CYCLICAL REVIEWS
IN SELECTED WESTERN SYDNEY
THE INFLUENCE ON PARTICIPATING PRINCIPALS

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A thesis submitted for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy of the University of New England

January 2014
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This study could not have been completed without the willing cooperation of many principals and regional personnel and the outstanding support and understanding from many others at the University of New England, my friends, and family.

Particular thanks are due to Dr Peter McClenaghan and Associate Professor Robyn Smyth, my supervisors, for their perceptiveness, optimism, friendship, understanding, encouragement, and boundless patience.

Sincere thanks are also due to Professor Reynold Macpherson and Professor Patrick Duignan for their ongoing support and critical reflections on my work and to Grant Beard, my brother, for hours of tireless proof-reading.

Special thanks are due to Mary McClenaghan for her hospitality and friendship, Nuala Duignan for her encouragement and friendship, and to Janelle Horton, Wanda Snitch, Lyn Chapman, Narelle Young, Del Da Costa, Carolyn Shaw, Gillian Shadwick, Joy and Jim Murray, and Barry Laing and Vanessa Morris, who formed my personal support network and remain dear friends.

To my two daughters, Tara and Liane, and to Ben and Melisa—thank you for being there.

Finally, thank you to all the participants whose expertise, time, and effort were greatly appreciated and without whom the study could not have progressed.
DEDICATION

This study is dedicated to Ron Ikin 1935–2012:
my adoring husband, confidante, mentor, work partner, and my best friend.

Ron was a passionate educator, a fanatical football supporter, and a builder and handyman; he was actively involved in politics, ran a newspaper, and was a Fulbright Scholar; he was very good at drawing and painting, and playing a range of sports, most notably table tennis, and was always unbelievably competitive; he was a great story teller; he was quick witted and exceptionally intelligent; he was fiercely determined but unselfish and motivated by what was right; he was a great friend and colleague to literally hundreds and loved developing connections between seemingly diverse people; he was fearless in meetings; he relished new challenges and loved ‘occasions’; he did not know how to retire or sit by idly, and he certainly did not know how to give up.
ABSTRACT

Over the period 2006 to 2009, the then Western Sydney Region of the New South Wales Department of Education and Training developed a Framework for School Cyclical Reviews and piloted these reviews in nine regional government schools.

The study examined the influence the Cyclical Review process had on participating school principals. Insight was sought into the use made over time of both the evaluation processes and evaluation results by the participating principals, including impressions from the principals of the factors that had influenced them in the course of the review.

From the insights gained it was expected to make recommendations about the appropriate selection and preparation of principals for reviews and review teams, and the future conduct of reviews, as well as comment on the usefulness of current research into evaluation influence.

The literature of educational evaluation—its functions and forms, evaluation utilisation, use, and influence; factors affecting evaluation; participatory evaluation; and evaluation capacity building (ECB)—were then explored. The literature suggested four key areas of focus including designing a theoretical model to map evaluation influence; uncovering factors that contribute to influence; effects of participation on principals; and determining outcomes of ECB demonstrated by the principals who participated in the Cyclical Reviews.

A qualitative case-study methodology comparing two groups of principals was undertaken.
Data were then collected from the participating principals, their schools, and the regional Cyclical Review Steering Committee by document searches, questionnaires, interviews, and participant observation. A process—Pocket PCs for Organising Data and Sorting (PPODS)—developed specifically for the Cyclical Reviews was also used to select, enter, and sort the data.

It was found that the principals who advised only as team members in other principals’ schools were primarily concerned with problem-solving when outcomes fell short of objectives. This is consistent with the limits of single-loop learning.

Principals who had to understand and apply criteria in the evaluation of their own schools, design evaluation strategies and techniques, and later reflect critically on the quality of evaluation practices and capacities in order to improve the values and assumptions influencing their own practices were shown to engage in deep learning. That is, they were engaged in a kind of learning that fully integrated an experiential learning cycle of experiencing, reflecting, thinking, and acting. This is consistent with double-loop learning.

Four areas were considered in the data analysis: the impact of context, human, and evaluation factors along with unique catalytic values identified by the researcher.

It is recommended that theory and policy partly include consideration of relevant values, methodology, context, professional development, double-loop learning, and national agendas.

It is recommended further with regard to school-based reviews that are cyclical that existing strategies and tools be retained while acknowledging contemporary methodologies, that differential strategies depending on roles be identified, and that selection criteria for participation in the reviews be determined.
Further research examining the role and influence of single and double-loop learning, reviews on student learning, and values should also be considered.
CERTIFICATION

I certify that the substance of this thesis has not already been submitted for any degree and is not currently being submitted for any other degree or qualification.

I certify that any help received in preparing this thesis and all sources used have been acknowledged in this thesis.

____________________________________
Signature
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<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CEFP</td>
<td>Collaborative Evaluation Fellows Project</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DARE</td>
<td>Drug Abuse Resistance Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ECB</td>
<td>Evaluation Capacity Building</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ESL</td>
<td>English as a Second Language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KWIC</td>
<td>Keyword-in-context</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NAPLAN</td>
<td>National Assessment Program for Literacy and Numeracy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OD</td>
<td>Organisational Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PAR</td>
<td>Participatory Action Research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PARS</td>
<td>Principal Assessment and Review Schedule</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PIP</td>
<td>Principal Improvement Program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P-PE</td>
<td>Practical-participatory Evaluation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PPODS</td>
<td>Pocket PCs for Organising Data and Sorting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TAFE</td>
<td>Technical and Further Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T-PE</td>
<td>Transformative-participatory Evaluation</td>
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