 6, 7 and 8 described and analysed themes taken from the three case studies. Chapter 9 provided an analysis of the questionnaire and Chapter 10 developed the focus group data. Chapter 11, the final chapter in the thesis, provides a summary of the main findings and its implications for practice.

Pre-primary Teacher Accountability

The trajectory of this study went “bottom up” examining through an ecological lens what pre-primary teachers know and do about accountability. The strength of this approach is that it begins with practitioners' present understandings. The ecological approach of this study also takes into account the radiating influences of the macrosystem (the outer ring of the systems that includes the culture and sub-culture) through the exosystem (where government is situated) to the mesosystem (the wider school community) and finally, the microsystem (the innermost system, where the teacher constructs and experiences everyday reality). Viewing accountability through this lens shows that what teachers working in the microsystem know and do about accountability is shaped by influences from all systems. Further, close examination of the microsystem has found wide variations of teacher accountability.

The Macrosystem and the Exosystem

In the macrosystem, the push for economic globalisation and the increased marketisation of education have influenced the exosystem. The ideology of the market has infiltrated policy formation at all levels of government (Woodrow & Brennan, 1999; Ball, 1994). Increased marketisation of the education sector, has significantly influenced the formation of accountability policies instigated at the federal and state levels. Such policies have highlighted greater school and individual accountability.

State government education policies, such as school development planning, are constructed and disseminated from the exosystem. However, it is in the meso and microsystems that policies such as these are enacted. This study shows that teachers operating in the microsystem did not share the same views as the policy makers within the exosystem, or at times with their line managers, the principals operating in the mesosystem. Teachers in the microsystem did not use or align their definition of accountability to the definition found in policy documents. This study found that the EDWA definition is used at the policy level and at times in the school but not in the pre-primary. The difference was revealed in the identification and rating of accountability stakeholders who are listed in the EDWA definition. EDWA identifies itself, the principal and the teachers' colleagues as the accountability stakeholders. However, this study found that the pre-primary teachers ranked the stakeholders differently, rating themselves and the parents as principal stakeholders. Even though the pre-primary is expected to be embraced in a whole school context, the accountability policies of the state government did not take into account the teachers' views.

This was not the only policy definition revealed to differ between the systems. The EDWA definition of performance management was reviewed because it became apparent in the focus groups that pre-primary teachers believed performance management was linked to their accountability. However principals in these groups did not share their views. Closer investigation of the EDWA definition of performance management reveals a combination of both the bureaucratic and professional aspects of accountability identified in Kogan and Halstead's models (Macpherson, 1998, see Chapter 2). This leads to conflicts within the EDWA model of performance management and illustrates the confusion shown by principals and teachers in the focus groups when discussing the issue of performance management and accountability. Policy definitions constructed within the exosystem should encompass the knowledge base of those implementing policies through the systems. In addition, a definition of performance management that did not blur professional and bureaucratic images of accountability would be helpful in achieving EDWA's institutional goals.

The Mesosystem

The mesosystem in this study was the ring encompassing the school community. Within the state government school communities EDWA would expect a degree of uniformity in the implementation of its policies, but this study found this was not the case. This study reveals that the contextual influences found within the mesosystem influenced the degree of fidelity in implementation of EDWA policy.

The Principal

The case studies, survey responses and focus group discussions revealed the role of the principal to be pivotal in what pre-primary teachers knew and demonstrated about their accountability. There are two elements to the principal's leadership role that influenced pre-primary teacher accountability. The first is the role of the principal as accountability leader and the second is the role the principal played in linking the pre-primary to the rest of the school. The EDWA bureaucracy directs teachers to account for their work by the implementation of the school development plan under the direction of the principal. The school development plan was not uniformly implemented which explained differences in teacher accountability knowledge and actions. Over two-thirds of the focus group teachers were unsure or did not know what was expected of them in regard to their accountability. One teacher wrote on her member check "Unsure because the exact expectations are unclear. I want them set out in black and white." Compounding the accountability "haze" pre-primary teachers faced was the differences between teachers and their employer's definitions of accountability and performance management as found in focus group discussions.

The case studies began the illumination of the isolation from the school many pre-primary teachers felt and the survey responses and focus groups discussions added to this picture. For many pre-primary teachers links to the school had not been forged or professional relationships with their principals cemented. In the case studies both Jane and Susan had different links to their respective schools. For Susan, the accountability roles between herself and her principal were still being negotiated, as Susan did not see the value in implementing the school priorities. She

explained that as many of the children in her class did not go onto the school, the school priorities were not always relevant. Jane had tried to forge links with the school but the principal called himself the “complaints department” and appeared to be content to let Jane be the instigator of issues concerning the pre-primary. Moreover, discussions in focus groups revealed that pre-primary teachers believed differences in pedagogy and lack of early childhood experience hampered the principal valuing the work done in the pre-primary. However, the principal has a fundamental role to play in teacher development and the effectiveness of the school as a community of learners (Rosenholtz, 1991). According to Rosenholtz (1991) the principal needs to create a sense of certainty so that teachers see themselves as knowledgeable, belonging to a technical organisation and having their efforts valued. Similarly, Fullan & Steigelbauer (1991) describe the role of the principal as vital, arguing that the principal is “probably the most potential source of help or hindrance to the teacher is the school principal” (p.143).

Quality Improvement Methods

Throughout this study it became apparent that stakeholders did not seek assurances of program quality from teachers. Who therefore in the system assures the quality of the pre-primary program? As the manager of the educational quality of school programs, responsibility could end with the district director. The role the principal played as line manager of quality program implementation in the pre-primary was in dispute. EDWA cannot lay claim to knowing because in the line management that connects the bureaucracy to the school, the principal in most cases must be viewed as a weak link to the pre-primary classroom. The EDWA process of school and teacher accountability is to ask teachers to report on the accomplishment

of the school priorities. Yet the school development plan was inconsistently implemented in most pre-primaries and cannot be held as a measure of pre-primary program effectiveness. Presented in the questionnaire was a list of 12 items that teachers considered important when making performance appraisals.

“Accomplishment of the school priorities” rated last.

Teacher Collegiality and Program Clientele

The pre-primary teachers perceived themselves substantially more accountable to their program clientele, the families, than to their colleagues at the school. For many of the teachers, links to the school had not been successful and what limited collegial interactions there were happened only at staff meetings. Pre-primary teachers, however, made strong links with families. Over 60 of the survey respondents and more than 100 focus group teachers rated the parents as a primary accountability stakeholder. This may be a result of the daily opportunity pre-primary teachers had to talk to parents whereas meetings with their colleagues were infrequent. The case studies, survey responses and focus group discussions highlighted the importance pre-primary teachers placed on the interactions they had with parents. For two of the three case study teachers the parents’ feedback was their chief tool for quality assurance.

Susan and Jane had weak links to the other teachers at the school. Susan had not attempted to build links with the teachers at the school and Jane suggested that her sense of isolation would eventually drive her from the school. Glenda spoke of her colleagues more positively but did remark at one stage that she and her colleagues had spoken together about the pre-primary teachers working with year one children. Of this meeting Glenda said, “We had a big talk at the staff meeting

but obviously we didn't communicate" (Field notes, 19.2.97). Jane also highlighted the view that the pre-primary teachers had to be more vocal to be seen as part of the school. She described not being included in drafting school priorities and argued that it would not be difficult to make the school priorities relevant to the pre-primary. Other teachers in the survey and focus groups spoke of the school staff not understanding and valuing their work. In the survey one teacher wrote, "I think one of the most important issues is our credibility with others teachers and the principal. Our work doesn't seem to be either understood or valued by other staff".

Resources, Buildings, Space and Program Funding

The school's resources, the buildings and spaces allocated to the pre-primary impacted on the educational programs provided and influenced the implementation of the school development plan. Glenda worked in a relatively poor neighbourhood and the resources and spaces in which she had to work were scant. The lack of space was illustrated in the crowded outdoor and indoor areas. The restricted space influenced Glenda's planning as she re designed the indoor spaces three times in first term. She spoke of finding it difficult to accommodate the traditional pre-primary learning centres and a large group of children in such a confined area. Financial resources were restricted in Glenda's context unlike Jane and Susan who had access to substantial funds. For this reason, Glenda limited excursions, as she was conscious of not burdening parents with extra expenses. To access financial resources Glenda had to move from the microsystem into the mesosystem. In this school community the funds allocated were tied to the implementation of the school development plan. Requests to the school's Parent and Citizens committee would only be acknowledged if they were tied to the plan and assisted in the

implementation of the school priorities. In contrast, Jane and Susan had access to their own funds provided by the parent's committee attached to the pre-primary and resources were not tied to the school development plan. In the survey, teachers rated resources as the sixth most important issue to consider when planning (from a list of 18 issues). One surveyed teacher responded that the influence of resources would be context specific, and would only be a consideration if she was in an impoverished area.

The Microsystem

The pre-primary teacher and the immediate setting in which they worked made up the microsystem in this study. The influences on pre-primary teacher accountability were many, varied and contextually bound, which reflects on the differences found in pre-primary teacher's accountability knowledge and action. These differences will be addressed in this section in two ways. First, a typology of pre-primary teacher accountability will be presented and second, the informal accountability techniques teachers used will be discussed.

A Typology of Pre-primary Teacher Accountability

This study has explored pre-primary teacher's notions and demonstrations of accountability in metropolitan school communities within the state education system. During this study the views and opinions of over 200 practicing pre-primary teachers have been sought in three different ways. Through three case studies, the survey of 67 pre-primary teachers and the focus groups of 145 pre-primary teachers some patterns of variation have emerged. This section of the discussion chapter will describe a typology of the accountability landscape and

accountability needs “to take into consideration the developmental learning and the unique situation of the pre-primary children.” To such teachers the EDWA process of accountability is viewed as a threat to the informality of the pre-primary program and so repudiated. The system accountability practices enacted through the school are viewed as a means of instigating the formalisation of the pre-primary program and the introduction of formal reporting of student performance.

Teachers associated with this group do not see or have not been shown the benefit of being involved in the system accountability processes. For some teachers in this group there was no input into the formulation of the school development plan while for others it was minimal. In the survey 7 out of 67 teachers indicated that they did not contribute to school development planning. They view the processes as time consuming and laborious with little reward and they were unwilling to participate. As one teacher wrote on her survey, “To become involved in these activities would divert time from our main focus”.

Teachers at this end of the continuum have an isolationist view and often view the pre-primary as an entity separate from the school. These teachers are perhaps used to the autonomy that community preschools and offsite pre-primary centres provided so that being accountable to the principal is a new phenomenon. This was certainly true for Susan and as yet she and her principal had not negotiated their accountability roles. Illustrating the non-negotiation of accountability roles was the group of 45 teachers who responded in the member check that there was a mismatch between their views of accountability and what the school expected teachers to demonstrate.

Links to school and system based accountability stakeholders were loose or tenuous. Teachers representative of this group did not believe they were accountable to the principal and to their employer. Mainly teachers were entrenched in the belief that they were accountable first and foremost to the parents of the children they taught and demonstrations of accountability to them were informally given. The informal nature of this group's accountability demonstration is illustrated in the 63 member check responses that indicated teachers main form of accountability was informal chats with parents. Further, these teachers view professional knowledge as an important part of their accountability but may not impart this knowledge in a school environment where they perceive it is not understood nor welcomed. In this environment they perceive themselves as the best judge of the quality of their program. One teacher commented in a focus group that, "We think we know more about early childhood education and a child's learning so we see ourselves as professionals...because we perceive others around us don't understand." These teachers feel threatened that those without early childhood knowledge or experience will pass judgement on their work. It is this tacitly held base of professional knowledge that influences how these teachers view the school priorities. Susan, for example, spoke of recognising her own professionalism in having to decide if the school's priorities were relevant to her class.

Another characteristic of this group was their view that the principal's leadership role in the pre-primary is weak or non-existent. In the survey 32 of the 67 teachers indicated that the principal could not make performance decisions about their program. This perception was confirmed in the member check where 100 of

the 134 participating teachers indicated that principals had to be more involved in order to make decisions about the program. To illustrate this perception, one teacher wrote on her survey “Accountability can only be effective when the person you are accountable to, knows what is happening both in theoretical and practical terms.”

Uncertain

The group of teachers falling into the middle of the continuum is typified by their uncertainty about engaging with the school development plan. In some instances, teachers chose when and how they will engage with the school priorities and implement the priorities they see as fitting with their philosophy. In others, they are not made aware of how accountability processes are to be played out in the pre-primary setting. For example, one teacher wrote on her member check, “school development days on this topic never mention K (kindergarten) and P (pre-primary)”. This moderate engagement may be illustrated by the group of 36 teachers who indicated in the member check that they were unsure of what the school expected them to demonstrate in terms of accountability. This was certainly the case at Jane’s school where the teachers had attended professional development on teacher accountability but the topic had not been raised at a staff meeting when they had been present.

In this group, teachers rank the school development plan as a moderately important issue to consider when planning. The 67 returned surveys showed that 52 teachers ranked the school development plan between not important and highly important. For Jane, the school priorities were not something she consciously implemented but she described them as something that she did anyway in the course of her teaching.

In the middle of the continuum the teacher's engagement at the school level oscillates from an 'isolationist' view to one of limited involvement. These teachers would to some extent be involved in school development planning but links were tentatively made and as yet these teachers were unconvinced of the value of engaging in such processes. Perhaps like Jane they would proffer an early childhood point of view when they thought it necessary or the school priority was thought to impact on the pre-primary program. They perceived that they had some way to go in making the school staff extend their view of the school to incorporate the informal years attached to the primary school. Jane spoke of her participation at staff meetings saying, "We have to be more vocal than other staff members until we are seen as part of the school" (Teacher Interview #1, 19.3.97). To further illustrate her point, Jane described a time when she went to collect a copy of the school development plan from the school office she was asked why she needed it. Teachers in this group, for whatever reason, felt isolated from the school and efforts to establish links to school colleagues were viewed as difficult and time consuming.

Acknowledgement of the value of the work carried out in the pre-primary by the school staff and the principal is an issue to these teachers. They perceived their accountability was tied in with the way people viewed their work and it was important to them that the accountability processes value their efforts. One teacher in the focus groups said that whatever process was used for teacher accountability, it should not be a regurgitation of information about the pre-primary to the principal. Instead, this teacher argued that the accountability process should be designed to inform the pre-primary program. Such an accountability process she viewed as

meaningful and worthwhile. The teachers in this group are uncertain that system accountability procedures would assist them in their work; rather they view accountability processes as assisting the principal in the administration of the school.

The teachers that typify this pattern of accountability viewed accountability links with the principal and EDWA as weak. The principal's involvement in the pre-primary was viewed as casual, and ties were not cemented in a formal professional relationship. It appeared that teachers in this group perceived the principal to be satisfied with the pre-primary program as long as there were no complaints. Jane commented that this applied to her principal, as he referred to himself as the "complaints department". Principals working with teachers from this group made informal assessments of program quality and teacher performance. As no formal measures were in place, teachers identifiable with this group would be unsure of what the school expected them to demonstrate in terms of accountability. In the member check 36 teachers indicated being unsure of what was expected of them in this regard. A comment made by a principal in a focus group illustrated the casual nature of some principal's evaluation of the pre-primary program. He described how his measure of an effective program was the happiness of the children, yet the teachers in this group disagreed that this was a valid measure. Many teachers who typify this group complained that the principal could not make an informed judgement about their program, as they never spent enough time in their rooms. When answering if her principal needed to spend more time in her room to make an informed decision about her program, one teacher on the member check

wrote, “Yes he’s my principal and no he hardly spends much time here to make an informed decision”.

For teachers in this group, the EDWA accountability procedures are typified as a ‘hit and miss’ affair. Teachers implement the school priorities that fit with their program or philosophy. Those priorities they perceive as inappropriate or do not complement their program are ignored and there is no insistence at the school level for the priorities to be implemented and assessed. The parents are still perceived to be the major stakeholders. Recognition is given to the principal and EDWA as stakeholders, although these accountability links are loose.

Engaged

Teachers typifying accountability patterns in this group engage with the school development plan by fully implementing and evaluating the school priorities in their program. They identify themselves as staff members who assist in the formulation and adoption of the school’s priorities. This was illustrated by Glenda and a teacher at a focus group who spoke of being instrumental in the adoption of a school priority. Further, these teachers debate issues that clash with their philosophy in a way that informs the staff of their outlook. This was demonstrated by a teacher in a focus group who shared her experience of debating issues of appropriate discipline procedures for young children in order to get the staff to change the school discipline policy.

Teachers in this group rate the school development plan as an important planning influence. In the survey 12 teachers highlighted the importance of the school development plan in their planning. Teachers understand what the school expects them to demonstrate in terms of accountability and 43 teachers in the survey

confirmed this point. Many teachers at this end of the continuum mould their practice and evaluation techniques to assist others with the identification of their accountability and to complement their early childhood philosophy. Glenda and her pre-primary colleagues spent considerable time constructing a “moderation”. The “moderation” (so named by Glenda) contained evaluation techniques that furnished information the principal required but at the same time supported the teacher’s early childhood philosophies. It is evident that teachers in this group understand what the school expects them to demonstrate for their accountability, as represented by 43 teachers out of 145 in the member check.

Accountability links to all stakeholders were strong for teachers in this group. Teachers can account equally to parents, children, colleagues, principals, EDWA, their assistants and members of the community both formally and informally. Links to EDWA and the principal were forged and the principal had strong ties to the pre-primary teacher and their program. At this end of the continuum, principals were viewed by the pre-primary teachers as supportive, understanding and knowledgeable of early childhood education. This was noticeable of Glenda’s principal who described Glenda’s program in early childhood terms and supported her program in a number of ways. He worked in her classroom once a fortnight, assisted in discipline and supported the pre-primary teachers when working on the “moderation”. In the survey one teacher described her luck in working with a principal who was “an excellent and well informed educator, aren’t I lucky?”

Teachers in this group had formal ties to the principal and had undergone performance assessments. In the survey the 22 teachers who had an interview with the principal represent this group. Typically teachers placed in this group embrace performance management as a constructive exercise that will improve their practice. Further, it is used to assist teachers in identifying areas for professional development. Glenda commented that she was disappointed that performance management procedures did not focus on a teacher's overall performance but the implementation of the school's priorities. She described welcoming the opportunity for someone to comment on her program and sought tools she could apply to assess her performance and planning.

For these teachers it is evident that the system accountability procedures work. They work in contexts that offer more opportunity to engage with the school accountability processes either by the support of the principal or school colleagues. In these contexts there is an expectation that all teachers will implement the school's priorities from kindergarten to year 7. In these cases the pre-primary is not seen as an exception to the rule.

The Framework

This study began with the purpose of exploring pre-primary teacher accountability and constructing an accountability framework. Along the way it became apparent that whatever accountability tool teachers used it had to satisfy all stakeholders in the micro, meso and exosystems. How might teachers in different groups use this framework to assist in meeting accountability requirements? The framework could be a useful lens for the "threatened" teachers to present their work,

as it is built on the knowledge base of early childhood practitioners. Such a framework assists “threatened” teachers to represent their work in concrete terms and dampens the threat of accountability being focussed on more formalised programs and reporting procedures. The teachers who represent the “uncertain” group could use the framework as a tool to forge links with the school. The conversations originating from this framework may serve to give a degree of formality to the professional relationships between the pre-primary teachers and their principals. The “engaged” teachers could use the framework to assist in the articulation of their practice, moderate ways to link their work with the school development plan and as a tool for self reflection.

The points of practice in each of the seven areas outlined in the framework are useful checkpoints for teachers illustrating their accountability to others. The points and associated artifact suggestions are embedded in the everyday working realities of teachers as they were constructed from the evidence collected and cross-checked with other frameworks and best practice documents. Further, the flexibility of this framework is important as it allows teachers to take into account and document individually constructed philosophies and contextual aspects that influence their work. More importantly, the collection of evidence addressing points of best practice and conversations about teachers’ work that may arise in the use of the framework will contribute positively to pre-primary teacher accountability.

Accountability Tools

Investigation of pre-primary teacher accountability within the microsystem revealed a number of issues that need to be addressed if EDWA accountability

policies are to be successfully implemented in the pre-primary. The key formal accountability tool in EDWA's policy was the principal-teacher interview reviewing accomplishment of the school development plan. The "threatened" teachers repudiated this way of working and they resisted being pushed into an existing primary school framework. The formal accountability processes did not connect with the "uncertain" teachers as many were uncertain how to link their work to the school development plan. Because the formal accountability process did not occur for the large majority of pre-primary teachers, they used a number of informal methods to account for their work. The two informal techniques most used by teachers to account for their practice were chats to parents and explanations. However, the case studies, the survey responses and focus group discussion show the language teachers used when talking about their work is characterised by a lack of explicitness. The "uncertain" teachers may have been unable to forge communicable links with their colleagues because their terms of practice do not relate to their colleagues. The language of DAP (1986) had a clear influence on teachers' use of terms, yet teachers were found to apply the same terms differently. It was evident in phrases such as "developmentally appropriate" and "children's needs" as applied divergently by two of the case study teachers. These two differences were reinforced in the focus group discussions where terms such as "child-centred", "open-ended" and "scaffolding" were also used. Terms and phrases such as those mentioned are not self explanatory and when used as the basis of explanations may not assist to inform or enlighten stakeholders particularly those with a curriculum based approach to primary teaching.

The irradicability of DAP is illustrated in the way that most of the pre-primary teachers in the study indicated that developmental knowledge of the child was their primary planning focus. Indeed, “children’s needs” was the term most used to describe the primary planning influence and this theme is found in explanations of planning and curriculum design in the early childhood literature (AECA, 1990; DECS, 1996; Queensland School Curriculum Council, 1998; Swadener, 1992). However, the pedagogy of developmentally appropriate practice has been under critical review from post modernists (eg Canella, 1997; Dahlberg, Moss & Pence, 1999). The focus on “children’s needs” is a reason why many of the “threatened” teachers had not implemented the school priorities. These teachers do not believe the school priorities reflect the needs of the children or that they are appropriate for their class. The “uncertain” teachers are unsure how to moderate the school priorities so they can be faithful to the school process and their understanding of early childhood teaching and learning.

Pre-primary teachers throughout the study described using their planning documents as accountability measures, however this was revealed as problematic. First, the variation of structures or frameworks that pre-primary teachers used for planning their program compounds the problem of articulating accountability as a profession. In the survey, most teachers indicated that they used “themes” as a planning framework. Relying on the term “themes” as the explanation for a framework for planning foregrounds the activities children will undertake, but obscures the learning goals teachers have in mind in developing these activities. By using themes as a planning framework teachers may not be readily able to explain

their work in a way that stakeholders value. If the teachers' documented program was to be used as a tool for articulating accountability then how are links between such knowledge and planning to be recorded? The second problem of using planning frameworks as accountability measures lies in the difficulty of representing the tacit knowledge of early childhood teaching. The "threatened" teachers held this knowledge and perceived themselves as the most knowledgeable in their context, so did not attempt to impart this knowledge to others. Teachers maintained from the case studies through to the focus groups that the principal could not make assessments on their work because of their lack of early childhood knowledge or experience. The "uncertain" teachers had not cemented professional relationships with their principal and were more likely to use parent feedback as a performance indicator. Those who view these teacher planning documents without the same knowledge need assistance to understand the complexity of early childhood teaching.

Yet the way teacher's plan may alter, as there is a wave of change about to engulf pre-primary teachers. The move to outcome based learning set in subject areas means that teachers may be asked to change the way they document their plans for learning. This will be a difficult undertaking, as pre-primary teachers do not traditionally work in subject areas. Indeed the survey showed that a small number of teachers used subject areas as their primary framework for planning. Added to this, only a slightly larger number of teachers used student outcome statements. The dominance of planning using domains rather than subject areas reveals a challenge for pre-primary teachers in using the curriculum framework. The implementation of

the curriculum framework will be seen by the “threatened” teachers as another tool to formalise the non-compulsory years of schooling. The “uncertain” teacher will need assistance to connect and meaningfully engage with another school based process. The “engaged” teachers will be reviewing and adapting (along with their school colleagues) the curriculum framework to be successfully implemented in their settings. Engineering greater teacher effectiveness is EDWA’s goal in using the framework but in doing so pre-primary teachers may be asked to change their program rationale, traditional techniques of evaluating children’s progress, their program framework and their own performance. However, without substantial professional development, this may be asking too much.

Conclusion

This study has argued that pre-primary teachers should be asked to account for their practices in ways that are meaningful to themselves and stakeholders. In order for the accountability requirements of the compulsory schooling sector to be successfully implemented by teachers, a number of issues uncovered by this study need to be considered.

First, a clear definition of accountability and accountability policy is needed. It must ensure that the definition and policy is meaningful to all stakeholders and is grounded in the reality of teacher’s work. In many cases, the engagement of pre-primary teachers with the school development plan illustrated a policy-practice tension and was illustrated by the first two groups of teachers identified on the continuum. “Threatened” teachers did not engage with a plan they saw as disturbing their way of working and the “uncertain” teachers did not see the need to engage in

accountability processes. In order to demonstrate their accountability through the school development plan pre-primary teachers need to have clear answers to the accountability questions: accountable to whom, for what and how? The “threatened” pre-primary teachers have dismissed the system specified accountability process. The “uncertain” teachers have not embraced the current accountability process. Fullan and Steigelbauer (1991) suggest that strategies put in place at the system level often do not work as they are “derived from a world or from premises different from that of teachers” (p.130). This would seem to be the case for pre-primary teachers, as policy conceived at the exosystem has not been carried through the mesosystem into the microsystem. If the education system dictates that pre-primary teachers are accountable for the accomplishment of school priorities then it ought to ensure these priorities are relevant to the pre-primary. The “uncertain” pre-primary teachers did not implement priorities they saw as inappropriate and the “engaged” teachers worked on making the priorities meaningful to the pre-primary context. Further, without checks and balances to ensure that policy is implemented properly gaps such as those identified in this study will occur.

Second, pre-primary teachers should be shown the value of undertaking accountability processes. The “threatened” teachers viewed accountability as a threat to the informal nature of their program or to developmental reporting of child progress. The “uncertain” teachers have not been shown the benefits or necessity of engaging in such processes. Clear understanding of the purpose of an accountability policy and its implications for pre-primary teachers should be set out. Further, the

principal has a role to play in supporting the adoption of priorities that the pre-primary teacher's views as appropriate and meaningful to the pre-primary context. For Jane it was impossible to be accountable for the school priority of "reading recovery grades 4-7". Added to this, evaluations of school priorities must be constructed to mesh with the teacher's philosophy. Constructing appropriate evaluation techniques was one way that Glenda and the pre-primary teachers at her school used to engage with the school development plan.

Third, EDWA needs to support principals and the pre-primary teachers in the successful implementation of accountability procedures by assisting the school staff and the pre-primary teacher to forge links. Pre-primaries have been administered by the state school system and have been amalgamated with schools regarding policy treatment for the last twenty years. However, this study has shown that "threatened" pre-primary teachers did not implement EDWA policies. The "uncertain" teachers chose how or if they would implement EDWA policies. In the case studies, Jane felt she had no tangible links to EDWA and saw no interest in her work from her principal and colleagues. In contrast, Glenda who exhibited "engaged" characteristics had a principal who was involved in her program and insisted in the participation and implementation of EDWA policies. For successful implementation of EDWA policies, principals, their staff and pre-primary teachers all need to see the value of such processes and the need to implement them across the school. Further, all staff but most importantly the principal needs to have professional development in the area of early childhood education, as forging links may be easier if the pre-primary teachers perceive their work is understood or

valued. Added to this, pre-primary teachers need to be trained to step into the whole school arena and debate issues of pedagogy and practice in an explicit language.

Such a language would be welcomed by the ‘uncertain’ teachers as it would assist in representing their work in a way others may value. Participation of the pre-primary teachers in school development planning is necessary so that school priorities reflect the needs of younger children in the school.

Fourth, an explicit language linking practice, pedagogy and accountability as applied in pre-primary settings should be discussed at the policy, practitioner and community levels. It is time to move on from the blurred meanings of developmentally appropriate practice and create a language more conducive to shared understandings not only between pre-primary teachers but also between the compulsory and non-compulsory years of schooling. A shared language would assist the teachers from “uncertain” teachers to communicate meaningfully to others about their work. This in turn could lead to better links to the school and to their colleagues.

For accountability to be meaningful to pre-primary teachers the processes need to take into account the specialist nature of the pre-primary teacher’s work. The framework is one way to do this. It was constructed through extensive research and generated within the field. It was grounded in the everyday realities of practicing pre-primary teachers and as such can be considered a “bottom-up” initiative. The framework was constructed as a tool for pre-primary teachers to use in order to articulate their accountability and to extend their professional development. Further, the accountability framework is a potential tool for teacher reflection. Self-

reflection was an aspect of teaching that many teachers in this research did not document. By using the framework and working towards the points of practice, teachers could illustrate their accountability. Throughout the focus groups, the teachers welcomed this framework, as many had no assistance within the school to improve their practice, nor guidelines with which to compare their practice. Teachers face difficulty in self-assessment without concrete models and criteria for illustration of practice. The framework could assist principals when viewing teachers work in the pre-primary.

This study revealed substantial variations in what constituted pre-primary teacher accountability, which was particularly surprising as all 207 of the teachers in the study were employed in a single school system. In principle, these teachers were all required to implement the same policies and guidelines. Accountability practices came down to matters of individual practice and contextual influences such as principal support. There was little evidence of the impact of the school system's accountability instrument, the school development plan among the individual practices.

The patterns of engagement with policy documents by these teachers are significant, if accountability practices are to change. A top down policy of accountability has not worked. Whatever a school system does in defining accountability, if it is to be effective it has to fit with what its members hold as true. People need to see the value of engaging in such processes. Therefore, this research has highlighted the need for change in the way that accountability policy is formulated, disseminated by school systems and enacted by their employees. In the

microsystem, too often employees' voices are not heard in policy construction and when policy is thrust upon them, they subvert reform. Change needs to occur through all systems identified in the study so people are sure of how policy is translated into practice. The school system within the exosystem should contain people with the relevant expertise to construct policy so that it is grounded in the realities of the field and meaningful to employees. Policy makers should consider that all stakeholders have roles to play in advocating and assisting in shaping a meaningful accountability policy that leads to the successful enactment of such policy. When the policy has been disseminated, it is imperative that all stakeholders are briefed so that roles and responsibilities of all stakeholders are clearly articulated. Further, checks and balances need to be in place through each particular system to ensure successful implementation.

Finally, the role those within the microsystem could play in articulating and demonstrating their accountability must be addressed. The motion of policy implementation needs to continually radiate through the interacting systems of a bureaucracy so that policy construction, implementation and evaluation will neither be "top down" or "bottom up" but a continual movement in and out of systems. This will occur when everyone linked in the accountability chain connects with the process because it is meaningful to them and roles and responsibilities are defined in the reality of the participant's work context.

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**Appendix 1
Teaching Continuum**

NONDIRECTIVE		➤	MEDIATING			➤	DIRECTIVE	
Acknowledge	Model	Facilitate	Support	Scaffold	Co-Construct	Demonstrate	Direct	
Give attention and positive encouragement to keep a child engaged in an activity	Display for children a skill or desirable way of behaving in the classroom, through actions only or with cues, prompts, or other forms of coaching	Offer short-term assistance to help a child achieve the next level of functioning (as an adult does in holding the back of a bicycle while a child pedals)	Provide a fixed form of assistance, such as a bicycle's training wheels, to help a child achieve the next level of functioning	Set up challenges or assist children to work "on the edge" of their current competence	Learn or work collaboratively with children on a problem or task, such as building a model or block structure	Actively display a behaviour or engage in an activity while children observe the outcome	Provide specific directions for children's behaviour within narrowly defined dimensions of error	

Appendix 2
Letter to Principals and Case Study Teachers

2 Harvey Road
Shenton Park
6008

Chitteringbrook Primary School

Dear Mr Minchin and Mrs Holcroft,

My name is Lennie Barblett and I am currently working on a Ph.D research project to investigate accountability in the pre-primary for my Ph.D thesis. After discussions with Jean Rice at the Education Department I am hoping that your school will be interested in participating in the study in first term, 1997. Additional to this I have had the great pleasure of supervising teaching practice in the school and after speaking with you on a few occasions Mr Eggleton on prac and continuity issues, I wish to use your pre-primary in the study.

The focus of this study centres on the way pre-primary teachers discuss and display what they do, to others around them, eg. Principals, other staff members and parents. The aim of this study is to construct an accountability framework for the pre-primary year, taking into account differing early childhood teaching philosophies. This framework would be used by schools to assist in incorporating the early years of education more comprehensively into the school development plan. It will assist continuity of practice from the pre-primary to the primary school and assist principals, pre-primary teachers and parents in assessing and discussing quality in pre-primary programs.

I have included the aims, research questions and data gathering techniques on the following page but provide a brief description of how the school and pre-primary teacher would be involved.

Phase 1 involves the observation of the pre-primary teacher at work for a day a week over eight to ten weeks. The time commitment for teachers is minimal and the research is designed to be non-intrusive. I will not be focussing on the teaching but how the pre-primary teacher may explain or account for their actions to others in the course of their work. I want to uncover the issues schools and pre-primary teachers encounter when discussing this topic. During this time, with participants' permission, I would also conduct informal interviews with the pre-primary teacher, the assistant, principal and parents on duty to find out their opinions on pre-primary accountability. School or teacher documentation used in the accountability process would also be viewed with permission. All information gathered is confidential. It will be used in conjunction with information gathered at two other schools which will provide an insight as to what is happening in the field. This data will form the basis of a survey that will be given to a large population of pre-primary teachers and go towards laying the foundations of the accountability framework I will construct. Once the framework is available the offer of relevant

professional development using this framework will be made to participating teachers and schools.

I realise that I am seeking your acceptance to be a part of this study for 1997 at a very hectic time of year. I am very willing to come to your school to discuss this study further at any time suitable to you both. I can also be contacted on 3817800 and would be only too pleased to discuss any aspect of the study.

My proposal has been presented to the Faculty and Ethics formalities have been completed. Please feel free to contact either of my supervisors (A/Prof. Collette Tayler & A/Prof. Bill Loudon at Edith Cowan , Churchlands) if you wish to confirm any details.

As a practising pre-primary teacher I know that this research will greatly benefit teachers and principals in communicating about accountability. I hope that you will view this research in a favourable manner and look forward to hearing from you.

Yours faithfully,

Lennie Barblett

Thesis Title: What counts as accountability? Towards an accountability framework for the pre-primary .

Aims:

The aims of this study are:

a) through research and investigation to develop an accountability framework for pre-primary teachers from the practitioner level. An accountability framework will assist pre-primary teachers and others who share an accountability relationship in the pre-primary year by:

- establishing a shared language of accountability that links to early childhood practice.
- providing a focus for pre-primary teachers articulation of their pedagogy that can be transposed into action, contributing to school accountability processes.
- identifying accountability practices and assisting all those who share accountability relationships to articulate practice.

b) build a body of knowledge on accountability processes in pre-primary which takes into account both teachers' views and substantive bases for accountability from the literature.

c) inform policy formulators of specific attributes of accountability which are prominent in early childhood teaching.

Research Questions.

Main Research Question.

1. How do pre-primary teachers demonstrate their accountability in designing, implementing and evaluating educational practices in the pre-primary year ?

Subsidiary Questions

2. What factors do pre-primary teachers consider when
a) designing the program?

b) implementing the program?

3. How do pre-primary teachers ensure the quality of the program?
4. What measures do pre-primary teachers take to explain their program to others?
5. What input does the pre-primary teacher have in formulating and implementing school accountability processes?
6. How do pre-primary teachers' means of demonstrating their accountability relate to accountability models prevailing in the literature?

Stages in Data Collection.

Three case study pre-primaries will be selected after consultation with Jean Rice (Manager, Early Childhood Education Program -EDWA) to find schools that may be willing to participate. Permission will be sought from District Superintendents to approach the schools. Principals and pre-primary teachers will be fully briefed as to what is entailed in the study. If they are willing to participate then the first phase entails observation of the teacher at work. The observations will focus on how teachers explain and demonstrate the reasons behind Pre-primary educational practices to those around them, that is their accountability. This phase will also include informal interviews involving all those with whom the teacher shares an accountability relationship (ie. the principal, parents and peer teachers). Document analysis of programs and other relevant documents to the study such as the school development plan will be carried out.

The second phase of data gathering is a short survey of pre-primary teachers in the district. This survey will be used to clarify and consolidate information found in phase 1.

Combining information gained from an extensive literature search with the data collected in phase 1 and 2, an accountability framework will be constructed.

Phase 3 entails using an early childhood network meeting to discuss the draft framework. This focus group of early childhood teachers will be asked to comment in small workshop groups on the draft accountability framework.

The next stage will be to refine the accountability framework, given the feedback and comments made. It is hoped that the framework will be available to be used by interested schools by the end of 1999.

Conditions of Research.

All relevant information from this study will be provided to the schools involved. Conditions of confidentiality and anonymity will apply and the permission of all teachers, parents and assistants will be obtained regarding participation in this project. Any participant can withdraw from the project at any time. A copy of the final research report will be provided to all participating schools.

Pre-primary teachers are not asked to do any thing differently or that they gather data on my behalf.

Appendix 3
Letter Inviting Participation in the Questionnaire

2 Harvey Road
Shenton Park
6008

Teacher Accountability in the Pre-Primary.

Could Principals please pass this questionnaire on to the Pre-Primary teachers in the school?

Dear Pre-Primary Colleague (through the Principal),

Have you noticed how often the words “Teacher Accountability” comes up? It’s a notion that is beginning to make a difference to teacher’s lives.

I am an early childhood teacher conducting research on pre-primary teacher accountability for a Ph.D at Edith Cowan University. My supervisor is Associate Professor Bill Loudon who is based at the Churchlands campus. I am writing to invite you to participate in this study by completing the attached questionnaire, which will help teachers develop accountability practices best suited to the early childhood field.

I’ve chosen teacher accountability because it is having an impact on the lives of pre-primary teachers and many are worried about the rapid changes and extra pressures. I would like to find out what explanation teachers make to those around them and how they give out information about their work.

At the end of this study I will use the information I’ve gained from teachers to formulate an accountability framework, which I hope will be of practical help to early childhood teachers.

Information you give will be regarded as highly confidential. Schools or individuals will not be identified in the final report.

I am very aware of the demands on your time but I do hope that you will be able to assist me by completing this questionnaire which should take no longer than ten minutes. When it was tested on practicing pre-primary teachers, it took only ten to fifteen minutes to complete. You just need to tick the box and add some comments at times.

I think that as Early Childhood teachers we need a framework generated from the field. It is important that as a professional group we discuss our ideas about accountability and how we want to account for our practice.

If you have any queries I am only too happy to answer them. My phone number is 938 17800.

I have included a self addressed and stamped envelope and would appreciate your prompt response by **Friday, 5th September 1997**.

Thank you for your help.

Yours sincerely,

Appendix 4 Questionnaire

Teacher Biography:

Qualifications you hold (please tick)

Diploma of teaching (E.C.E)

Diploma of teaching (Primary)

Bachelor of Arts (Education - Primary)

Bachelor of Arts (Education - E.C.E)

Other

Number of years teaching experience in the pre-primary? _____

Number of years teaching experience in other grades?

If you have taught in other grades please state which grades?

Please circle the age group to which you belong?

20 - 24 ; 25 - 29 ; 30 - 34 ; 35 - 39 ; 40 - 44 ; 45- 49 ; 50 - 54 ; 55 - 59 ; 60 - 64 ; 65 - 69.

Gender (please circle) Male / Female

1. What do you understand by the term

accountability? _____

2. Do you use the term accountability in your work? Yes No

2a. Do you believe that pre-primary teachers should be accountable for their teaching decisions? Yes No

2b. Do you believe that pre-primary teachers are accountable for their teaching decisions? Yes No

2c. Please explain on what information you based your answer. _____

3. Do you use the term accountability when talking to the :

a) principal Yes No

b) parents Yes No

c) teacher assistant Yes No

d) teaching colleagues Yes No

e) other people (please specify) _____

4. Maybe you use another term at times. Please tick any of the words or terms you use instead or as well as accountability?

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> professional responsibility | <input type="checkbox"/> performance management |
| <input type="checkbox"/> record keeping | <input type="checkbox"/> program <input type="checkbox"/> school development |
| <input type="checkbox"/> standards | <input type="checkbox"/> liability |

other (please specify) _____

5. Have you had call to explain your program and/or the educational decisions you have made to: (please tick)

- | | | |
|--|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> parents | <input type="checkbox"/> colleagues | <input type="checkbox"/> children you teach |
| <input type="checkbox"/> the principal | <input type="checkbox"/> your aide | <input type="checkbox"/> student teachers |
| <input type="checkbox"/> people from the community | <input type="checkbox"/> district office staff | |

other (please specify) _____

5a. To whom have you explained your educational decisions and/or program in the last week?

- | | | |
|--|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> parents | <input type="checkbox"/> colleagues | <input type="checkbox"/> children you teach |
| <input type="checkbox"/> the principal | <input type="checkbox"/> your aide | <input type="checkbox"/> student teachers |
| <input type="checkbox"/> people from the community | <input type="checkbox"/> district office staff | |

other (please specify) _____

6. To whom do you believe you are accountable? (please rate: from 1- not accountable to 3- significantly accountable)

	Not Accountable	Minimally Accountable	Significantly
self	1□	2□	3□
EDWA	1□	2□	3□
principal	1□	2□	3□
parents/ families	1□	2□	3□
teaching assistant	1□	2□	3□
children	1□	2□	3□
colleagues	1□	2□	3□
the profession	1□	2□	3□
the community	1□	2□	3□
other (specify) _____			

7. Please answer by ticking **true** or **false** to the following statements?

I provide information or explanations about my program to others:

- | | | |
|--|-------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| - only when asked | True <input type="checkbox"/> | False <input type="checkbox"/> |
| - there is no need to | True <input type="checkbox"/> | False <input type="checkbox"/> |
| - because the principal expects explanations | True <input type="checkbox"/> | False <input type="checkbox"/> |
| - to advocate for young children | True <input type="checkbox"/> | False <input type="checkbox"/> |
| - because parents expect explanations | True <input type="checkbox"/> | False <input type="checkbox"/> |
| - to foster a clear understanding of my philosophy | True <input type="checkbox"/> | False <input type="checkbox"/> |
| - as part of my professional responsibility | True <input type="checkbox"/> | False <input type="checkbox"/> |

8. In priority order, please rank the following items that you use to explain your teaching decisions and/or educational program? (starting with 1 being the most frequently used technique, OMIT any item not used)

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> school newsletters | <input type="checkbox"/> talks to parents as a group |
| <input type="checkbox"/> parent/caregiver interviews | <input type="checkbox"/> written information displayed around the centre |
| <input type="checkbox"/> information booklet | <input type="checkbox"/> informal chats to parents |
| <input type="checkbox"/> notes home | other (specify) _____ |

8a. In the last week which methods of providing information about your teaching decisions and/or program have you used? (please tick)

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> school newsletters | <input type="checkbox"/> talks to parents as a group |
| <input type="checkbox"/> parent interviews | <input type="checkbox"/> written information displayed around the centre |
| <input type="checkbox"/> information booklets | <input type="checkbox"/> informal chats to parents |
| <input type="checkbox"/> notes home | other (specify) _____ |

9. Which one of these descriptions best describes your pre-primary program? (please tick)

- Directive** - a teacher planned program, whereby the teacher selects children to complete learning activities for the majority of the time. Yes No
- Mediating** - a child/teacher planned program, whereby the children select their own learning activities for the majority of the time. Yes No
- Non directive** - a child centred program where children are free to select their own learning activities all of the time. Yes No

10. Do you have a parent/caregiver meeting at the beginning of the year to explain your teaching program? Yes No

10a. Do you have other parent meetings during the year? Yes No

10b. If so when and for what reason?

11. Does the principal or any other person have direct input into the content, learning strategies or assessment planned in your programs? Yes No

11a. If so whom, and what input do they have? _____

12. What are the major factors you take into consideration when planning your pre-primary program? _____

12a. How important are the following when planning your pre-primary program? (Please rate from 1 - not important to 5-very important)

	Not Important					Very Important
	1	2	3	4	5	
age of children	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
home background of children	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
position in family of children	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
children's level of development	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
children's previous learning themes	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
what has worked before	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
resources available	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
parent's expectations	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
school development plan	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
EDWA regulations	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
socio-economic status of local community	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
principals/colleagues expectations	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
gender of children	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
number of children in the class	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
areas of teacher strength	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
results of child observations	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
information about children from services (eg speech pathologists)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
other						

13. Are there parts of your program not represented in your written documentation?
(Please tick the appropriate response)

a lot not much none

13a. If so what parts are not represented? _____

14. Do you use a framework for planning? Yes No

14a. If so, what framework in your planning do you use? (In priority order, please rank the following items that you may use, starting with 1 being the most frequently used framework. OMIT any you don't use.)

themes domains subject areas
 projects student outcome statements

other (specify) _____

15. Do you show your written programs to:

parents principal or admin staff aide
 district office staff student teachers other teachers

other (specify) _____

16. Do you evaluate the effectiveness of your program? Yes No

16 a. If so, how? _____

16b. Who sees or hears about the results of the evaluation of your program?

colleagues principal self
 children parents

other(specify) _____

17. Do you keep written records on children? Yes No

17a. If yes, in priority order please rank the following items that you use to collect your information? (Please rank starting with 1 being the most frequently used technique, OMIT any item not used).

- anecdotal notes skill checklists work samples
 First Steps continua standardised tests observations
 teacher made tests other _____

17b. Who sees or hears about this information?

- colleagues principal self
 children parents

other _____

18. Do you send any written reports / records to parents about their children during the year? Yes No

18a. If yes, when? _____

18b. Whose decision was it to send reports?

- colleagues principal self
 children parents

other _____

19. Do you send any records/ reports on to the Year 1 teacher? Yes No

19.a. If so, in what form? _____

19b. Do you think this information is useful to the teacher? Yes No

20. Do you send any records or reports to the principal? Yes No

20a. If so, in what form? _____

21. Do you participate in school development planning? Yes No

22. Does the school development plan affect the way you work and teach in the pre-primary? Yes No

22a. If so how? _____

23. Have you undergone any performance management at your school? Yes No
23a. If so, what form did it take? _____

24. Do you believe your principal is able to make performance management decisions about your pre-primary program or your work in the pre-primary? Yes No
24a. Please note reason(s) for your belief?

25. Please tick yes or no to the following items you consider important when making performance appraisal decisions about your work in the pre-primary?

Item	Yes	No
the atmosphere of your centre	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
qualities of best practice observed	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
planning, preparation and delivery of your program	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
developmental appropriateness of activities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
teacher relationships with children	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
teacher relationships with families	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
successful professional relationships	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
success of pre-primary children in Year 1	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
accomplishment of school priorities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
accomplishment of your work aims	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
self evaluation of your work	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
records kept on children	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
teacher explanation of teaching decisions made	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
other		

26. Please express your views on any issues you believe are important about pre-primary teacher accountability? _____

**Appendix 5
Cross Check Table**

Child Development and Learning Section One of “Effective Early Childhood Educators (Barblett, 2000).	NBPTS Early Childhood/ Generalist (NBPTS,1995)	“What is good early childhood education?” (EDWA,1998)	EDWA Level 3 (EDWA, 1997)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children’s development varies and learning pathways and learning styles differ. 	St.2 p.23 St.5 p.40	A.2 p.21	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Play allows children to engage with materials, the environment and other people, which is essential to early learning. 	St.2 p.19 St.3p33	A.1 pp. 8, 9 & 10	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children’s learning is integrated, continuous and related to development. 	St.3 p.25		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positive attitudes to learning; optimism, self-esteem and a sense of personal identity need to be fostered. 	St.1 p.16 St.2 p.22, 23 & 24.	A.1 p.13	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The learning tasks must be relevant to the real life experiences of each child enable them to learn. 	St.1 p.17 St.4 p.36	A.1 pp.13 & 14	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers are articulate in stating their evolving philosophy, knowledge of child development and early learning principles. 	St.2 p.19 St.5 p.40 St.8 p.47 & 48		

Early Childhood Curriculum Section Two of “Effective Early Childhood Educators (Barblett, 2000).	NBPTS Early Childhood/ Generalist (NBPTS,1995)	“What is good early childhood education?” (EDWA,1998)	EDWA Level 3 (EDWA, 1997)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A balanced curriculum gives equal weight given to knowledge, skills and dispositions across subjects and domains. 	St.3 p.25	A.1 p.13 A.3 p.24	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An inclusive curriculum caters for all children and all domains - cognitive, social- emotional, aesthetic and physical domains. 	St.2 p.21	A.2 p.20 A.3 p.24	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A flexible curriculum builds on children’s interests, strengths, competencies and needs. 	St.1 p.18 St.2 pp.20, 22 & 24	A.1 pp. 11 & 12 A.2 p.19	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher’s design and implement appropriate experiences within and across subjects built on their knowledge of the child’s development, previous learning and experiences. 	St.1 p.18 St.3 pp.25, 27 & 30	A.1 pp.11 & 13	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers set realistic but ambitious goals matched to children’s growth and development. 	St.1 p.17 St.2 p.22 St.3 p.25 St.5 p.36	A.2 p.19	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers sequence activities in ways that makes sense conceptually. 	St.3 p.25	A.2 p.23	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowledgeable teachers explain the significance of each learning area and can account for their decisions. 	St.3 pp.25, 27 &30 St.6 p.42 St.7 p.44		

Teaching for Meaningful Learning Section Two of “Effective Early Childhood Educators (Barblett, 2000).	NBPTS Early Childhood/ Generalist (NBPTS,1995)	“What is good early childhood education?” (EDWA,1998)	EDWA Level 3 (EDWA, 1997)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teachers create a supportive learning environment (indoors and outdoors) where children feel safe to explore, take risks and discuss different approaches, responses and understandings of tasks and activities. 	St.2 pp.19, 21 & 24 St.3 p.30 St.4 p.36	A.3p24	Comp.1
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teachers are adept at selecting, combining and creating materials that match the activity and the development of children. 	St.4 p.36		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Timetable is flexible and allows for the active engagement of children and strikes a balance between child choice and teacher direction of tasks and activities. 	St.2 p.19 St.4 p.36	A.1 p.9 A.3 pp.24, 25, 27 & 28	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Size and composition of groups varies for intended outcomes. 	St.2 p.19 St.3 p.29 St.4 p.35	A.3 pp.24, 27 & 28	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Different strategies are used to complement different learning styles so that teachers work successfully with all children. 	St. 2 p.19 St.3 p.26 St.4 pp.35,36 & 37	A.1 p.12	Comp.1
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teachers use a variety of innovative and effective teaching strategies. 			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Quality interactions take place that build positive classroom relationships and improve student learning. 	St.2 p.23	A.1 p.12 A.2 p.20 A.3 p.26	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teachers foster student capacity to make choices and work as independent learners promoting self-regulation and child ownership of learning. 	St.1 p.17 St.2 pp. 21 & 22; St.3 p.29 St.4 p.36	A.1 pp. 8,11 & 13 A.3 p.27	

Assessment and Reporting Section Two of “Effective Early Childhood Educators (Barblett, 2000).	NBPTS Early Childhood/ Generalist (NBPTS,1995)	“What is good early childhood education?” (EDWA,1998)	EDWA Level 3 (EDWA, 1997)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assessment is authentic, ongoing, suited to the age group and celebrates student progress. 	St.3 p.30 St.5 p.39	A.4 pp.29 & 30	Comp.2
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assessment is collected in a variety of settings, using various sources of information collection and is a collaborative effort. 	St.2 p.24 St.5 p.39	A.1 pp.15 & 16; A.4 p.30 & 31	Comp.2
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers process assessment against several frames of reference eg. First Steps, published child development literature. 	St.5 p.39	A.1 p.8 &15 A.4 p.30	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers demonstrate how assessment informs planning and program effectiveness. 	St.5 p.40	A.1 p.16 A4. pp.29 & 30	Comp.2
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A cumulative picture of each child is built across disciplines and in all domains. 	St.2 pp.20 & 22	A.1p. 18 A.4p.30 & 31	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reporting reflects the nature of young children’s learning. 			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assessment information is conveyed so that parents and colleagues can understand what the teacher is doing and seeking to accomplish. 	St.5 p.40 St.7 p.44	A.4 pp.30 & 32	Comp.2

Educational Partnerships
Section Two of “Effective Early
Childhood Educators (Barblett,
2000).

**NBPTS Early
Childhood/
Generalist**
(NBPTS,1995)

**“What is good
early childhood
education?”**
(EDWA,1998)

**EDWA
Level 3**
(EDWA,
1997)

- | | | |
|--|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaboration with families is an essential component of an early childhood program and the teacher ensures that contact with families is made over a variety of ways. • Teachers incorporate community needs in the program. • The teacher builds connections among children’s families, cultures and community and children’s work. • Teachers communicate and work effectively with parents and families to inform and enhance support for children’s learning. • Teachers establish and maintain effective working relationships with supervisors, aide, peers, professionals from other disciplines and volunteers. | <p>St.7 pp.43 & 44</p> <p>St.3 p.33</p> <p>St.1 p.18
St.2 p.22</p> <p>St.4 p.37
St.7 pp.43 & 44</p> <p>St.3 p.47
St.2 p.21
St.4 p.37</p> | <p>A.5 p.35</p> <p>A.1 p.10
A.2 p.20</p> <p>A.1.p.15</p> |
|--|--|--|

The Whole School Context
Section Two of “Effective Early Childhood Educators (Barblett, 2000).

NBPTS Early Childhood/ Generalist
(NBPTS,1995)

“What is good early childhood education?”
(EDWA,1998)

EDWA Level 3
(EDWA, 1997)

- Teachers work towards the accomplishment of school priorities.
- Teachers work within a whole school philosophy and assist in the development of policies that ensure that appropriate procedures and guidelines for young children result.
- Teachers lead a collaborative approach with parents, colleagues and other professionals in identifying and supporting children with exceptional needs throughout the school.
- Teachers are active team members of a coordinated approach to teaching and learning in the early years so that transition and continuity, monitoring progress and intervention are ongoing.
- Teachers work effectively as collaborative team members who can negotiate resource sharing, add expertise to the school community and facilitate teacher leadership to assist others.

St.8 p.47

A.5 pp. 34 & 35

Comp.1

Comp.2
Comp.5

Comp.4

Building Professional Responsibility Section Two of “Effective Early Childhood Educators (Barblett, 2000).	NBPTS Early Childhood/ Generalist (NBPTS,1995)	“What is good early childhood education?” (EDWA,1998)	EDWA Level 3 (EDWA, 1997)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teachers regularly engage in the process of professional growth and reflective practices. 	St.6 p.41		Comp.3. Comp.4
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teachers evaluate results and seek input systematically from a variety of sources. 	St.6 p.41		Comp.3 Comp.4
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teachers are open to new ideas and continually refine practices that reinforce their creativity, stimulate their personal growth and enhance their professionalism. 	St.6 p.41		Comp.3
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teachers are open to new ideas and continually refine practices that reinforce their creativity, stimulate their personal growth and enhance their professionalism. 	St.8 p.47		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teachers contribute to the field of Early Childhood Education by discussing, examining, researching issues and policies pertinent to the development and learning of young children in the school community. 	St.5 p.40; St.8 p.48		

Appendix 6
Sections of Accountability Framework

EFFECTIVE EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATORS

Section A: Child Development and Learning

Focus points for effective early childhood teachers to consider:

- 1. Children's development varies and learning pathways and learning styles differ.**
**activity ideas that demonstrate how you have given the same concept in different ways (could be a photocopy of your daily plan with relevant parts highlighted); *photos depicting children at work on the same concept in different ways; *work samples (or photos of work samples) showing the same concept but represented in different mediums, clay, construction material etc*
- 2. Play allows children to engage with materials, the environment and other people which is central to effective early learning** -**highlight floor plan areas set up for exploration and play; * photos of children at play; * excerpt from plan of how you have structured the environment for play; * photos of creative play environments you have created; *anecdotal records of child initiated exploration; * short video of children at play or teacher participation in scaffolding play; * play checklist to gauge child's level of play*
- 3. Children's learning is integrated, continuous and related to their development-**
**evidence of developmental growth – checklists, First Steps continua, example of a child's portfolio with growth and development logged; *a copy of an information sheet filled out by parents regarding their child's growth and development; *examples of integrated learning experiences.*
- 4. Positive attitudes to learning, optimism, self esteem and a sense of personal identity need to be fostered.-****five minute tape recording of teacher working (with caption highlighting positive reinforcement techniques); *classroom awards used; *lessons plans that promote self esteem and self identity; *individualized programs for self esteem and behavioral modification; *copies of notes home to parents about children's good work; *photos of displays of class work in the school library, community centres e.g. council chambers, local shopping centres, District office, Royal Show Education pavilion; *short explanation of school buddy system or other class visits; *mentor teacher description of classroom atmosphere.*
- 5. The learning tasks that relate to the real life experiences of each child enable them to learn.** -**copy of parent filled information sheet on the child; anecdotal records, teacher journal excerpt (photocopied); *photocopy of weekly plan with activities and highlighted that are totally child choice; *photos of activities with stated relevance to children; *Child Involvement Scale(see Appendix 2); *video of classroom at work; observation notes of mentor teacher*

- 6. Teachers are articulate in stating their evolving educational philosophy, knowledge of child development and early learning principles.** -** copy of pre-primary handbook * copies or photos of written information around the room; *teacher journal notes about participation at staff meeting; * copy of policy developed by teacher on school based committees; *letters to parents, school council, professionals from other child services*

Section B: Early Childhood Curriculum

Focus points for effective early childhood teachers to consider:

- 1. A balanced curriculum gives equal weight given to knowledge, skills and dispositions across subjects and domains.** **take one day's planning and when evaluating it mark next to activities and learning centres, k,s and d (to represent knowledge, skills and dispositions) and look at the breakdown; *go back and mark domain headings c,p,a s/e and review tally; *copies of programs or planning documents with colour coded legends for domains or subjects; * copy of explosion chart; * copy of integrated plan*
- 2. An inclusive curriculum caters for all children and all domains –cognitive, social-emotional, physical and aesthetic.** **plans showing same activity offering different levels of participation; * samples of open ended activities; *plan of play areas; *special modifications made to the environment or timetable or program*
- 3. A flexible curriculum builds on children's interests, strengths, competencies and needs.** *-* copy of how you tailored S.O.S to meet the needs of children in your class; *copy of information sheet filled out by parent and activities that compliment that; *appraisal of a child's development and caption notes how program fits that; *teacher journal excerpt of shared planning with children; *activities and learning tasks inspired by community events; * photos; *examples of peer tutoring*
- 4. Teacher's design and implement appropriate experiences within and across disciplines built on their knowledge of the child's development, previous learning and experiences.** *-*evidence from a child's portfolio showing development and caption highlights teacher scaffolding of child's learning; *teacher made resources to support children's learning; *First Steps continua logging a child's journey; * S.O.S showing a student's learning pathway*
- 5. Teachers set realistic but ambitious goals for all children matched to children's growth and development.** *.-* extension or remedial programs designed by teachers; *link child evaluations with classroom learning i.e. in evaluations of days' work set future directions for children made from classroom observations; *behaviour programs or plans*
- 6. Teachers sequence activities in ways that make sense conceptually.** *-* present a sequence of lesson plans(photocopy, cut and paste D.W.P. or planning documents); *show photos of different equipment used over time to develop concepts i.e.; gradual introduction of more complicated manipulative materials to play areas, or outdoor skills taught over time e.g. steps to throwing and catching; * children's work samples*
- 7. Knowledgeable teachers explain the significance of each learning area and can account for their decisions.** *-*letters home to parents, * staff meeting notes of your explanation to staff; *tape of interview with mentor teacher; *tape of talking to aide; *tape of teacher addressing parents meeting;* letter to Junior primary staff; *copy of pre-primary handbook; *copies or photos of written information around the room; *information accompanying pre-primary records to school*

Section C: Teaching for Meaningful Learning

Focus points for effective early childhood teachers to consider:

- 1. Teachers create a supportive learning environment (indoors and outdoors) where children can explore, take intellectual risks and discuss different approaches, responses and understandings of tasks and activities.** -**child's evaluations of pre-primary; *mentor teacher evaluations of environment; *letters from parents or significant others; *Early Childhood Environment Scale (see Appendix 3); *photos; *assistants observations; *teacher journal noting parents comments.*
- 2. Teachers are adept at selecting, combining and creating materials that match the activity and the development of children.** -**photos of resources made and children's use of them; *resource selection in activity shown and caption explains selection; *tape of talk to parents explaining resources in room and how and why they are used; *copy of written information around room that may accompany resource display.*
- 3. Timetable is flexible and allows for active engagement of children and strikes a balance between child choice and teacher direction of tasks and activities.** -**copy of timetable(it may change from term to term); *excerpt from teacher journal of how timetable changed or was altered for incidental learning; *weekly or daily plan with times of child choice and teacher choice highlighted in different colours; *map one child's day and look at choices.*
- 4. Size and composition of groups varies for intended outcomes-** *weekly or daily plan highlights group sizes with intended outcomes written in caption; *examples of partner work, cooperative group learning and one to one learning activities; *work samples produced in different groupings.*
- 5. Different strategies are used to complement different learning styles so that teachers work successfully with all children.** -**plans showing different teaching strategies; *teacher journal extracts; *video of a lesson or mat session or teacher scaffolding play in home corner; *work samples that highlight different strategies used*
- 6. Teachers use a variety of innovative and effective teaching strategies.**-**journal entries or lesson plans showing innovative ideas used successfully with children with different needs; *resources made; *child work samples; *letters from other professionals complimenting you on your innovations; *audio tape of lesson.*
- 7. Quality interactions take place that build positive classroom relationships and improve student learning.**-**Teacher Interaction Scale(see Appendix); *tape of classroom discourse; *mentor teacher observations; *teacher observations and notes of student interactions and student/adult interactions; *copies of questions you have asked parents or your aide to ask while doing an activity to extend learning; *sociograms*
- 8. Teachers foster student capacity to make choices and work as independent learners promoting self-regulation and child ownership of learning.**-**work sample with child's comments written on; *weekly or daily plan showing areas where child's independence is promoted; *activities that promote child independence and self regulation; *examples of child regulation of learning – work samples, audio tape of child talking as working; *assistants or teacher's written observation of activities.*

Section D: Assessment and Reporting

In this section as with the others issues of student confidentiality exist. Do not use any names of students, if you do, only show the artifacts to professionals in the school.

Focus points for effective early childhood teachers to consider:

- 1. Assessment is authentic, ongoing, suited to age group and celebrates student progress.**
*copies of assessment techniques used; *child portfolio, *developmental checklists; *anecdotal records; *work samples; *First Steps Continua; *photos; *teacher made checklists; *audio tapes of children talking, playing etc; *play checklists; *student outcome statements assessment*
- 2. Assessment is collected in a variety of settings, using various sources of information collection and is a collaborative effort.** **child portfolio; *developmental checklists; *anecdotal records; *work samples; *First Steps Continua; *photos; *teacher made checklists; *audio tapes of children talking, playing etc; *play checklists; *student outcome statements assessment; *includes information gathered from other sources eg assistant observations; *notes from parent conversations; *parent information sheets; *professional reports; *summary of information on medical card*
- 3. Teachers process assessment against several frames of reference e.g. First Steps, Learning Outcome Areas, Student Outcome Statements,** **examples of children's assessment made against frames of reference e.g. plotting children on the First Steps continua; *assessment of SOS*
- 4. Teachers demonstrate how assessment informs planning and program effectiveness.** – **link examples of assessment to planning documents (perhaps include a section on future planning); *photos; *work samples; *show (in caption) how assessment has influenced First Steps continua and SOS pathways taken; *highlight changes made by assessment: to environment (map), play areas (photos), resources used or changed (photo) and teaching strategies (lesson plan)*
- 5. Teachers build a cumulative picture of each child across disciplines and in all domains.** – **child's portfolio; *information sheet assembled by teacher; *teacher made checklists; *copies of reports; *children's work on SOS*
- 6. Reporting in the pre-primary classroom reflects the nature of young children's learning** – **reports (if used) by pre-primary accompanied with any explanatory notes sent home to parents; *portfolios of children's work; *reports to principals or transition notes or reports to Year One teacher*
- 7. Assessment information is conveyed so that parents and colleagues can understand what the teacher is doing and seeking to accomplish.** – **reports; *letters to parents; *parental replies noted; *reports to colleagues; *tape of parent interviews (with parent permission); *notes of transition meetings with colleagues; *mentor teacher report; *principal report*

Section E. Educational Partnerships

Focus points for effective early childhood teachers to consider:

- 1. Collaboration with families is an essential component of an early childhood program and the teacher ensures contact with families is made over a variety of ways.** –**parent assistance highlighted in pre-primary handbook; *copy of note home to parents which lists the different ways in which parents can help; *photos of parents working in different ways in and out of the centre; *letters to parents thanking them for assistance on excursions etc; * teacher journal entries; *rosters; *letters from parents; * copies of newsletters or parent information letters*
- 2. Teachers incorporate community needs in the program.** - **copies of newsletters to parents telling of program; *photos illustrating point ; *excerpts from teacher journal; *student work samples of activities promoting some type of community need identified; * community members used as resources; * examples of incursions and excursions(perhaps video or photos) addressing need; *letters from community groups thanking class for input (eg visit to nursing home, donating to charity appeal, neighbourhood watch, safety house program, participation in work experience program)*
- 3. The teacher builds connections among children’s families, cultures, community and children’s work.** - **photo display; *special cultural days celebrated in the centre; * visits by cultural leaders in the community; * work samples; *planning documents; * incidental teaching notes made in teacher’s journal; *photo of children’s work on a community/cultural theme displayed in the community and school*
- 4. Teachers communicate and work effectively with parents and families to inform and enhance support for children’s learning.** -**copies of letters to parents; *teacher journal excerpts from parent interviews; * special work sent home or activity ideas for parents to do at home; *teacher notes on support services teacher has put family in contact with; *notes of case meetings teacher has set up with professionals; * newsletters to parents*
- 5. Teachers establish and maintain effective working relationships with supervisors, aide, peers, volunteers and professionals from other disciplines.** **copies of correspondence between teacher and other children’s services professionals; *letters from parents; * evaluation sheet filled out by assistant about her work and workplace; *photos ; *reports from mentor teacher, principal or other colleagues; *teacher notes from case meetings with other professionals; *teachers notes participation in teaching practice or letters of thanks for supervision of teaching students; * teacher notes on participation in work experience program or letters of thanks from program coordinator*

Section F. The Whole School Context

Focus points for effective early childhood teachers to consider:

- 1. Teachers work towards the accomplishment of school priorities.** -**photocopy of planning documents highlighted in relevant parts; * work samples; * photos; *video presentation; * audio tape of lesson; *mentor teacher report*
- 2. Teachers work within a whole school philosophy and assist in the development of policies that ensure that appropriate procedures and guidelines for young children result.** -** staff meeting notes about your participation; * journal entries about policy committee meetings you attend; *copies of policies you have assisted in writing; * outside educational knowledge shared by you to others in the school e.g. journal articles, AECA booklets; * notes about or copies of talks you give to others about PD you have attended; * PD sessions you run.*
- 3. Teachers lead a collaborative approach with parents, colleagues and other professionals in identifying and supporting children with exceptional needs throughout the school.** -**copies of letters to parents; * notes of meetings with parents, colleagues and principal; * copy of the process used to identify child with special needs; * notes in journal of steps taken by teacher to support child or children with exceptional needs; * case meeting notes about child and the educational support they will receive*
- 4. Teachers are active team members of a coordinated approach to teaching and learning in the early years so that transition and continuity, monitoring progress and intervention are ongoing.** -**case meeting notes; *letters from other professionals involved with child and family; *transition and continuity activities or processes :- letters to colleagues concerning children moving on from your class; * reports; *notes in teacher journal of philosophy sharing sessions with colleagues; * photos of use of school facilities; * teaching activities with junior primary; * notes on school buddy system used *newsletters home about the move to the next year level*
- 5. Teachers work effectively as collaborative team members who can negotiate resource sharing, add expertise to the school community and facilitate teacher leadership to assist others.** -**notes or newsletters about school events you organized or participated in; * teacher journal notes about your expertise added in the school; *journal notes about your assistance to others in the school; * letters of thanks from colleagues in the school; *notes or copies of reports written by you as mentor teacher to someone else; *teacher journal notes on resource sharing; *duty description of other roles you play within the school eg First Steps key teacher, level 3 teacher etc; * copies of programs or policies written collaboratively*

Part G. Building Professional Responsibility

Focus points for effective early childhood teachers to consider:

1. Teachers regularly engage in the process of professional growth and reflective practices. -

**P.D information and how it is reflected in your work; * what professional development you have attended (certificates of attendance); * how have you used your PD -; photos; work samples; video of new teaching technique; evaluation of program that reflects new skills or knowledge from PD;*

2. Teachers evaluate results and seek input systematically from a variety of sources.

**mentor teacher notes; * principal comments; *minutes from interview meeting with principal *any performance management documentation * letters from district office eg from Curriculum Information officers; * temporary teacher returns; * assistants evaluative comments on workplace; * children's' comments or drawings about pre-primary; *teacher journal extracts about colleagues comments, *daily or weekly planning evaluation comment; * letters from parents; * teacher surveys to parents seeking input; *teachers own action research about their program; *input from student teachers(eg teacher journal notes about student comments, or a letter from student thanking teacher for practice)*

3. Teachers are open to new ideas and continually refine practices that reinforce their creativity, stimulate their personal growth and enhance their professionalism. -

**work sample; , * photos; * mentor teacher comments; *excerpt from teacher journal; *action research ; *teacher notes on participation in teaching practice supervision; *participation in professional development sessions(show attendance certificates; examples of how PD refined practice etc); *notes or certificates showing participation in network meetings*

4. Teachers contribute to the field of Early Childhood Education by discussing, examining, researching issues and policies pertinent to the development and learning of young children in the school community.

**membership to professional bodies: * letters to papers,; *letters to parents; *letters to the council; * copies of written comments to policy committees eg comment on Draft proposal of curriculum framework; *attending PD, network meetings and conferences; * writing to professional newsletters or journals; * book reviews; *notes on your contribution in teaching practice supervision from teacher journal or copy of student report; * photocopy of page from practice booklet with teacher supervision duties highlighted * notes on work experience supervision or copy of student report.*

Appendix 7

Focus Group Questions, Work Sheets and Member Check

Please complete these three tasks:

Task 1

Focus Points – Identify the item you consider the most important? _____

Why? _____

Are there any items you reject as unimportant? _____

Why?

Task 2

Look at the list of artifacts that could be collected. Circle the two artifact collection methods for each point that you consider to be:

- a) easy to do in your class room , and
- b) likely to be rewarding

Task 3

I have surveyed a number of teachers (you may have been amongst them) and the survey lead to a number of conclusions. I would like to know your thoughts to these questions.(or agree with these conclusions?)

A. My main form of accountability is talking to parents informally ? (please circle)

True False Unsure

B There seems to be differences between my thoughts about my accountability and what the school expects me to demonstrate?

True False Unsure

C Apart from myself I am most accountable to the parents of the children I teach?

True False Unsure

D The major factor that influences my planning is the children's level of development?

True False Unsure

E. Would you agree that your principal is unable to make performance management decisions about your K or P program?

True False Unsure

Appendix 8

Questions for Focus Group Principals

1. How do you ensure the quality of the pre-primary program?
2. Explain the accountability relationship you have with your pre-primary teacher(s)?
- 2a. Is the current accountability relationship satisfactory? If not how would you like it changed?
3. Have you experienced any difficulties in your accountability relationship with the pre-primary teacher(s) in your school? If so in what way?
4. Is there any difference between the accountability relationship you have with the pre-primary teacher(s) and the accountability relationship you have with other teachers in the school? Please explain your reasons.
5. On what information do you base your management decisions regarding the pre-primary teacher?
6. Would this framework assist you in making performance management decisions about the pre-primary program? Please explain the reason for your answer.
7. What difficulties would you have talking through these best practice focus points with the pre-primary teachers in your school?

Appendix 9
Results of Member Check (N= 145)

Item	True	False	Unsure	Missing
A. My main form of accountability is talking to parents informally?	63	61	11	
B. There seems to be differences between my thoughts about accountability and what the school expects me to demonstrate?	43	52	36	
C. I am most accountable to myself?	91	36	7	
D. Next, I am most accountable to the parents of the children I teach?	106	18	10	
E. The major factor influencing my planning is the children's level of development?	132	1	1	1
F. Would you agree that the principal needed to be more involved in the pre-primary program in order to make performance management decisions about your K or P program?	100	24	8	

Appendix 10
Refined Accountability Framework

Effective Early Childhood Educators

A portfolio to inform accountability and practice.

EFFECTIVE EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATORS

A Portfolio Framework for Pre-Primary Teachers

Preface

This project was initiated by my desire for pre-primary teachers to be able to articulate in a whole school context the reasons for their educational decisions. The pre-primary was often overlooked in the school development plan the vehicle for school accountability or asked to join the school MIS that did not lend itself (without close examination) to the pre-primary way of doing things. It was my opinion from my experiences, that pre-primary teachers were in fact accountable but had a different working framework from the one used by the primary classes of the school. Therefore I set out to talk to pre-primary teachers about how they formulated their educational program, the points they took into consideration to formulate their program and how they explained the decisions that they made and to whom.

INTRODUCTION

The portfolio is owned and constructed by each teacher and can be used as a springboard to talk to others about how pre-primary teachers work effectively and as a tool to reflect upon educational practices. It was constructed in a simple way so that teachers can use existing work and it should not be overly time consuming to participate.

The portfolio structure has two sections. Each section is set out with suggestions of what information to collect and how it may be used.

Section 1. This involves four steps to set the scene and describe your philosophy or goals.

Section 2 This section is broken up into seven subsections of effective practice focus areas for early childhood teachers. The subsections are:

- Child Development and Learning
- Early Childhood Curriculum
- Teaching for Meaningful Learning
- Assessment and Reporting
- Educational Partnerships
- The Whole School Context
- Building Professional Responsibility

The portfolio framework content was constructed from research in the field and a review of scholarly texts. Three influential references are:

- National Board for Teaching Standards – Early childhood Generalist (NBPTS,1995)
- “What is good early childhood education?” (EDWA,1998)
- Level 3 Portfolio (EDWA,1997)

So very simply let us start at the beginning.

What is a portfolio?

A portfolio is a purposeful collection of teacher's work describing their accomplishments over time. It is important in this collection to have clear succinct evidence that addresses the focus points that reflect effective teaching. The evidence collected will be referred to as artifacts.

Why use a portfolio?

A portfolio allows the contextual issues that influence educational decisions made in constructing curricula for young children to be explained. The portfolio is an ongoing project that will change over time mirroring the changes teachers go through as they grow and learn. It is a collection of work owned and constructed by the individual so it allows each teacher to showcase their work. Importantly, the portfolio framework can be used to lift the pre-primary teacher into the whole school context so that the essence of early childhood is not lost in the sometimes different perspective of the primary school.

How does it work?

Firstly the teacher must set the scene for his or her teaching. This is done in Section One and teachers can pull together information already contained in their documentation (see Section One).

In the second section there are a number of focus areas with focus points for teachers to consider when collecting evidence to show case their work. There are suggestions of artifacts that can be collected to illuminate these points, but these are suggestions only. Once the artifact is collected teachers are asked to write small captions on each artifact that identifies it, ties it to the focus point being considered and sets the scene in which it was created. At the end of each subsection there are three or four reflective questions for teachers to consider when reviewing their work in that area. The last part to each section is a page for comments and points that you would like to follow up with the principal, mentors, other staff members, parents or pre-primary colleagues.

PORTFOLIO FRAMEWORK FOR EFFECTIVE EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATORS

AIM

To assist Pre-primary teachers to articulate their educational decisions, to highlight professional teaching competence and to reflect and refine their early childhood teaching program.

AUDIENCE

The portfolio would be relevant to stakeholders in the accountability process. The portfolio can be used in interviews and dialogues with the principal, parents, colleagues, mentor teachers, district office staff and other professionals involved with young children.

PURPOSE

This portfolio is to be used as a springboard for meaningful conversations about effective early childhood education, to showcase examples of effective early childhood educational practices and assist pre-primary teachers to articulate their early childhood philosophy and accountability practices in a whole school context.

THE PORTFOLIO FRAMEWORK

This section outlines the areas to consider. The next section includes suggestions of artifacts to collect.

SECTION ONE

Contents

- Statement of Early Childhood Educational Philosophy or Teaching Goals
- A description of the context or Pre-primary setting
- A map of the Indoor and Outdoor areas
- A profile of yourself as a early childhood educator
- School Priorities for the year

SECTION TWO

Contents -

A Child Development and Learning

Focus Points for Effective Early Childhood Teachers to consider:

- Children's development varies and learning pathways and learning styles differ.
- Play allows children to engage with materials, the environment and other people which is essential to early learning.
- Children's learning is integrated, continuous and related to their development.
- Positive attitudes to learning, optimism, self-esteem and a sense of personal identity need to be fostered.

- The learning tasks that relate to the real life experiences of each child enable them to learn.
- Teachers are articulate in stating their evolving educational philosophy, knowledge of child development and early learning principles.

B Early Childhood Curriculum

Focus points for Effective Early Childhood Teachers to consider:

- A balanced curriculum give equal weight given to knowledge, skills and dispositions across subjects and domains.
- An inclusive curriculum caters for all children and all domains– social –emotional, aesthetic, physical and cognitive .
- A flexible curriculum builds on children’s interests, strengths, competencies and needs.
- Teacher’s design and implement appropriate experiences within and across disciplines built on their knowledge of the child’s development, previous learning and experiences.
- Teachers set realistic but ambitious goals for all children matched to children’s growth and development.
- Teachers sequence activities in ways that make sense conceptually.
- Knowledgeable teachers explain the significance of each learning area and can account for their decisions.

C Teaching for Meaningful Learning

Focus points for Effective Early Childhood Teachers to consider:

- Teachers create a supportive learning environment (indoors and outdoors) where children can explore, take intellectual risks and discuss different approaches, responses and understandings of tasks and activities.
- Teachers are adept at selecting, combining and creating materials that match the activity and the development of children.
- Timetable is flexible and allows for active engagement of children and strikes a balance between child choice and teacher direction of tasks and activities.
- Size and composition of groups varies for intended outcomes.
- Different strategies are used to complement different learning styles so that teachers work successfully with all children.
- Teachers use a variety of innovative and effective teaching strategies.
- Quality interactions take place between that build positive classroom relationships and improve student learning.
- Teachers foster student capacity to make choices and work as independent learners promoting self-regulation and child ownership of learning.

D Assessment and Reporting

Focus points for Effective Early Childhood Teachers to consider:

- Assessment is authentic, ongoing, suited to age group and celebrates student progress.
- Assessment is collected in a variety of settings, using various sources of information collection and is a collaborative effort.

- Teachers process assessment against several frames of reference eg First Steps, Learning Outcome Areas, Student Outcome Statements
- Teachers demonstrate how assessment informs planning and program effectiveness.
- Teachers build a cumulative picture of each child across disciplines and in all domains.
- Reporting in the pre-primary classroom reflects the nature of young children's learning
- Assessment information is conveyed so that parents and colleagues can understand what the teacher is doing and seeking to accomplish.

E Educational Partnerships

Focus points for Effective Early Childhood Teachers to consider:

- Collaboration with families is an essential component of an early childhood program and the teacher ensures contact with families is made over a variety of ways.
- Teacher incorporates community needs in the program.
- The teacher builds connections among children's families, cultures, community and children's work.
- Teachers communicate and work effectively with parents and families to inform and enhance support for children's learning.
- Teachers establish and maintain effective working relationships with supervisors, assistant, peers, volunteers and professionals from other disciplines.

F The Whole School Context

Focus points for Effective Early Childhood Teachers to consider:

- Teachers work towards the accomplishment of school priorities.
- Teachers work within a whole school philosophy and assist in the development of policies that ensure that appropriate procedures and guidelines for young children result.
- Teachers lead a collaborative approach with parents, colleagues and other professionals in identifying and supporting children with exceptional needs throughout the school.
- Teachers are active team members of a coordinated approach to teaching and learning in the early years so that transition and continuity, monitoring progress and intervention are ongoing.
- Teachers work effectively as collaborative team members who can negotiate resource sharing, add expertise to the school community and facilitate teacher leadership to assist others.

G Building Professional Responsibility

Focus points for Effective Early Childhood Teachers to consider:

- Teachers regularly engage in the process of professional growth and reflective practices.
- Teachers evaluate results and seek input systematically from a variety of sources.
- Teachers are open to new ideas and continually refine practices that reinforce their creativity, stimulate their personal growth and enhance their professionalism.

- Teachers contribute to the field of Early Childhood Education by examining, researching issues and policies pertinent to the development and learning of young children in the school community.

Artifact Collection Suggestions

It is very important that when you collect the artifact you write the focus point you are considering and then a couple of short sentences that highlights the point. Following are a few suggestions of artifacts to collect. Select a couple of ways that suit you to demonstrate each point.

SECTION ONE

Contents

- **Statement of Early Childhood Educational Philosophy or Teaching Goals**
- **A description of the context or Pre-Primary setting –**
- **A map of the Indoor and Outdoor areas-** *A hand drawn map of how you have set up the indoor area and a map of outdoor area with fixed equipment shown.*
- **A profile of yourself as an early childhood educator-***This could include a C.V. if you have one. If you don't want to be that formal, jot down your previous teaching experience and your strengths, hobbies or interests.*
- **School Priorities for the year-** *The School Development Plan could be included with relevant parts highlighted or priority page photocopied and included.*

SECTION TWO

A. Child Development and Learning

Focus points for effective early childhood teachers to consider:

- 1. Children's development varies and learning pathways and learning styles differ.**
**activity ideas that demonstrate how you have given the same concept in different ways (could be a photocopy of your daily plan with relevant parts highlighted); *work samples (or photos of work samples) showing the same concept but represented in different mediums, clay, construction material etc.*
- 2. Play allows children to engage with materials, the environment and other people which is central to effective early learning.** **highlight floor plan areas set up for exploration and play; * photos of children at play.*
- 3. Children's learning is integrated, continuous and related to their development.**
**evidence of developmental growth – checklists, First Steps continua, example of a child's portfolio with growth and development logged; *examples of integrated learning experiences.*
- 4. Positive attitudes to learning, optimism, self esteem and a sense of personal identity need to be fostered.** **lessons plans that promote self esteem and self identity; *individualized programs for self esteem and behavioral modification.*
- 5. The learning tasks that relate to the real life experiences of each child enable them to learn.** **photocopy of weekly plan with activities and highlighted that are totally child choice; *photos of activities with stated relevance to children.*
- 6. Teachers are articulate in stating their evolving educational philosophy, knowledge of child development and early learning principles.** ** copy of pre-primary handbook * copies or photos of written information around the room.*

**Discussion Guide (to be used with Mentor Teacher or Principal)
Teacher Notes on A. Child Development and Learning.**

Teacher Reflection:

Future Planning: (e.g. Something that I learnt that I really want to do something about and this is how I am going to try to do it).

Points for Discussion: (list the points about this section that you would like to bring up for discussion. They can be highlights, advice to be sought from more knowledgeable others or issues affecting practice. The literature shows if you have some points written down it is harder for other people to highjack your discussion).

Discussion Notes:

B. Early Childhood Curriculum

Focus points for effective early childhood teachers to consider:

- 1. A balanced curriculum gives equal weight given to knowledge, skills and dispositions across subjects and domains.** **take one day's planning and when evaluating it mark next to activities and learning centres, k,s and d (to represent knowledge, skills and dispositions) and look at the breakdown; *copies of programs or planning documents with colour coded legends for domains or subjects.*
- 2. An inclusive curriculum caters for all children and all domains –cognitive, social-emotional, physical and aesthetic.** **plans showing same activity offering different levels of participation; * samples of open ended activities.*
- 3. A flexible curriculum builds on children's interests, strengths, competencies and needs.** ** copy of how you tailored S.O.S to meet the needs of children in your class; *teacher journal excerpt of shared planning with children.*
- 4. Teacher's design and implement appropriate experiences within and across disciplines built on their knowledge of the child's development, previous learning and experiences.** **evidence from a child's portfolio showing development and caption highlights teacher scaffolding of child's learning; *First Steps continua logging a child's journey.*
- 5. Teachers set realistic but ambitious goals for all children matched to children's growth and development.** ** extension or remedial programs designed by teachers; *link child evaluations with classroom learning i.e. in evaluations of days' work set future directions for children made from classroom observations;*
- 6. Teachers sequence activities in ways that make sense conceptually.** **show photos of different equipment used over time to develop concepts i.e. gradual introduction of more complicated manipulative materials to play areas, or outdoor skills taught over time e.g. steps to throwing and catching; * children's work samples.*
- 7. Knowledgeable teachers explain the significance of each learning area and can account for their decisions.** **letters home to parents; *copies or photos of written information around the room.*

Discussion Guide (to be used with Mentor Teacher or Principal)
Teacher Notes on B. Early Childhood Curriculum

Teacher Reflection:

Future Planning: (e.g. Something that I learnt that I really want to do something about and this is how I am going to try to do it).

Points for Discussion: (list the points about this section that you would like to bring up for discussion. They can be highlights, advice to be sought from more knowledgeable others or issues affecting practice. The literature shows if you have some points written down it is harder for other people to hijack your discussion).

Discussion Notes:

C. Teaching for Meaningful Learning

Focus points for effective early childhood teachers to consider:

- 1. Teachers create a supportive learning environment (indoors and outdoors) where children can explore, take intellectual risks and discuss different approaches, responses and understandings of tasks and activities.** **photos; *assistants observations.*
- 2. Teachers are adept at selecting, combining and creating materials that match the activity and the development of children.** **photos of resources made and children's use of them; *copy of written information around room that may accompany resource display.*
- 3. Timetable is flexible and allows for active engagement of children and strikes a balance between child choice and teacher direction of tasks and activities.** **copy of timetable(showing flexibility or change); *excerpt from teacher journal of how timetable changed or was altered for incidental learning.*
- 4. Size and composition of groups varies for intended outcomes.** ** examples of partner work, cooperative group learning and one to one learning activities; *work samples produced in different groupings.*
- 5. Different strategies are used to complement different learning styles so that teachers work successfully with all children.** **plans showing different teaching strategies; *work samples that highlight different strategies used.*
- 6. Teachers use a variety of innovative and effective teaching strategies.** **resources made; *child work samples.*
- 7. Quality interactions take place that build positive classroom relationships and improve student learning.** **teacher observations and notes of student interactions and student/adult interactions; *copies of questions you have asked parents or your aide to ask while doing an activity to extend learning.*
- 8. Teachers foster student capacity to make choices and work as independent learners promoting self-regulation and child ownership of learning.** **work sample with child's comments written on; *activities that promote child independence and self regulation.*

Reflective Questions for Teachers.

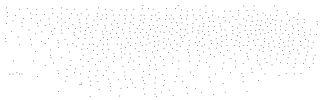
C. Teaching for Meaningful Learning.

- 1. For which children has the match between teaching strategies and learning been of most benefit? Why did you select these particular strategies?**

1a. For which children have the strategies used failed to provide meaningful learning? Why?

- 2. How can you be sure quality interactions are taking place in your classroom?**

- 3. Give three examples of how your classroom environment inside and outside have been varied to meet the needs of children.**



Discussion Guide (to be used with Mentor Teacher or Principal)
Teacher Notes on C. Teaching for Meaningful Learning

Teacher Reflection:

Future Planning: (e.g. Something that I learnt that I really want to do something about and this is how I am going to try to do it).

Points for Discussion: (list the points about this section that you would like to bring up for discussion. They can be highlights, advice to be sought from more knowledgeable others or issues affecting practice. The literature shows if you have some points written down it is harder for other people to highjack your discussion).

Discussion Notes:

D. Assessment and Reporting

In this section as with the others issues of student confidentiality exist. Do not use any names of students, if you do, only show the artifacts to professionals in the school.

Focus points for effective early childhood teachers to consider:

- 1. Assessment is authentic, ongoing, suited to age group and celebrates student progress.** **child portfolio ; *work samples.*
- 2. Assessment is collected in a variety of settings, using various sources of information collection and is a collaborative effort.** **child portfolio; *work samples.*
- 3. Teachers process assessment against several frames of reference e.g. First Steps, Learning Outcome Areas, Student Outcome Statements.** **examples of children's assessment made against frames of reference e.g. plotting children on the First Steps continua; *assessment of SOS*
- 4. Teachers demonstrate how assessment informs planning and program effectiveness.** **work samples; * highlight changes made by assessment: to environment(map), play areas(photos), resources used or changed(photo)and teaching strategies(lesson plan).*
- 5. Teachers build a cumulative picture of each child across disciplines and in all domains.** **child's portfolio; *teacher made checklists.*
- 6. Reporting in the pre-primary classroom reflects the nature of young children's learning.** **portfolios of children's work; * reports to principals or transition notes or reports to Year One teacher*
- 7. Assessment information is conveyed so that parents and colleagues can understand what the teacher is doing and seeking to accomplish.** **letters to parents; *notes of transition meetings with colleagues.*

Discussion Guide (to be used with Mentor Teacher or Principal)
Teacher Notes on D. Assessment and Reporting

Teacher Reflection:

Future Planning: (e.g. Something that I learnt that I really want to do something about and this is how I am going to try to do it).

Points for Discussion: (list the points about this section that you would like to bring up for discussion. They can be highlights, advice to be sought from more knowledgeable others or issues affecting practice. The literature shows if you have some points written down it is harder for other people to hijack your discussion).

Discussion Notes:

E. Educational Partnerships

Focus points for effective early childhood teachers to consider:

- 1. Collaboration with families is an essential component of an early childhood program and the teacher ensures contact with families is made over a variety of ways.** **copy of note home to parents which lists the different ways in which parents can help; *copies of newsletters or parent information letters*
- 2. Teachers incorporate community needs in the program.** **community members used as resources; *examples of incursions and excursions(perhaps video or photos) addressing need*
- 3. The teacher builds connections among children's families, cultures, community and children's work.** **special cultural days celebrated in the centre *photo of children's work on a community/cultural theme displayed in the community and school.*
- 4. Teachers communicate and work effectively with parents and families to inform and enhance support for children's learning.** **special work sent home or activity ideas for parents to do at home; *newsletters to parents*
- 5. Teachers establish and maintain effective working relationships with supervisors, aide, peers, volunteers and professionals from other disciplines.** **copies of correspondence between teacher and other children's services professionals; *reports from mentor teacher, principal or other colleagues; *teacher notes from case meetings with other professionals.*

Discussion Guide (to be used with Mentor Teacher or Principal)
Teacher Notes on E. Educational Partnerships

Teacher Reflection:

Future Planning: (e.g. Something that I learnt that I really want to do something about and this is how I am going to try to do it).

Points for Discussion: (list the points about this section that you would like to bring up for discussion. They can be highlights, advice to be sought from more knowledgeable others or issues affecting practice. The literature shows if you have some points written down it is harder for other people to highjack your discussion).

Discussion Notes:

F. The Whole School Context

Focus points for effective early childhood teachers to consider:

1. **Teachers work towards the accomplishment of school priorities.** **photocopy of planning documents highlighted in relevant parts; * work samples.*
2. **Teachers work within a whole school philosophy and assist in the development of policies that ensure that appropriate procedures and guidelines for young children result.** ** journal entries about policy committee meetings you attend; *copies of policies you have assisted in writing.*
3. **Teachers lead a collaborative approach with parents, colleagues and other professionals in identifying and supporting children with exceptional needs throughout the school.** ** notes of meetings with parents, colleagues and principal; * copy of the process used to identify child with special needs; * notes in journal of steps taken by teacher to support child or children with exceptional needs.*
4. **Teachers are active team members of a coordinated approach to teaching and learning in the early years so that transition and continuity, monitoring progress and intervention are ongoing.** **transition and continuity activities or processes:- letters to colleagues concerning children moving on from your class; *notes in teacher journal of philosophy sharing sessions with colleagues.*
5. **Teachers work effectively as collaborative team members who can negotiate resource sharing, add expertise to the school community and facilitate teacher leadership to assist others.** **notes or newsletters about school events you organized or participated in; *duty description of other roles you play within the school eg First Steps key teacher, Level 3 teacher etc*

Discussion Guide (to be used with Mentor Teacher or Principal)
Teacher Notes on F. The Whole School Context

Teacher Reflection:

Future Planning: (e.g. Something that I learnt that I really want to do something about and this is how I am going to try to do it).

Points for Discussion: (list the points about this section that you would like to bring up for discussion. They can be highlights, advice to be sought from more knowledgeable others or issues affecting practice. The literature shows if you have some points written down it is harder for other people to hijack your discussion).

Discussion Notes:

G. Building Professional Responsibility

Focus points for effective early childhood teachers to consider:

- 1. Teachers regularly engage in the process of professional growth and reflective practices.** **P.D information and how it is reflected in your work; * how have you used your PD -; photos, work samples, video of new teaching technique.*
- 2. Teachers evaluate results and seek input systematically from a variety of sources.** ** children's comments or drawings about pre-primary; *daily or weekly planning evaluation comment.*
- 3. Teachers are open to new ideas and continually refine practices that reinforce their creativity, stimulate their personal growth and enhance their professionalism.** **work sample; *participation in professional development sessions(show attendance certificates; examples of how PD refined practice etc.*
- 4. Teachers contribute to the field of Early Childhood Education by discussing, examining, researching issues and policies pertinent to the development and learning of young children in the school community.** **membership to professional bodies; *attending PD, network meetings and conferences.*

Discussion Guide (to be used with Mentor Teacher or Principal)
Teacher Notes on G. Building Professional Responsibility

Teacher Reflection:

Future Planning: (e.g. Something that I learnt that I really want to do something about and this is how I am going to try to do it).

Points for Discussion: (list the points about this section that you would like to bring up for discussion. They can be highlights, advice to be sought from more knowledgeable others or issues affecting practice. The literature shows if you have some points written down it is harder for other people to hijack your discussion).

Discussion Notes: