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What role can Indigenous child care training play in ameliorating disadvantage for Indigenous people?

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What role can Indigenous child care training play in ameliorating disadvantage for Indigenous people?



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**A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the
requirement for the award of
Bachelor of Social Science (Honours) degree.**

Edith Cowan University
Faculty of Psychology and Social Science

Supervisor:- Associate Professor Margaret Sims

Submitted: 27 October 2008

Abstract

The early years of children's lives are vitally important to their long term outcomes. Yet, in Australian, not all children have access to the same opportunities to enhance their development and achieve their fullest potential, as Australian Indigenous children experience considerable disadvantage in comparison to other Australian children. The multifaceted approach required to eliminate this disadvantage, and the associated oppression, has education central to it. Emancipatory education is powerful as it assists learners to develop skills and, within the context of the educational philosopher Freire, also develop their ability to confront their oppression. This research paper explores Indigenous child care training developed in Western Australia and Canada's successful model of working with Indigenous Canadians, First Nations, in the child care and education area. This exploration is conducted within Freire's approach to education to determine what makes education liberating for oppressed groups and ameliorates disadvantage.

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Signed..........

Date 14 July 2009

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Chapter 1 - Introduction

I was inspired to focus my research project on Indigenous child care after working alongside some truly dedicated professionals, passionate about children, child care and building capacity within families and communities, on a project with a similar focus. Given my passion for children and families and an innate belief in social justice, the direction of my research project emerged organically.

Nevertheless, I spent much time deliberating the intricacies of the project. As a non-Indigenous woman could I truly understand Australia's Indigenous community's history, its current status and hopes for the future? While I chose to persevere, I was always conscious of my lack of knowledge and insight into Australia's Indigenous people. I hope my words are read with the understanding that they were always chosen with the greatest respect to Australia's Indigenous people.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The depth and breadth of the disadvantage currently being experienced by many Indigenous children and their families is concerning. Of more concern is the lack of success in addressing the advancing disadvantage. In seeking to address this, intervention early in children's lives is where the greatest impact is felt as children's development can be optimized, and the functioning of families' enhanced and negative outcomes prevented.

Firstly, this research project begins by exploring the current situation for many of Australia's Indigenous people before considering the Australian government's approach to child care and the importance of focusing upon these early years of children's lives.

Indigenous Australian disadvantage

Current research, literature and government reports leave no doubt that many of Australia's Indigenous people are disadvantaged. This disadvantage exists largely because of historical events where Indigenous Australians were treated unjustly. Indigenous Australians lived in a society, up until the 1970s, where legislation discriminated against them on the basis of their race and where policies were

implemented that restricted their rights and freedom (Davidson & Jennett, n.d., p. 2). The legacy of these past actions is evident in the degree of disadvantage experienced, whilst the continuing existence of discrimination, exclusion and control are far more subtle.

By international standards, Australian children enjoy many opportunities and prosper well in life, yet there is an anomaly, as this is not the case for many of Australia's Indigenous children. From the Indigenous child's viewpoint, the degree of disadvantage many experience in their early years inhibits their ability to grow to their fullest potential. Many Indigenous children experience a multitude of factors that can create long term disadvantage, denying them the same opportunities as other Australian children. When consideration is given to the statistical evidence, the depth together with the breadth of disadvantage that Indigenous children encounter presents a worrying picture (Australian Government Task Force on Child Development Health and Wellbeing, 2006, p. 8; Daly & Smith, 2005; States of New South Wales and Queensland, 2004; Zubrick et al., 2004).

According to Zubrick et al. (2004, p. 25) the Indigenous population of Western Australia at 30 June 2001 was estimated at 66 069 people, or 3.5% of the State population. Within this Indigenous population, 29 817 people were under the age of 18 years which equates to 6% of the state's general population, or 45% of the total Indigenous population (Zubrick et al., 2004, p. 25). This disproportionate age distribution in continuing to increase as the birth rate for Indigenous families continues to increase more rapidly in comparison to non-Indigenous births. In 2004 there were 2.29 births per Indigenous women compared with 1.81 for all other women in Western Australia (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2004). The median age for Indigenous mothers was 24.1 years compared with 30.2 years for all other mothers (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2004).

Research indicates that both the mother's health during pregnancies and the early years of a child's life are critical periods for long term developmental outcomes (Daly & Smith, 2005, p. 51; National Health and Medical Research Council, n.d., p. 4). If, during these times, mothers and children are exposed to positive and

healthy experiences then the likelihood of optimal future outcomes are increased. Conversely, negative and unhealthy experiences impact adversely on outcomes.

There are some core areas of health for mothers and children that need consideration, such as premature birth and birth weight as well as maternal health during pregnancy, as these are influential factors impacting on long term outcomes for children. Often Indigenous women experience poorer pregnancy outcomes and are more than twice as likely to have babies of low birth-weight and/or who die at birth or in the early post-natal phase (National Health and Medical Research Council, n.d., p. 4) when compared to other Australian children. Indigenous children are far more likely to be born prematurely (13% compared with 8% for non-Indigenous births) or with a low birth weight (11% compared with 7% for general population) (National Health and Medical Research Council, n.d.; Zubrick et al., 2004, p. 107). Low birth weight babies, including premature babies, are at greater risk of dying or suffering significant disability and poor health which impacts upon their future outcomes (Department of Indigenous Affairs, 2005, p. 24; National Health and Medical Research Council, n.d.; Zubrick et al., 2004, P. 107). With the increased rates of premature births and low birth weights many Indigenous babies begin life disadvantaged compared to their peers.

A report presented by Zubrick and others in 2004 on the health of Western Australian Indigenous children indicated that Indigenous mothers often experience multiple risk factors that contribute to their low birth weight babies (Zubrick et al., 2004). Foetal development is impacted upon by smoking cigarettes, consuming alcohol and using other drugs, and statistics reveal that Indigenous mothers are more likely to engage in these activities (Daly & Smith, 2005; Zubrick et al., 2004). Forty-six percent of mothers of Indigenous children are reported to have smoked tobacco during pregnancy compared with 22% for other mothers (Zubrick et al., 2004). Smoking during pregnancy places the unborn child at a great risk of being born with a low birth weight thereby affecting later outcomes.

Interestingly this same report discovered that, compared to the general population, Indigenous mothers rate of consumption of alcohol was far less (Zubrick et al., 2004, p. 114). Whilst the pattern of alcohol consumption was not surveyed it is claimed that Indigenous women (of child bearing age) tend to consume alcohol at a hazardous level, therefore it is assumed that this pattern continues for pregnant women (Zubrick et al., 2004, p. 114). This is concerning, as the consumption of alcohol whilst pregnant adversely affects the unborn child (Daly & Smith, 2005, p. 51). Drug use in pregnancy also impacts on the unborn child. It was reported that 8.8% of Indigenous mothers smoked marijuana whilst pregnant (Zubrick et al., 2004, p. 116). These three areas of unhealthy behaviours whilst pregnant all increase the likelihood of mothers delivering a low birth weight baby. Consequently, low birth weight babies begin life disadvantaged compared with other babies as they are at a greater immediate risk of long term adverse developmental outcomes.

Another significant illustration of the disadvantage experienced by Indigenous children is the over-representation of these children in the state's child protection system. There are 23.4 per 1000 Indigenous children on care and protection orders, compared with 4.6 per 1000 non-Indigenous children (Australian Government Task Force on Child Development Health and Wellbeing, 2006, p. 9). At 30 June 2004, 23% (5059) of children in out-of-home care were Indigenous children with this figure increasing (Australian Government Task Force on Child Development Health and Wellbeing, 2006; Higgins, Bromfield, & Richardson, 2005; Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care, 2005a).

From beginning life with increased risk factors Indigenous children often enter school behind their peers. This gap widens when Indigenous children engage in the education system. As early as Year 3 Indigenous students underperform compared to other students as they record lower levels in both reading and numeracy skills (measured at Years 3 and 5) (States of New South Wales and Queensland, 2004; Zubrick et al., 2006). As educational attainment is linked to a number of outcomes in later life, this lowered performance level so early in life will have lasting implications for Indigenous children (Department of Indigenous

Affairs, 2005, p. 10). This gap widens for many Indigenous children the longer they stay at school.

Indigenous students are less likely than all students to stay at school beyond the compulsory years (Zubrick et al., 2006, p. 237). In 2001 the proportion of Indigenous students continuing to Year 10 was 88% compared with 99% for all other students (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2007). For those Indigenous students who continued to Year 12 the apparent retention rate was half that of all students – that is 40% compared with 77% (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2007).

The trend of disadvantage continues for Indigenous people in post secondary training. The National Centre for Vocational Education (NCVER) reported that in 2003 there were approximately 58 000 Indigenous students enrolled in VET (Vocational Education and Training) courses. These students represented only 3% of the total student population (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2005b, p. 20).

Although there has been a 60% increase in the number of Indigenous VET students from 1996 to 2000 (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2002) Indigenous students are generally undertaking lower level Certificates I and II qualifications. The proportion of Indigenous VET students studying at the Certificate I or II level is twice that of all students – that is 44% compared with 22% for non-Indigenous students (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2002). In addition Indigenous students are achieving fewer passes compared with all other students (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2002). Overall the statistics for higher education Indigenous students are less positive than all other students. Success in vocational education is reliant upon the completion of modules of study. In 2003 the rate of VET module completions was lower for Indigenous students (65%) than from the total VET student population (78%) (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2005b, p. 20). Of those modules not completed, the rate of unsuccessful results for Indigenous students was higher than for all students (17% compared with 10%) (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2002). Yet again, success rates for Indigenous people lag behind other Australians.

With Indigenous people experiencing this degree of educational disadvantage, opportunities to improve their situation are hindered. Education is a key factor in overcoming disadvantage and should be considered as a pivotal strategy (Alsop, Bertelsen, & Holland, 2006; Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2005a, 2005b, 2005c; Australian Labor Party, 2007b; Campbell, 2000; Daly & Smith, 2005, p. 49; Department of Indigenous Affairs, 2005; UNESCO, 2004).

Employment status and occupation skills are influenced by education and training therefore a lack of achievement restricts Indigenous people from accessing the same level of opportunities as other non-Indigenous Australians.

The Howard government's approach to Indigenous disadvantage

On 3 December 2007, Australia experienced a significant change with the demise of the Howard government and the Rudd government taking office. With any change in government a multitude of amendments to policy, strategies and service delivery are expected. The new Rudd government is currently planning for these, and with the implementation stage just beginning, this paper focuses is upon the events prior to the 2007 Australian federal election.

Australia's Indigenous people's disadvantage is undeniable and faced with such obvious evidence the governments of Australia have focused upon Indigenous affairs for many years. Notwithstanding this evidence of widespread disadvantage for Indigenous Australians, it may appear that Australia is not committed to ensuring that Indigenous Australians enjoy the same standard of living as other Australians. While there are many reports, policies, strategies and actions from the Howard government's time in office to suggest that overcoming disadvantage was a goal the government endeavoured to achieve, this objective remains elusive.

In the eleven years of governing Australia, the Howard government's courses of action in relation to Indigenous affairs were adjusted in response to the lack of success in addressing or significantly reducing the depth and breadth of Indigenous disadvantage. It was stated by former Prime Minister, John Howard, that positive outcomes for Indigenous Australians "cannot be achieved quickly or

easily, and represents a long-term national commitment. The legacy of past injustices and misguided policies presents a major challenge”

(Steering Committee for the Review of Government Service Provision [SCRGSP], 2005, p. iii). Nevertheless, the Howard government decided that a change in direction was required. There was an expressed belief that separate and elected representation for Indigenous people had been a failure and therefore changes in the way of approaching Indigenous affairs were fundamental (Gray & Sanders, 2006, p. 1). The discourse around Indigenous affairs also changed, with a shift in the terms used, from those of self-determination, self-management and national Indigenous representation and advocacy to those of mainstreaming, mutual obligation, shared responsibility and a whole-of-government approach (Taylor, 2006). In addition on the 30 June 2004, the Minister for Indigenous Affairs, Amanda Vanstone, announced that the government would no longer persist with its current approach and that a new approach based on acceptance of responsibility by government as well as Indigenous communities would be implemented. Minister Vanstone went on to state that “Mainstream government departments would be required to accept responsibility for Indigenous services and will be held accountable for outcomes.” (Gray & Sanders, 2006, p. 4). This mainstreaming of Indigenous services at this time was not a surprising move, as there was a general trend towards economic liberalism (Altman, 2007, p.2).

The Howard government’s change in direction was based on a growing emphasis on what is termed “practical reconciliation” or the pursuit of statistical equality between the standard of living of Indigenous and other Australians in the areas of health, housing, education and employment (Rowse, 2005, p. 5; Taylor, 2006, p. 2). The compelling evidence from the statistical data, presented earlier in this chapter, affirms the depth and breadth of disadvantage experienced by Indigenous Australians. Taylor (2006, p. 1) suggests that the socio-economic situation of Indigenous people in Australia can be considered as evidence of the failure of government policy over the past 30 years or alternatively, that these government policies have not significantly improved the lives of Indigenous people fast enough. It would appear that the lack of success in addressing Indigenous disadvantage presents a convincing argument for urgent strategies to create statistical equality between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians.

To measure progress towards these goals the Howard government introduced a reporting framework to inform the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) about changes to the key indicators of Indigenous disadvantage. That direction enabled the evaluation of social interventions or actions, which were then used to report back to the government (Taylor, 2006). The associated reporting framework drew heavily on socio-economic indicators from census and survey sources (Taylor, 2006, p.2) and these sources of information were considered pivotal to monitoring progress towards achieving the government's goal of addressing Indigenous disadvantage. In order to formulate progress reports, strategies facilitating the changes had to be developed and implemented. Whilst not a new strategy, child care is an extremely important and very influential strategy when seeking to ameliorate disadvantage.

Child care as a government strategy

As impoverished environments have a significant negative impact on outcomes for adults, it is essential to take action early in children's lives, as this is a fundamental step in prevention. One such preventative approach in Australian society is child care and this critical strategy supports children in the quest for optimal development. Child care is a strategy, not just for supporting specific families. It is a political heavy weight, as it is a key component that spans the political divide as both major political parties' social policies utilise child care as they seek to achieve their vision for Australian families (Australian Government Department of Families Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, 2007; Australian Government Department of Family Housing Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, 2005; James, 2005). This strategy, through the provision of assistance, supports families to participate in the economic and social life of the Australian community. Furthermore, it supports families overall functioning (Australian Government Task Force on Child Development Health and Wellbeing, 2006; Brennan, 1994; McGurk, 1996; Wise & Sanson, 2000) and the benefits for children from disadvantaged family backgrounds are even greater (Australian Government Department of Families Housing Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, 2007a; Australian Government Department of Family and Community Services, 2004b). The role of child care links with the overwhelming

evidence of the importance of the early years and the provision of positive and enriching opportunities and environments to support children's optimal development.

The important early years

Within our society the message is being stated loudly, that providing enhanced and enriched environments and opportunities is essential for children to grow to their fullest potential. Support for the early years of children's lives comes from a range of disciplines and extends beyond the boundaries of Australia, with considerable international research adding weight. The arguments for enriched early childhood experiences go beyond those of social justice and equity to include the strong voice of economics and productivity (Australian Government Task Force on Child Development Health and Wellbeing, 2006; Heckman, 2006; Heckman & Masterov, 2005; McCain & Mustard, 1999; McCain, Mustard, & Shanker, 2007; Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000). Children's early years experience establishes a foundation which critically influences health, social and educational outcomes throughout life.

With evidence of the importance of children's early years of life it could be expected that all Australian children are experiencing the same level of opportunities and advantages. But this is not the case as there are a number of children who do not have the same opportunities as other children to grow and develop to their fullest potential. These children and their families need support to ameliorate their disadvantage. Heckman (2006, p. 2) suggests that traditionally the argument to invest in disadvantaged children has been based on social justice and fairness but there is another argument that is grounded in economic efficiency. This argument stresses that costs associated with ensuring that children have rich early environments is far less than the costs associated with addressing issues and associated consequences in adulthood. The Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care (2002, p. 3) reiterates this notion that increased expenditure in children's early years is an investment "...which will return to families, communities and governments not just long term savings in financial terms but long term benefits in the health and welfare of Indigenous children and young people". Similarly, Heckman and Masterov (2005) suggest

that from a productivity point of view, it makes sound business sense to invest in young children from disadvantaged environments, otherwise the quality and growth of the labour force is negatively impacted.

PURPOSE OF THIS STUDY

The purpose of this qualitative study was to understand the role that Indigenous specific child care training can have in ameliorating disadvantage for Australian Indigenous people. The study sought to explore and understand this relationship by using a Freirean approach (discussed in detail in Chapter 2) to interpret the data collected through reviewing literature, analysing documentation and interviewing a key person involved in the development of a Western Australian Indigenous specific child care training package.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS STUDY

Australia is experiencing a change of quite mammoth proportions as a new federal government begins to lead this country. The previous Howard government had a strong intention to mainstream services for Indigenous people. Whilst the Rudd government, although only in the infancy stage of governing Australia, will inevitably introduce numerous changes impacting upon Australian lives, at this time a change in direction is likely to happen.

Indigenous people experience disadvantage at a far greater rate than non-Indigenous Australians and in all aspects of their lives. From beginning life with a low birth weight many Indigenous children then don't attend early childhood services such as playgroups, child care centres and preschools that provide many opportunities for optimising developmental outcomes and supporting families. This disadvantage continues at school where attendance and completion rates are less than their non-Indigenous peers and as adults where life style and health negatively impact on mortality rates.

As a first world country, the overall picture for Australia's Indigenous people is far from optimal and is a picture that needs to be recreated. If there is a goal for Australia's Indigenous people it is to enjoy the same life expectancy, opportunities and standard of living as other Australians and to be active

participants in the social and economic aspects of Australian life, then ensuring effective strategies are put in place to facilitate this is fundamental. Therefore, the outcomes of this research are important as through a review of a successful model with Indigenous communities and an exploration of this model within Australia's current Rudd government, knowledge will be increased and a greater understanding gained. This can influence the development, including the pedagogical approach of education, which has the potential to contribute to the amelioration of disadvantage for Indigenous people. The knowledge gained is not limited to the early childhood area and can be applied across a range of areas, wherever families and communities are central.

DEFINITIONS OF TERMS

Child care – Care that is provided to children by people other than the parents of the child. Child care can be both informal and formal care (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2006).

Curriculum – The courses of study offered by an educational institution (UNESCO, 2004).

Disadvantage – Being in an unfavourable position in life (Department of Indigenous Affairs, 2005)

Early childhood services - Services that are provided during early childhood to support children grow to their fullest potential (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2006).

Education – The process by which learning and knowledge is gained (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2001). ***(For this study the term education is used to encompass all opportunities to learn including through training, informal and formal education).***

Elder – A senior member of an Indigenous community who may be an original descendent or has lived in and contributed to the community.

First Nations – Indigenous people of Canada.

Formal care – This is regulated care that happens away from a child’s home. The main types of formal care are before and/or after school care, long day care, family day care, occasional care and preschool (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2006).

Indigenous – A person of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent who identifies as an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander and is accepted as such by the community in which he or she lives (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2003b).

Informal Care – Care arranged by a child’s parent/guardian, either in the child’s home or elsewhere. It comprises care provided by (step) brothers or sisters, care by grandparents, care by other relatives (including a parent living elsewhere) and care provided by other (unrelated) people such as friends, neighbours, nannies or babysitters. This can be paid or unpaid (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2006).

MACS (Multifunctional Aboriginal Children’s Services) – Flexible services that are provided to meet Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children’s social and developmental needs. MACS offers care for children under school age and for school age children, including long day care, playgroups, before and after school care and school holiday care, and cultural programs (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2003b).

Out-of-home care – Refers to the placement of children away from their parents for protective or other family welfare reasons. These placements may be voluntary or in conjunction with care and protection orders (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2003a).

Pedagogy – The profession, science or theory of teaching (UNESCO, 2004).

Training – The process by which learning and knowledge is gained (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2001). ***(This term is used interchangeable with education throughout this paper).***

VET (Vocational Education and Training) – General learning that has a vocational perspective. It includes elements such as generic employability skills,

enterprise education, career education and work based learning (Department of Education Employment and Workplace Relations, 2008).

LIMITATIONS OF THIS RESEARCH

As noted previously, in late 2007 Australia experienced a change in federal government and consequently there have been many amendments proposed and implemented as a result. Whilst these changes provide opportunities and challenges for Australians, they have placed limitations on this research. Whilst the direction in early childhood care and education for Australia's Indigenous people has been articulated, the formalisation of this is yet to manifest. This research comes at an interesting time but one of constraint as the new Rudd government establishes itself and its strategies. Therefore, this paper focuses upon the events prior to the 2007 Australian federal election.

Chapter 2 - Theoretical framework

This chapter presents the theoretical framework to be applied to this research project. A theoretical framework presents itself as a tool of explanation to clarify the main points raised in a study (Bell, 2005, p. 103) and therefore, by applying Paulo Freire theoretical framework to this project, there is an opportunity to understand Indigenous Australians' disadvantage whilst exploring what role Indigenous specific child care training has in ameliorating disadvantage for Australia's Indigenous people.

The impact that Freire has had upon education and educators is exceptional. He has inspired many to "make life more humane for those oppressed by economic and ideological structures that denied them their dignity, rights, and self-determination" (Glass, 2001, p. 15). Consequently Freire is considered by many as one of the most influential people (in relation to his thoughts on education) to have emerged in the latter part of the twentieth century (Glass, 2001, p. 15; Steiner, Krank, McLaren, & Bahruth, 2000, p. 1; Taylor, 1993, p. 1). With his work centering on the issues of social and political change, Freire's theory focuses on the relationship between liberation and education (Steiner, Krank, McLaren, & Bahruth, 2000, p. 5). Freire has explored, examined and explained, in various formats, the importance of education to ameliorating disadvantage and oppression for the oppressed (Freire, 1972). His writings always consider education as the key to empowering the oppressed to challenge the status quo and to work towards addressing their situation. It is only through the realisation of their situation, and then challenging this, that oppression is overcome and liberation achieved.

FREIRE – THE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

It is difficult to consider liberation, education, empowerment and oppression without reflecting on the work of Paulo Freire, the Brazilian philosopher, educator and political activist. Some view Freire as "the greatest living educator, a master and teacher..." as he introduced the notion that education that sought to liberate the oppressed was essential for them to attain social change and freedom (Taylor, 1993, p. 1). Whilst the phrase "knowledge is power" is commonly heard and often

accepted, Freire believed that education and freedom were intertwined. He felt that education was a practise of freedom; that freedom was enjoying the power to speak and think without external control and education the tool of empowerment.

Education and knowledge provides people with an awareness of issues impacting on their lives; without awareness addressing these issues is impossible.

Knowledge assists the decision making process, but it is important to understand where the knowledge emerges, as knowledge can be used to control and influence consciousness. Therefore it is essential, if disadvantaged groups are to increase their awareness and improve their situation, that they have access to emancipatory education and knowledge (Freire, 1972; Gaventa & Cornwall, 2006, p. 72; Reason & Bradbury, 2006, p. 72).

Freire's philosophy of education is based upon the belief that people's consciousness and participation increases with education. As people understand the cause of their oppression, they can then take steps to ameliorate their situation (Alsop, Bertelsen, & Holland, 2006, p. 10; Freire & Faundez, 1989; Medel-Anonuevo, 1995, p. 42). Freire believed that conventional educational systems and approaches were not suitable for minority groups as they continued to oppress instead of liberate (Freire & Faundez, 1989, p. 77; Pimentel, 2006, p. 8). Instead Freire suggested that education needed to focus on equity, transformation and the inclusion of all individuals through the development of conscious and critical thinking (Darder, 2002, p. xii; Freire & Faundez, 1989, p. 35; Pimentel, 2006). This enables content to be analysed and understood, so that learning isn't just memorising but is about truly understanding and making sense of situations. Consequently, this in-depth understanding and knowledge assists to empower people to embark upon addressing their situation.

The dichotomy that exists between teacher and student in conventional educational settings needs to be rethought so that there is a bi-directional relationship in which both parties bring their knowledge and experiences to the learning process. Freire was opposed to the idea of teachers depositing knowledge "into students" believing that a reciprocal relationship was needed between teacher and student (Freire, 1975, p. 5; Freire & Faundez, 1989;

Pimentel, 2006). This relationship allows students to fully participate in activities that are real to their learning. As a result, students develop the ability to think consciously and critically enabling them to make decisions and participate more fully in their own lives and future.

This reciprocal relationship impacts on the learner, as it is through this that Freire believes that people learn to understand and transform reality. This transformation is part of the process of overcoming oppression as it enables people to see their reality instead of the reality of the oppressor; opposing conformity to the oppressor. Dialogue enables this to occur and it is important that this happens within the learner's community as this community has a familiar language to the learner (Darder, 2002, p. 69; Gaventa & Cornwall, 2006, p. 72). The delivery of education in communities provides the opportunities to gain an understanding of the learner's way of thinking and at the same time the learner's experiences are contextualised in the process. This relationship is based on respect for each other's knowledge and skills as this enables all people to participate equally in learning (Pimentel, 2006).

Freire emphasises the power of dialogue as he claims that oppression continues for minority groups as the oppressors seek to prevent people from uniting (Freire & Faundez, 1989). Through discourse the oppressors warn that it is dangerous to the status quo to talk to the oppressed about uniting. This results in alienation that weakens the oppressed as it causes internal unrest and division within this group. When people confront oppression and seek liberation they can be stigmatised for their efforts and therefore potential leaders do not emerge (Darder, 2002, p. 137). It is in the interest of the oppressors to ensure that oppressed people do not unite; as if they do they are able to liberate themselves. Unity would challenge the oppressors own status and the status quo and to be able to continue to dominate, oppressors need to ensure that this does not occur (Darder, 2002, p.40).

Freire's philosophy is based on belief in the power of education to change the world for the better through supporting freedom from oppression and the inclusion of all people (Freire & Faundez, 1989; Pimentel, 2006, p. 8). It is with these thoughts in mind, that Freire's philosophy of education has been introduced

to the discussion of this research, as his work provides the discourse for explaining and understanding the power of liberation for oppressed groups, such as Australia's Indigenous people.

FREIRE – EDUCATION AND POWER

The importance of education has been captured in the following statement, that “education is the first building block of development upon which everything else - health care, social care, employment - must be founded’ (Oxfam Poverty Handbook cited in Vaux, 2000). There is significant power in education, and the important link between education and long term positive outcomes has been reported upon and acknowledged by many (Alsop, Bertelsen, & Holland, 2006; Australian Government Department of Family and Community Services, 2004a; Campbell, 2000; Department of Indigenous Affairs, 2005). This evidence, combined with the knowledge that education is a critical empowerment strategy, makes it impossible to ignore education as a key factor in ameliorating disadvantage.

Any discussion on disadvantaged Australians will include Indigenous people, and the topic of education is no different. In all areas of education, Australia's Indigenous people are significantly disadvantaged compared with other Australians (as discussed in Chapter 1). It has been suggested that Indigenous people are often confronted with education systems that ignore their cultural and historical perspectives and consequently, they are immersed into a system that is not conducive to positive outcomes (Abu-Saad & Champagne, 2006, p. 1; Freire, 1972, 1975). To overcome the disempowerment experienced and the resulting disadvantage, increased opportunities for education are essential.

It is stated in the Australian government report *Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage* that “Education is generally considered to be a key factor in improving outcomes for Australia's Indigenous people particularly when it comes to health, employment and socio-economic status” (Department of Indigenous Affairs, 2005, p. 12). If seeking to ameliorate disadvantage and increase positive outcomes for Indigenous people, then as education is a key empowerment

strategy, appropriateness of educational systems must be considered (Alsop, Bertelsen, & Holland, 2006).

The theoretical framework of Paulo Freire provides the lens to analyse the appropriateness of adult education systems available to Australia's Indigenous people. This lens provides the opportunity to understand why, when such disadvantage is being experienced, training specifically created for Western Australia's Indigenous people in the area of early childhood remains under-utilised and under-recognised.

Chapter 3 – Methodology

This chapter examines the qualitative approach used in this study to explore what role Indigenous specific education, in particular early childhood education, has in ameliorating disadvantage for Australia's Indigenous people. This approach enables a multifaceted exploration of this question, which will reveal if there is any correlation between education and empowerment to overcoming disadvantage for oppressed groups.

A qualitative methodology was chosen as this offered the most relevant methods to answer the proposed research question. Qualitative methods consist of three kinds of data collection methods, that is, written documentation, in-depth interviews and direct observation, and this research project engaged the first two methods (Patton, 1990, p. 10). A qualitative methodology seeks to gather rich detailed data and undertake in-depth exploration and, for this research project, this methodology and the combination of methods was essential to creating an understanding and answering the proposed research question (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998, p. 3; Patton, 1990, p.40). The process of combining methods, or triangulation, strengthens research as using only one method can render it vulnerable. To strengthen this research, a combination of literature review, documentation analysis and a key person interview were employed.

As the focus of this research project is on exploring Indigenous child care training, the guidelines for undertaking ethical research with Indigenous people was consulted. It is essential that Indigenous people are participants in any research that concerns them (The Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies, 2000, p. 4). Unfortunately it was not possible to involve relevant Indigenous people in this study and subsequently, this impacted upon the methods chosen.

By beginning this study with an explicit theoretical perspective in which to develop an understanding, this qualitative methodology falls into what Patton refers to as "Orientational Qualitative Inquiry" (Patton, 1990, p.86). The chosen theoretical framework has also influenced the focus of this inquiry and

consequently all aspects of this study. It is essential when pursuing this approach that the researcher is clear about the theoretical framework being used and the impact that this will have on the data collection and the analysis (Patton, 1990, p. 87). The researcher of this study was very aware of this and acknowledges this. Overall, this methodology provides the best opportunity to answer the question proposed in this research project.

Patton (1990, p. 371) suggests that the “purpose of qualitative inquiry is to produce findings” and that data collection is not an end point; in fact it is part of a process of discovery. In order to discover and answer the research question, the data collected was analysed and interpreted. The interpretation of the literature reviewed, written documentation and the data from the interview, has been undertaken using a Freirean approach. By engaging this theoretical perspective in the interpretation of all data collected, information gathered and documents analysed, the subsequent findings reflect this perspective.

LITERATURE REVIEW

As discussed in the previous section, a review of the literature forms part of the methodology of this study. Reviewing relevant literature is fundamental to the research process, but generally the review of the literature is not one of the methods used. In order to adhere to ethical practices when conducting research in Indigenous studies, placing the review of the literature in the methodology became necessary when it was not possible to actively involve Indigenous people in this study.

A review of the literature is considered an essential part of the research process and in this study this was essential to the methodology (Bell, 2005, p. 99; Hart, 1998, p. 13). The literature review provides an insight into the connection between the various themes, and very importantly, these themes are interpreted using the philosophy of Freire who believed in the power of education to liberate oppressed groups.

It was essential to review both national and international literature to create a picture that encompasses all areas explored in this study. It is stated that there is

no one particular way in which to conduct a literature review (Cresswell, 2003, p. 34) and for this research project a diverse range of literature was accessed and evaluated as to its appropriateness to answering the research question. This was the essential step to beginning Chapter 4 and developing an understanding of the relationship between Indigenous child care training and the contribution this has to the amelioration of disadvantage for Australia's Indigenous people. This analysis and evaluation provided the opportunity to discover any threads running through the literature and also any gaps. As specified previously (Chapter 2) Freire's philosophy of education was used as the lens through which to interpret the identified thread and gaps.

DOCUMENT ANALYSIS

Analysis of documentation can provide a rich source of information in qualitative research. Document analysis yields information from memorandums, meetings, reports, correspondence and publications that enables the researcher access to a range of information that cannot be observed (Patton, 1990, p. 245). This information can provide an understanding of what has occurred in the past creating a better understanding of the question being researched.

For these reasons, an analysis of documentation was conducted. Through the assistance of the Industry Training Advisory Body (ITAB), particularly Mr Ian Andrews, the researcher accessed information associated with the development in Perth, Western Australia of the Indigenous child care training package in this organisation (Appendix 1 and 2). The researcher examined available documentation (some photocopying was allowed and otherwise notes were taken). The triangulation of information gathered from documentation, a review of the literature and the key person interview provided the opportunity to answer the proposed question.

The documents available for analysis were not complete as ITAB's records had been refined and the most relevant retained which impacted upon this research. Nevertheless, the researcher was able to ascertain the goals of the training, the processes to achieve these goals and how participants could access the training. It

was not possible to ascertain from the documents the effects that the training had upon participants, but this was revealed in the key person interview.

INTERVIEW

Patton (1990, p. 136) suggests, “information-rich cases are those from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the research”. This provides the justification for undertaking only one interview, but with a person who was central to the development of Western Australia’s Indigenous child care training package. This purposefully chosen interview enabled the researcher to gather rich and detailed information central to this research project.

Data was collected using a semi-structured interview that involved open-ended questions (Appendix 3). A semi-structured interview ensured that all necessary areas were covered in the interview. The suggestion of Polit and Beck (2006, p. 291) that interview questions be used as a guide but that participants encouraged to talk freely, was applied when undertaking the key person interview.

The identification of the key interviewee emerged from undertaking the analysis of the written documentation associated with the development of specific training created in Western Australia for Indigenous people interested in education relating to the care of young children. Identification of the organisation that held the background information on this specific training emerged from general information gathered. This Perth, Western Australia based organisation was approached and invited to be involved in this study. This offer was accepted (Appendix 1 and 2) and the process of researching and analysing the written documentation began. It became evident that one person was central to the development of the specific training and therefore it became essential to interview this person. With this identification, the organisation (ITAB) that held the documentation assisted in contacting this person (Appendix 4). Adhering to the requirements of the Edith Cowan University Ethics Committee, an approved Information Letter (Appendix 5) and a Consent Form (Appendix 6) were forwarded to this person via ITAB and consent was given to proceed.

Interview participant

A one-hour interview, with this person, was audio recorded and brief notes were taken at the time of interview. One of the characteristics of qualitative research is that it takes place in natural settings such as home or office of the interviewee (Cresswell, 2003, p. 181). This approach was taken as the interview was conducted at the home of the interviewee. Yet another characteristic of qualitative research is having participants/interviewees actively involved in data collection, and this was the situation with the key interviewee as she expressed her willingness enthusiastically to be interviewed (Cresswell, 2003, p.182).

Limitations

There may be some limitations associated with undertaking an interview with a key person, as this person may have a vested interest in ensuring that the information provided is positive and shows that she played a significant role in ameliorating disadvantage for Indigenous people. As this interviewee chose to be involved in the research project, the self selection process is also limiting, as choosing to be involved may indicate that this person has her own reasons for being involved (Cresswell, 2003, p. 188; Polit & Beck, 2006, p. 142).

Furthermore, the reviewed documentation was not complete, limiting the research. An analysis of documentation enabled the researcher to have a look behind the scene (Patton, 1990, p. 234), but in this situation, given the documents were limited, a thorough exploration was not possible.

Chapter 4 – Literature, documents and interview

This chapter presents the current literature, both nationally and internationally, undertaking an analysis of supporting documentation associated with the development of Indigenous specific child care training and analysing information from a key person interview. The context in which this analysis of the literature, the supporting documentation and the interview is presented, will be through the theoretical framework of Freire. This framework makes it possible to explore the relationship between education, power and oppression as it relates to Australia's Indigenous people and the disadvantage experienced by many.

This literature review initially considers the historical factors that have impacted upon the current situation for many Indigenous Australians. An analysis of the importance of education for all people, but in particular for Indigenous Australians, must be discussed before considering the importance of child care education and training specifically for Indigenous people. Specific educational approaches considered conducive to positive educational outcomes for Indigenous people will be explored through examining the role of child care training as a tool of empowerment and liberation. In assist with this, an analysis of Canada's Generative Curriculum Model for Indigenous people will be undertaken throughout this chapter. This will provide an understanding of what it is about this model that makes it successful and what lessons can be learnt.

Where appropriate, the review of the literature will be combined with the information analysed from the documentation and the interview. The triangulation of the information from these three sources will be presented throughout this chapter as the proposed research question of "What role can Indigenous child care training play in ameliorating disadvantage for Indigenous people?" is explored.

HISTORICAL FACTORS IMPACTING ON AUSTRALIA'S INDIGENOUS PEOPLE

This discussion about Indigenous Australians needs to first acknowledge the events of the past and the impact these have had, and continue to have. This is particularly pertinent to this study with its focus upon Indigenous child care

training, as there is a fundamental link between the forced removal and separation of Indigenous people and the current situation for Indigenous Australians (Borg, 2004; Pocock, 2002; Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care, 2005a). The importance of this acknowledgement is emphasised by Borg (2004, p. 4) who states that the forced removal and separation of Indigenous people “is without doubt the most critical issue affecting Indigenous people today”. Such has been the impact that it is impossible to consider the current situation for Indigenous people without recognising the consequences that forced removals and assimilation have had on Indigenous Australians.

Colonisation to devastation

Separation of Indigenous families from each other, their communities and their land has had devastating consequences. Such is the breadth of the impact that the Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care (SNAICC) (2005a, p. 5) claims that no Indigenous family has been unaffected by past policies of removal and assimilation. Borg (2004, p. 4) insists that the situation has “denied generations of Indigenous people the opportunity to experience their traditional lifestyle”.

These events of the forced removal of children and the fragmentation of families have resulted in the breakdown of community kinship systems, as well as a lack of knowledge of language, culture and traditional child rearing practices. These actions shattered Indigenous culture and this was and continues to be devastating. It is suggested in the literature that the ramification of these historical events of assimilation and colonisation are seen today in the degree of disadvantage being experienced by Indigenous people (Borg, 2004; Borg & Paul, 2004; Pocock, 2002; Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care, 2005a, p. 17; Warrki Jarrinjaku ACRS Project Team, 2002).

One area significantly affected by the separation of families and the removal of children is child rearing. It is pointed out by Borg (2004, p. 4) that assimilation has deprived Indigenous people the opportunity to develop a natural bond with their parents whilst also depriving the children of culturally relevant role models for when they became parents. This has caused confusion and uncertainty for

today's Indigenous parents. As Borg and Paul (2004, p. 41) suggest, historical events have impacted upon the ability of Indigenous families to be functional and resilient and to fulfil the expectations of parenting roles. Traditional knowledge of the key principles of child rearing, which are considered essential to maintaining culture and practises, has not been available to many parents. Whilst parents have suffered the ramifications of these past actions, they and their children are not alone as Elders have also suffered as they have been denied their traditional role of teaching these child rearing practices (Borg & Paul, 2004, p. 49).

The negative impact on child rearing practices as a result of colonisation, is further supported by the Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care (2005a, p. 5) in its report on *Achieving stable and culturally strong out of home care for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children*. It concluded that there was a link between the current situation of children being cared for out of home and colonisation. The lack of positive parenting role models and the lack of Elders undertaking their traditional role has resulted in the loss of child rearing skills and practices and this is directly linked to the removal of Indigenous children from families to be cared for out of their home (Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care, 2005a).

Whilst the literature and the statistics associated with children in out of home care provide a clear picture of the magnitude of break down in child rearing practices, it is also a reflection of broader issues. This is captured by Higgins, Bromfield and Richardson (2005):-

The over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care systems is a reflection of the wider problem of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people having high levels of economic disadvantage, lower education and employment levels, poorer health outcomes and shorter life expectancies than non-Indigenous Australians. (p. 27)

Australia's Prime Minister, Kevin Rudd, commented on the enormity of the current situation in 2007 in the Labor party's paper *New Directions: An equal start in life for Indigenous children*. This paper stated that "Australian Indigenous people remain the singularly most disadvantaged group in Australia today" and

that past government policies had “inflicted painful damage on the fabric of Indigenous families and communities” (Australian Labor Party, 2007b, p. 1). The damage is embedded in families and communities and continues to flow on to the next generation as children have been raised in communities lacking strength in child rearing practices. The devastation of colonisation continues to be felt today.

Freire – explaining the past

To further understand the actions and the consequences of past events currently being experienced by many Indigenous Australians, Freire’s philosophy provides enlightenment. Freire would suggest that the current situation for many Indigenous Australians comes as no surprise as the dominant culture in Australia endeavours to maintain oppression of others.

Oppression happens over time, as the dominant culture exercises its power by developing mechanisms and systems to maintain oppression. As Freire suggests, oppressors have a desire to maintain the status quo in their society, where they dominate and maintain their power over the less dominant cultures. There are a variety of ways in which the oppressor sees the oppressed and these views can be placed upon a continuum. At one end the oppressed are viewed as a “pathology in an otherwise healthy society” and at the other end the oppressed are seen as a group of people, not individuals, who are a “by-product of a generally successful social structure” (Breault, 2003, p. 1). These views held by the oppressor, that the oppressed are inferior, guides their behaviour and actions. It is claimed by Freire that to ensure that those viewed as inferior do not change the status quo, the oppressors seek to hinder the oppressed from reaching their fullest potential (Freire, 1972). That is, through the actions and attitudes of the oppressors, others are unable to reach their potential and therefore the status quo is maintained in society.

From the beginning of colonisation in Australia, the actions and attitudes of the dominant group have had a devastating effect upon Indigenous Australians. These actions and attitudes have lead to the break down of community kinship systems, the disempowerment of communities, the fragmentation of Indigenous culture by the removal of culturally relevant role models for parents as they raise

their children, and this has ensured the oppression of Australia's Indigenous people. Consequently, past events have ensured that Indigenous Australians have been kept from reaching their fullest potential thereby maintaining their oppression. The oppressors have constructed a distorted history in Australia, where dominance ensures supremacy.

THE POWER OF EDUCATION

Many people, from different perspectives fiercely argue the benefits associated with education (Alsop, Bertelsen, & Holland, 2006; Australian Government Department of Family and Community Services, 2004a; Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2005a, 2005b; Australian Labor Party, 2007a, 2007b; Campbell, 2000; Department of Indigenous Affairs, 2005; Heckman & Masterov, 2005; UNESCO, 2004; Vaux, 2000). There are commitments to the arguments of economics and productivity, social justice and fairness and beliefs in Freire's philosophy associating education with liberation for the oppressed. Regardless of the argument it is loudly agreed that education is a key component that leads to positive outcomes for individuals, communities and society.

Epictetus (n.d, ¶ 5) was a Greek poet and philosopher whose claim that "only the educated are free" epitomizes the power of education. Education opens people's minds so they are free to think and to question. This is powerful, as once the mind is opened it cannot be contained or oppressed. Subsequently, education improves the quality of people's lives, it is the catalyst for human development and is essential for economic development (UNESCO, 2004). It is an investment that benefits not just the individual but communities and society.

The far reaching consequences of education are captured by Vaux's (2000, p. 1) statement that education is the "first building block of development" and that all main areas of life are built upon these foundations. Abu-Saad and Champagne (2006, p. 3) also echo the importance of education stating that it "is generally considered a path to individual and national empowerment". Education is critical to the broad long-term outcomes of individuals and society. But to achieve these outcomes factors such as the educational opportunities people have access to, their ability to participate in these and their educational attainment are critical.

Education for addressing disadvantage

The link between education and addressing disadvantage has been articulated by many researchers and writers and has been discussed and analysed in many government reports and documents (Alsop, Bertelsen, & Holland, 2006; Australian Government Department of Family and Community Services, 2004a; Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2005a, 2005b; Australian Labor Party, 2007a, 2007b; Campbell, 2000; Department of Indigenous Affairs, 2005; Heckman & Masterov, 2005). Further recognition of the importance of education is made by The United Nations as a number of declarations specifically refer to this. Article 26 of The Universal Declaration on Human Rights stresses that education is a human right, whereas the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child affirms the rights of children to free, relevant and quality education (UNESCO, 2004). Disadvantage is not limited to a particular group in society, yet throughout the world Indigenous people dominate this category, and for this reason, Article 14 of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People articulates the importance of education. This Article is dedicated to ensuring Indigenous people have access to, and are able to participate in, appropriate educational opportunities (United Nations, 2008).

Whilst the descriptors of disadvantage may be broad, education is a single common thread woven through the strategies proposed to address disadvantage (UNESCO, 2004). Education is a one weapon in the fight against disadvantage.

Canadian approach

Like many of the world's Indigenous communities, Canada's First Nations have not been immune to disadvantage. Canada's First Nations communities have a similar history to Australia yet current approaches indicate that Canada has found a model that is empowering, liberating and ameliorating disadvantage by using education and by focusing upon children, who are central to First Nations culture.

Canada's First Nations experience of disadvantage is as a consequence of forced residential schooling, child welfare practices and other "helpful" strategies imposed by government and non-government organisations, all done with the "best interests" of Canada's Indigenous people, disadvantage prevailed (Ball,

2004a, p. 455). With many years for these actions to take effect, a significant gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Canadians evolved (Ball, 2005, p. 14). Ball (2005, p. 15) claims that Canada's Indigenous children are over-represented in nearly every health, social and educational risk indicators, suggesting they are more likely to be placed in out-of-home care and a greater percentage than non-Indigenous Canadians will live below the poverty line (Ball, 2005, p. 15).

With the Indigenous Canadians predicament evident, Canada endeavoured to redress the situation by focusing upon education. The realisation of the importance of education encouraged Canada to explore alternative, appropriate options to confront disadvantage (Ball, 2004a, 2005; Ball, Pence, & Benner, 2002; Boven & Morohashi, 2002). There was a strong commitment to bring about positive changes, particularly in the early child care and education area.

Australian approach

The story for Australia's Indigenous people is linked to the government's attempt to understand and address the disadvantage experienced by many Indigenous Australians. In order to gain an understanding, research was undertaken and reports written. Robinson and Bamblett (1998) suggest that the recognition in Australia of the power of education in addressing disadvantage for Indigenous Australians began with two very significant reports released in the 1980's. The 1985 report of the *Committee of Review of Aboriginal Employment and Training Programs*, chaired by Mick Miller and the 1988 report of the *Aboriginal Education Policy Task Force*, chaired by Paul Hughes, have contributed to the current direction of addressing educational inequalities for Indigenous Australians. Miller, in the *Committee of Review of Aboriginal Employment and Training Programs* report, made the important connection between Indigenous education levels and employment outcomes. He documented the level of disadvantage experienced and proposed changes to various Indigenous education and training measures to assist in addressing the situation. For example, Robinson and Bamblett (1998) cite the following in the report:-

low school completion rates have considerably exacerbated Aboriginal employment difficulties, and have resulted in a relatively low number of Aboriginal people being able to go on to tertiary and further education. Our view is that even with considerable improvements in the arrangements

for Aboriginal post-school education and vocational training, that system will never be able to overcome the deficiencies that are currently being left by the school system. The committee, therefore, believes that improved access to employment and a fulfilling of the potential for development in Aboriginal communities will not only rely on reforms to post-secondary education and training arrangements, but also on the ability of schools to cater better for the needs of Aboriginal students. (Committee of Review of Aboriginal Employment and Training Programs 1985, p.197)

Over the last twenty years this connection has guided strategies to address the inequalities between Indigenous people and other Australians, with respect to access to, participation in and outcomes from, all levels of education and training (Robinson & Bamblett, 1998, p. ix). The National Report to Parliament on Indigenous Education and Training, 2001 claims that positive outcomes have been achieved in the last two decades (Commonwealth of Australia, 2002) however, educational inequality between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians continues.

Whilst referring to formal educational systems, the Department of Indigenous Affairs (2005, p. 92) further emphasizes this point in its report on overcoming Indigenous disadvantage stating that “successful completion of year 12 has long been considered a key component to improving the economic and social status of Indigenous people”. The Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care (n.d.) report, *Their future: Our responsibility*, also stresses the importance of education for young Indigenous people stating that: -

Successful participation in education and training is critical if young people are to access any available employment opportunities. Without decent employment Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people are destined to live in poverty... (p. 13)

The link between education and the amelioration of disadvantage was clearly documented in 2005 in Australia’s *Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage Report*. The Australian government articulated the significance of education in this statement, “Education is generally considered to be a key factor in improving outcomes for Indigenous people particularly when it comes to health, employment and socio-economic status” (Department of Indigenous Affairs, 2005, p. 12). Regardless of the perspective, the crucial link between education and positive long-term outcomes is undeniable.

Education for skills development

Traditionally, education is considered to be the gradual process of gaining knowledge of specific skills through a learning process which frequently occurs within formal institutions (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2001; Pimentel, 2006, p. 3). This perspective of education links the learner with the opportunity to use the skills learnt to gain employment and therefore improve their quality of life.

Canada's focus upon the importance of the development of specific skills is evident in the literature around workforce issues. Fennessy, Krywulak and Macdonald (2008) consider the learning of workforce skills as being critical to Canadian prosperity. With a commitment to building a strong economy, investing in the development of skills is required and in order to do this, it is essential to invest in education. Whilst the learner's development of skills is considered to be important there are additional benefits. As Boven and Morohashi (2002, p. 202) report, specific early childhood education provided to First Nations has shown that developing skills is beneficial to many. Whilst the development of specific skills to care for children is an obvious benefit, the additional benefit is the enhanced skills that these learners are able to use as they care of their own children. This is commented on by Ball (2004b, p. 67) in her study as she acknowledges the importance of the ripple effect of enhanced child rearing skills within First Nations communities. Education that develops skills doesn't just impact on the learner, but encompasses those around the learner.

Australia takes a similar approach to Canada, by providing education for skills development. In the late 1980s, Australian industry recognised that to remain competitive with international industries it must rethink future employees' education and training (Campbell, 2000, p. 5). With an increase in the level of skills required in the workforce, education and training was identified as the key to addressing this growing demand (Campbell, 2000, p. 8).

Around the same time and when Australia was exploring the link between education and disadvantage for Indigenous Australians, training specifically for Indigenous Australians was being researched and developed through the Industry Training Council (currently ITAB – Industry Training Advisory Body) in Western

Australia. As a result of a shortage of skilled child care workers, particularly Indigenous workers in communities, the idea of providing training to increase these numbers was gaining momentum (Theresa Ilsley, interview, 11 January 2008). Having Indigenous workers within care child is not just skilling workers for the workforce, as the impact is far broader.

The perception that skills alone are sufficient to providing opportunities in life is misguided. Campbell (2000, p. 8) suggests that generally, Indigenous people have a world view that is holistic and focuses upon relationships, whereas the dominant culture can be quite different. Abu-Saad and Champagne (2006, p. 1) reiterate this point, as they state that “Indigenous views are not inherently counter to the view of national communities or nation-states. But, they are very different”. With education created within the dominant culture and ignoring the context, which gives Indigenous people meaning to the knowledge, the learning of skills alone becomes quite meaningless. Whilst the acquisition of skills is important to addressing disadvantage, it is not the entire solution.

Education for liberation

The literature clearly articulates that education is vitally important for disadvantaged groups such as Australia’s Indigenous people, if their disadvantage is to be addressed. It is through education that skills and the knowledge to obtain employment and therefore the benefits associated with employment are gained. But by drawing upon the work of Freire it becomes evident that there is a gap in the literature on truly confronting and addressing Australian Indigenous disadvantage. This gap is around the importance of education to Australia’s Indigenous people in overcoming oppression through challenging the status quo, confronting their oppression and embarking upon their journey to achieve liberation. From a Freirean perspective, education is not just about the development of skills it must be about empowerment and liberation (Freire, 1972).

Pimentel (2006) captures the distinct difference between skills development and a Freire’s philosophy of education in the statement that:-

Freire expanded education's technical-pedagogic dimension to a political one, which demands a major shift of the education paradigm into 'praxis': reflection plus action, which highlights the importance of learners becoming active subjects in the learning process, taking a position of agents. (p. 3)

The development of skills, without an overarching commitment to addressing oppression, are not sufficient to reverse the disadvantage experienced by Indigenous Australians.

With Freire's work centring on the issues of social and political change (Steiner, Krank, McLaren, & Bahruth, 2000, p. 5) and consequently his theory focusing upon the relationship between liberation and education, the importance of education is undeniable. It is suggested by Freire that it is only through appropriate education that the realisation by the oppressed, of their situation, and challenging this that oppression is overcome and liberation achieved (Alsop, Bertelsen, & Holland, 2006; Freire, 1972; Freire & Faundez, 1989; Medel-Anonuevo, 1995).

INDIGENOUS CHILD CARE

As discussed in Chapter 1 the importance of investing in the early years is indisputable. This together with the evidence of the benefits associated with participation in child care, particularly for disadvantaged groups, places the attention firmly upon the importance of ensuring engagement and participation of Australia's Indigenous children and families in child care.

The importance of child care for Indigenous people

Whilst the provision of optimal opportunities and environments in children's early years positively impacts upon children's long term outcomes, the opposite also applies. Heckman and Masterov (2005, p. 3) emphasises this point stating that "Early advantages cumulate; so do early disadvantages". With the knowledge gained through research and the literature of the importance of the early years (Australian Government Task Force on Child Development Health and Wellbeing, 2006; Heckman, 2006; Heckman & Masterov, 2005; McCain & Mustard, 1999; McCain, Mustard, & Shanker, 2007; Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000) it is imperative that children have the opportunity to be raised in enriched

environments. The child is not the only one to benefit, as the child's family, their community and society at large also reap the benefits of this investment.

A fundamental step to addressing negative long-term outcomes is to implement prevention and early intervention strategies that will enhance children's environments. One key strategy in supporting families overall functioning and consequently children's developmental outcomes is child care (Australian Government Task Force on Child Development Health and Wellbeing, 2006). Government documents and policies associated with providing assistance and support to families to participate in economic and social life in Australian communities, emphasise the important role of child care (Australian Government Department of Families Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, 2007; Australian Government Department of Family Housing Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, 2005; James, 2005). There have been many studies and reports in Australia and throughout the world documenting the value of child care for the growth and development of all children (Australian Government Department of Families Housing Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, 2007a; Australian Government Department of Family and Community Services, 2004b; Battle & Torjman, 2002). Furthermore, the literature stresses that the benefits gained by the participation of disadvantaged children and their families in child care are accentuated. The long term impact of impoverished early environments is illustrated in Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care's comments (2002, p. 2) that investing in the early years will keep Indigenous children out of child protection and then later in life, the juvenile justice system. They go on to say that it is imperative that there is an improvement in the participation rate of Indigenous children in child care so that these children will have the same opportunities as non-Indigenous children in Australia (Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care, 2002). Given the degree of disadvantage experienced by many Indigenous Australians, Indigenous children's participation in child care provides support opportunities for families and the enhancement of children's development. By investing early the benefits are far reaching.

With a similar history to Australia, Canada's First Nations communities have also experienced serious erosion of parenting models. Children were forcibly enrolled in Indian Residential Schools and when these children returned to their communities and became parents they did not have parenting skills that would traditionally have been passed down to them (Ball, 2004b, p. 61). The roles that Elders had in the past were also altered and intergenerational relationships strained. In First Nations communities, where there had been a broad shared involvement in caring for children, this has had devastating consequences and the effects continue to be felt.

As Canada embarked upon addressing the consequential disadvantage experienced by First Nations communities, the actions of the past were reflected upon. The model currently adopted by Canada for First Nations child care has carefully considered the past events and incorporated strategies and actions that seek to make amends. As child care is a key strategy within this model, its importance in addressing the disadvantage that many Indigenous Canadians experience is undeniable (Ball, 2004b).

Diversity in Indigenous child care

As participation in child care is a key factor in addressing Indigenous disadvantage and empowering Indigenous people and communities, engaging children and their families in child care is the fundamental first step. With this in mind, and with the support of the literature, child care within Indigenous communities needs to be considered more broadly than what is generally thought of as traditional child care provided for working parents.

Silburn et al. (2006, p. 569) suggest that within Indigenous communities the role of child care needs to be a lot broader as it is the "link" between early childhood services, kindergartens and schools. It connects families to other services such as health and child protection, whilst providing other opportunities such as training and education or employment opportunities. It is further claimed by Silburn et al. (2006, p. 570) that child care can play an important role in supporting families and not just by providing a service to working parents. A multifunctional approach that provides a range of services, including child care, has proven to be

more appropriate for Indigenous communities and families (Australian Government Department of Families Housing Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, 2007a; Bond, 2000; Fasoli, 2004).

The *Towards an Indigenous Child Care Service Plan* report illustrates the important role of child care in the following statement “In many Indigenous communities, child care is an essential service that meets the primary needs of children such as food, basic hygiene and ‘time out’.” (Australian Government Department of Families Housing Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, 2007b, p. 7). SNAICC (2002, p. 7) also adds their support to this position, suggesting that MACS (Multifunctional Aboriginal Children’s Services) provide high quality early childhood services whilst offering a range of other support services to Indigenous families and children, as a successful model for Indigenous people and communities. Priest (2005, p. 7) also acknowledges the effectiveness of the MACS model which provides a range of different services in accordance with the needs of the individual community. The success of MACS is attributed to its appropriateness through diversity for Indigenous communities, families and children.

As previously mentioned past events have adversely affected child rearing practices and, as traditionally children have a central position in communities, the ramifications have been significant. It is also clear that members of communities must be involved in anything seeking to improve the outcomes for children. Children are extremely important within Indigenous communities and therefore, so too is the care available to these children. Whether this care is formal through child care services or informal care provided by members of families and communities, the literature indicates that education and training that provides knowledge and skills, and builds the capacity of people and communities will improve the outcomes for all Indigenous people but particularly for young children.

Due to the degree of disadvantage being experienced by First Nations, Canada realised that past approaches were not working and therefore a new approach was desperately needed. Diversity and appropriateness were critical to success.

Today, Canada has an overall goal that First Nations have control over a sustainable child care system that adopts a holistic, culturally appropriate approach (Assembly of First Nations, 2005). This contributes to long term benefits for families, their communities and therefore Canadian society.

Canada had a desire to create a new way of developing and implementing social policy that would address First Nations disadvantage. To begin this, the government committed to working in new and different ways that involved working in partnership with First Nations (Greenwood, 2000, p.15). Central to this starting point was the acknowledgment that child care for First Nations may not look like child care in the traditional sense that it needed to be broader and focus upon supporting families. Diversity was essential in the child care available to First Nations.

Early childhood centres within First Nations communities became “hubs” where a range of programmes and services promoting wellness, social cohesion and cultural continuity happened (Ball, 2005, p. 4). This concept of creating a hub is essentially a family and community centred approach to service delivery, where services are designed to meet the needs of the local population (Ball, 2004b, p. 50). With an understanding of the need for appropriateness to First Nations and also to the specific communities, the essence of the First Nations world view was drawn upon to create these centres. Whilst these centres provided the hub for First Nations to attend, ensuring that they and the programmes and services provided were accessed was a different matter. Ball (2004b) suggests that:-

The central, most essential “hook” that attracts families to new services in the community and that secures their attachment to programs that support the wellness of all family members is offering parents the quality child care, and sometimes the special services, that they need for themselves and want for their children. (p. 50)

As child care was critical to the success of the hubs, and ultimately to the children in the long term, ensuring that it was appropriate to the needs of First Nations was essential. As a consequence, diversity in the provision of child care was required if it was to be a successful “hook” to engagement. It is suggested by Ball (2004b) in her research that setting up child care as a focal point in a larger system of

community programmes and meeting spaces, has been hugely successful with First Nations. The success of this approach is further acknowledged by Boven and Morahashi (2002) in their report on *Best Practices using Indigenous Knowledge*. The Canadian approach of incorporating Indigenous knowledge into Indigenous programmes and services was recognised in 2002 by UNESCO as they selected the Canadian model to be included in a “best practice” publication. By respecting Indigenous knowledge and respecting what it is that First Nations want for their children, appropriateness in the early childhood area has ensured.

Freire – listening and liberation

In order to maintain their dominance over the oppressed, the dominant culture in society must engage in practices that will ensure domination continues. As Freire suggests liberation can only be achieved when the oppressed become aware of the reality of their situation. This awareness enables them to create their own understanding and allows them to fight for their liberation (Freire, 1972; Freire & Faundez, 1989, p. 34). Consequently, the dominant group must not permit the oppressed to think for themselves, as this would challenge the status quo. In Freire’s (1972, p. 101) classic work, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, he suggests the “dominant elite....can – and do - think without the people”. The dominant do not think about the people to know them better but instead think about them to dominate them more effectively. Communication between the dominant and the oppressed is simply to deposit information that will continue the controlling influence.

Canada’s history is one of domination by the elite and oppression of Indigenous Canadians. Yet the current situation is showing signs of change. With the Canadian government’s commitment to a model of service delivery, within the early childhood area, done in partnership with First Nations addressing disadvantage and overcoming oppression is possible. As Freire suggests liberation is only possible when people work together; nobody can liberate anyone else and no one can liberate themselves alone, but people will be able to liberate themselves when they collaborate with others (Freire, 1972). By working in a true partnership the needs and the wants of First Nations can be heard and early childhood services and programmes can be developed and implemented.

Adhering to standardised programmes and traditional child care models will not bring about long term, generational alleviation of oppression. It is through listening and working together that oppression is challenged.

INDIGENOUS CHILD CARE WORKERS

It is claimed by SNAICC (2002) that the participation rate of Indigenous children in child care is low, and this is despite the overwhelming evidence of the importance of child care to supporting families and therefore addressing disadvantage. The literature proposes that the lack of Indigenous workers in child care is a significant factor influencing the low child care participation rates of Indigenous children (Borg & Paul, 2004, p. 44; Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care, 2002, p. 9; Silburn et al., 2006, p. 570). The presence of Indigenous staff in child care settings is reassuring for many Indigenous people and this has the potential to increase attendance. This has further implications as education and training that targets child rearing skills, and which is appropriate to Indigenous communities, is another component to confronting disadvantage.

In Western Australia this claim of the lack of Indigenous workers in child care was a fact. The Western Australian Industry Training Council (ITC), currently referred to as the Industry Training Advisory Board, determined in the late 1990's that whilst some Indigenous people were working in pre-schools, pre-primary's and child care centres they often did not have any sort of training to work in these positions. Whilst there were child care courses available these were not considered to be appropriate for and were not being accessed by these Indigenous workers. Therefore training focused upon developing the necessary skills for working in child care in Indigenous communities was needed.

The identification of the need for specific Indigenous child care training in Western Australia was further supported through comments made in the interview with Theresa Ilsley, who was the Project Officer at ITAB involved in the development of Indigenous specific child care training (Certificate III in Child Care in Aboriginal Communities). Theresa arrived at her opinion by considering the number of Indigenous child care workers and from listening to and consulting with various Indigenous people in communities (Theresa Ilsley, interview, 11

January 2008). She stated that “people in communities wanted quality child care and quality facilities but this did not exist” (Theresa Ilsley, interview, 11 January 2008). There was a commitment by members of Indigenous communities to their children, and a desire to provide experiences that would enable them to enter school ready for learning and to have the best start in life. As Theresa Ilsley (interview, 11 January 2008) recalled her conversations with various Indigenous women about the importance of Indigenous children attending child care it was clear that “a lot of the grandmothers and mothers in Indigenous communities knew that without having those formal western ways taught to them before primary school they were going to be behind the eight ball”. Generally it was evident that Indigenous people “all wanted the best for their kids” (Theresa Ilsley, interview, 11 January 2008). To achieve this, more Indigenous children needed to become involved in child care but consideration must be given to the factors influencing access and participation, as without this the status quo would remain.

“The Generative Curriculum Model embraced by Canada as it committed to working collaboratively with First Nations, illustrates clearly the effectiveness of having Indigenous workers involved in child care and ways of engaging Indigenous people in child care education. This successful model takes a community-based approach to building capacity through focusing upon early childhood care and development in First Nations communities.

The Canadian literature indicates that the success of the Generative Curriculum Model can in part be attributed to the emphasis placed upon providing opportunities to enhance the well-being of children in a manner that is respectful of First Nations culture (Ball, 2004a; Boven & Morohashi, 2002; Greenwood, 2005). The model adopted has an understanding of the importance of community for First Nations, particularly in relation to children. By doing this, the Generative Curriculum Model has been successful in engaging Indigenous people in training in the early childhood area. Consequently these people have become actively involved in caring for and meeting the developmental needs of young children in the community. The needs of the children are met, the community is strengthened and the culture is respected.

Freire – context of learning

Freire was opposed to the “bank concept” of education where students were merely containers into which knowledge was deposited. He claimed this approach did not liberate people. In order to confront oppression students need to think and to question not memorise and gather information given to them. This is illustrated by Freire (1972) as he suggests that:-

Authentic education is not carried on by A for B or by A about B, but rather by A with B, mediated by the world – a world which impresses and challenges both parties, giving rise to views or opinions about it. (p. 66)

In order to understand their oppression, Freire claims that the topics of learning for the oppressed are best found in the reality that surrounds them (Freire, 1972). Learning that takes place in the location of the learner is respectful of the learner and their learning processes. The context of the learners learning must not be disassociated from their reality.

The Generative Curriculum Model embraces generative topics, which are placed in the location of the learner. Within this model, learning is not a mechanical act as it is a process of discovery. This process of discovery is complex, as it needs to be undertaken in the learner’s environment as this provides context to learning. Learners and teachers work together in the learning process as questions emerge and thinking is challenged. Freire (1972) expresses this by stating that:-

For the dialogical, problem-posing teacher-student, the programme content of education is neither a gift nor an imposition – bits of information to be deposited in the students – but rather the organized, systematized, and developed ‘re-presentation’ to individuals of the things about which they want to know more. (p. 65)

The Canadian model has embraced ways of working that, from a Freirean perspective, would appear to show that the oppressed are currently challenging their oppression. This model seems to be succeeding where others have failed. Unfortunately the situation for Australia’s Indigenous people is not similar, as general training that would increase the number of Indigenous child care workers does not embrace Freire’s philosophy for addressing disadvantage and overcoming oppression.

EDUCATION FOR INDIGENOUS CHILD CARE WORKERS

As previously discussed, education is an influential strategy to empower people and for disadvantaged groups the effects of education are compounded. When this education is focused upon child rearing skills, where as a consequence of historical events of assimilation and colonisation traditional Indigenous Australian child rearing skills have been compromised, then the positive effects have the potential to be more pronounced. By providing opportunities for Indigenous Australians to learn child care skills (or child rearing skills), those skills lost in the past can be re-learned. Training that teaches skills will increase parent's capacity so that they can responsively and appropriately parent and therefore increase the children's resilience and improve long term positive outcomes (Borg & Paul, 2004, p. 39). As suggested in the literature, to build capacity in Indigenous communities there needs to be an approach that targets parenting and family, but which does not compromise appropriateness to the community (Borg & Paul, 2004, p. 42; Silburn et al., 2006, p. 569). Educational appropriateness is vital to both the success of education for Australia's Indigenous people to address disadvantage and confront oppression and to increase the number of Indigenous child care workers.

Importance of appropriateness

Chapter 1 provided background information on the breadth and depth of disadvantage experienced by Australia's Indigenous people, with the statistics depicting the continuing existence of inequality between the outcomes for Indigenous people and other Australians. With the knowledge that education plays an important role in addressing disadvantage, it would be reasonable to assume, in child care, schools or Universities, that educational "systems", appropriate for Indigenous Australians, were in existence. Yet this does not appear to be the case as adverse educational outcomes persist for Indigenous Australians.

The literature reveals that there are a number of factors associated with education that contribute to the continuing inequality for Indigenous people. Campbell (2000, p. 8) suggests that education and training is often inappropriate for Indigenous people as it has been developed to suit mainstream, industry-driven

frameworks. Those people developing education and training often have little or no experience of Indigenous culture and this raises the issue of the relevance to Indigenous context, further compounding the inappropriateness. As the Department of Indigenous Affairs (2005, p. 12) explored how to overcome Indigenous disadvantage it concluded: “Importantly there needs to be integration of, and support for, Indigenous culture into the process of training and education, as evidence suggests it has a positive impact on learning outcomes.”.

Article 14 of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous people also focuses upon the importance of appropriateness, stating that:-

Indigenous peoples have the right to establish and control their educational systems and institutions providing education in their own languages, in a manner appropriate to their cultural methods of teaching and learning.
(United Nations, 2007)

This idea of appropriateness is further supported by Bond (2000, p. 141) who determined that often education and training programmes fail to take into account cultural issues for Indigenous people. Fasoli (2004, p. 12) also supports this point emphasising that education and training that is designed for mainstream services can be problematic for some Indigenous people and communities. Yet further support for ensuring the appropriateness of education and training for Indigenous people comes from the *National Report to Parliament on Indigenous Education and Training, 2001*, which sought to identify priorities for improving educational opportunities for Indigenous people. This report states that:-

The aim in identifying these priority areas was to focus attention on ensuring that systems and other educational providers improved their practices to make education and training accessible and appropriate for Indigenous Australians. The ultimate aim was equitable and appropriate outcomes being achieved by and for Indigenous communities and individuals.(Commonwealth of Australia, 2002, p. 8)

Robinson and Bamblett (1998, p. xi) also add to the argument for appropriateness in education whilst linking to the positive outcomes education have to offer. They state that:-

The most critical issue for future improvements is to make sure the conditions are created to encourage Indigenous people to achieve *appropriate outcomes* in education and training. Indigenous aspirations to achieve the skills and qualifications necessary to enable indigenous peoples to take a full role in Australian society need to be met without

requiring indigenous people to forsake their communities or cultural heritage. (Robinson & Bamblett, 1998, p. ix)

Appropriateness encompasses the flexibility surrounding the delivery of training and timeframes associated with the completion of course. The literature provides evidence of the impacts that these have upon Indigenous people's educational outcomes. The notion of providing flexibility in courses and self-paced learning is acknowledged in the *National Report to Parliament on Indigenous Education and Training, 2001* (Commonwealth of Australia, 2002, p. 87). Also, both Campbell (2000) and Fasoli (2004) refer to the important role that flexibility in delivery has for Indigenous people. Education and training that is offered flexibly, by way of self-paced learning, on the job training or blocks of training, can be far more suitable for Indigenous people, yet these options are not always available. It is suggested that Indigenous people, due to family commitments and situations, can find it difficult if these options are not offered (Campbell, 2000; Fasoli, 2004). Without flexibility, participation of Indigenous people in education and training is limited.

Flexibility in relation to time frames for completion of courses can also cause complications. Most courses, whether VET or at University level, have an associated time frame for completion of the course. If courses are not completed within the specified time, funding is affected, and as educational institutes must ensure that they are financially viable, flexibility in time frames is compromised (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2005b).

As previously discussed the participation rate of Indigenous people in VET courses is higher than in other post secondary education and training options. Generally, VET course must be completed within a set period of time (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2002). Indigenous VET students are less likely to complete their courses and as indicated in the *National Report to Parliament on Indigenous Education and Training in 2001*, in order to achieve successful completion of courses Indigenous students require flexibility in relation to timeframes (Commonwealth of Australia, 2002, p. 22).

It is evident that appropriateness is a key factor in education for Indigenous people. In order to increase the number of Indigenous child care workers, suitability of the training offered, the timeframes within which to complete this training and the mode of delivery must be considered, as this will provide the best possible opportunities for success.

Appropriateness for First Nations

Canada provides an excellent example of success of appropriate training for Indigenous Canadians. The lack of trained First Nations child care workers was an issue for many communities. Communities were losing their families, as they were forced to leave so they could access services that their children needed. Alternatively with the lack of qualified workers in communities, workers from outside the communities were employed. Whilst this means the requirement of a worker is met, it does leave communities “less able to carry forward cultural goals for children’s development” (Ball, 2004b, p. 24).

There is growing recognition and understanding in Canada that language, culture and traditions are central to the strength of First Nations communities (Ball, 2005; Greenwood, n.d.). Consequently, today Canada has an overall goal that First Nations have control over a sustainable child care system that adopts a holistic, culturally appropriate approach (Assembly of First Nations, 2005). Each First Nations community is supported to develop their own early learning and child care approach that is based upon their own culture; not one where they are expected to fit into a mainstream model. Therefore, child care within communities provides two benefits. Workers from within communities ensure that programmes for children are culturally appropriate and communities have the opportunity of being part of the process of caring for the children (Ball, 2004b, p. 24). Increasing the number of child care workers ensures that child care services and programmes can operate and that there are sufficient local people to work in these, and this provides stability for communities as a whole (Ball, 2004b, p. 34).

Canada has developed a way of engaging First Nations in child care by considering the needs of communities and respecting their desires. This has resulted in a flow on effect in communities as Indigenous workers contribute to

the participation of Indigenous children in child care. This increased participation ensures that First Nations children are exposed to culturally rich environments that embrace traditional child rearing practices. With workers increasing their child rearing skills and by being involved in environments that respect of their culture, the capacity of the people and therefore the community are strengthened.

Community involvement in Indigenous child care training

There is a range of literature, both nationally and internationally, that stresses the crucial role that community involvement has for education, training, programmes and services for Indigenous people, particularly in matters concerning children (Ball, 2004a, 2004b, 2005; Ball, Pence, & Benner, 2002; BC Aboriginal Child Care Society, 2003; Greenwood, n.d.; Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care, 2005b, p. 40; Waltja Tjutangku Palyapayi Aboriginal Corporation, 2001). The involvement of community members in intergenerational teaching and learning embraces the principles of social inclusion, strengthening communities and people.

Canada - First Nations involvement in child care

The literature from Canada on the success of the Generative Curriculum Model supports the inclusion of Indigenous communities in educational matters (Ball, 2005; Ball, Pence, & Benner, 2002; BC Aboriginal Child Care Society, 2003; Boven & Morohashi, 2002). Programmes for children have been used to engage community members, as community involvement is fundamental to this model. With children's programmes providing the hook to engage members, the desire to enhance and support the well-being of the children helps keep community members involved. First Nations are encouraged to be involved in the provision of quality care for their children and therefore community members attend training. This culturally appropriate training involves Elders as it passes on cultural values and practices and enriches the lives of children and their families whilst strengthening the community's cultural identity. The involvement of community ensures success and sustainability of the programmes and of the First Nations communities.

By turning our attention to the Generative Curriculum Model of supporting Indigenous children, families and communities their success can provide an insight into the importance of involving communities in matters relating to children and families. Whilst today the achievements of this model are apparent, it has taken some time for this model to be implemented. Emerging over time, the governments realised that a different approach was required to address the breadth and depth of disadvantage experienced by First Nations communities. This realisation together with a growing belief that communities were able to turn their situation around, was the impetus for Canada to take a new approach.

To begin with, First Nations were involved in the development process where understanding was being gained of what the communities wanted. After consultations with First Nations communities about the meaning of child and family wellness, Ball (2005, p. 6) concluded that across all communities it was strongly stated that “the themes of holism, ecological contextualism and community-embeddedness” were important and these concepts are therefore reflected in the Generative Curriculum Model. Ball and Pence (1999) state that this model has evolved from an idea that saw communities as having strengths, not deficiencies, and where an empowerment approach was used when working with all generations. This is a model that respects all aspects of Indigenous culture. It is suggested by Ball (2004c) that the Generative Curriculum Model:-

Is a success story that has gone beyond good advice, beyond the books and beyond training classrooms, to support First Nations goals for community development with a vision for the well-being of young First Nations children as the driving force. (p. 1)

The Canadian literature indicates that the success of the Generative Curriculum Model can be attributed to several aspects. All First Nations initiated training programmes have the common goal of strengthening the capacity of community members whilst meeting the developmental needs of young children, youth and families. Ball (2004c, p.2) emphasises that the well-being of children is pivotal to First Nations communities. This is further explored by Ball (2005) as she states that:-

When a community begins a development process with the well-being of the community’s children as the starting point, the focus on young children can work as a ‘hook’ to attract and secure community

commitment and action, and the ECCD [Early Childhood Care and Development] program can become a hub of community – serving programs and activities. (p. 35)

By focusing upon this fundamental belief about children, the Generative Curriculum Model has succeeded where others have failed.

It is evident that central to the Generative Curriculum Model is community. Ball and Simpkin (2004) suggest that there is an assumption that:-

Culturally valued and useful knowledge about childhood and childcare is embedded within the community and that this knowledge needs to be afforded a central place in the development of training curricula. (p. 482)

This belief is embraced in the Generative Curriculum Model with Boven and Morohashi (2002) explaining that:-

The curriculum and its outcomes are not pre-determined, but rather are 'generated' each time the programme is delivered, in order to reflect the unique Indigenous knowledge and the particular needs, goals and circumstance of the communities participating in the programme. (p. 199)

Research into the effectiveness of this model indicates that involvement of community and respect for the knowledge in that community is fundamental to its success (Ball, 2004c; Ball & Pence, 1999; Ball & Simpkins, 2004; Boven & Morohashi, 2002).

As First Nations in Canada seek to strengthen capacity amongst community members they are doing this by being involved in the planning, operating and monitoring of children's programmes to ensure they are consistent with cultural values. Through the involvement of community members, particularly Elders, Indigenous knowledge is brought into learning and teaching that takes place. It is suggested by Ball (2004a) that:-

First Nations leaders have linked improvements and developmental conditions for children to the reconstruction of their cultural identity revitalization of intergenerational transmission of culture and traditional language, and reproduction of culturally distinctive values and practices in programs for children and youth. (p. 455)

As the curriculum within the Generative Curriculum Model develops in communities, the input of community members is pivotal to the training. Learners are teachers and teachers are learners as Indigenous knowledge is

respected and valued in the learning process. This is emphasised by Alan Pence, who pioneered the Generative Curriculum Model (cited in Ball, 2004c), as he explains:-

The curriculum involves respecting diverse knowledge bases and seeking to understand their sources. The emphasis is on the process of learning, rather than the transferral of information. When we innovated the generative curriculum model, we came to understand all participants as learners, and all as teachers. (p. 1)

The involvement of respected community members with local knowledge is essential to child care training using this model. It is suggested by Ball and Pence (1999, p. 48) that this relationship between teacher and learner values and respects Indigenous knowledge contributing to the success of this model. Boven and Morohashi (2002, p. 199) concur, acknowledging the importance of this respectful, reciprocal relationship to the success of the Generative Curriculum Model.

Boven and Morohashi (2002, p. 204) suggest that the Generative Curriculum Model provides benefits in addition to the actual training that is delivered. They propose that community involvement results in a community of learners, who are actively involved in the programme through the learning and teaching as well as supporting the project for children and families. This benefit is more than a tagged on benefit as within the framework of this model community empowerment and capacity building are one of the goals.

Australia – Encouraging involvement in child care

In contrast to Canada, Australia does not provide such an exemplary model of engaging Indigenous people in child care training. Whilst there have been similarities in the disadvantage experienced by Australia's Indigenous people, the approaches taken in the early childhood area are different. Canada embraces a model that utilises early child care and education service and programme to engage community members to learn and to teach, whereas Australia, despite having entertained this idea, does not have such an approach.

Whilst Australia differs to Canada in some of its approaches to addressing Indigenous disadvantage, there is an acknowledgement by the Australian

government and it is shown in the research, that community involvement in Indigenous education is important if sustainable and effective change is to be achieved. The Australian government in the *National Report to Parliament on Indigenous Education and Training, 2001* remarks on the importance of community involvement in the following statement:-

As part of its strong commitment to Aboriginal education and training, the Government recognises the importance of promoting and encouraging the involvement of Aboriginal parents, families and communities in school activities, ensuring that Aboriginal people achieve employment and training outcomes comparable with their non-Aboriginal counterparts and that Aboriginal people are part of the decision-making process, all of which are critical to achieving better outcomes for Aboriginal people. (Commonwealth of Australia, 2002, p. iii)

From a slightly different perspective, Fasoli (2004, p. 14) in the *Both Ways – Children Services Project* report succinctly sums up the importance of the connection between community and family when working with Indigenous families stating that “Children’s services are a microcosm of their community and they work well when they are supported by a strong community”. Involving community is important to the successful engagement of Indigenous people in education linked to the care of children within their communities.

In order to understand the approach taken in Australia to engage Indigenous people in child care, the Indigenous specific child care training developed in Western Australia was explored. This exploration involving searching documentation and conducting an interview with the Project Officer engaged by ITAB, who was involved in the development of this training. The information gathered from both sources has enabled a better understanding of what strategies have been used, or were intended to be used in Australia to address the lack of Indigenous child care workers. One such strategy surrounding the Indigenous child care training was the understanding of the importance of community to the success of the training.

The child care training specifically developed for Western Australian Indigenous communities had the potential to increase the number of Indigenous child care workers and build capacity and skills in communities. A search of the

documentation at ITAB indicated that the development of the child care training specifically for Indigenous people was based upon the need to increase the number of Indigenous child care workers. This was identified in a 1998 ITAB report ("Aboriginal Childcare Training Program Report ", 1998) which was the result of consultations with Indigenous communities where it was noted that communities wanted education around the care of children. With a lack of qualifications for Indigenous workers working with young children, it was determined that a basic child care course specifically for Indigenous people was required. Despite the fact that there were other courses available, it was believed that specific Indigenous child care training would be more appropriate for Indigenous people and therefore provide the best possible opportunities for the children to grow and develop to their fullest potential.

This identified need for increased number of Indigenous child care workers was coupled with concern within Indigenous communities about the declining health and well-being of their children. This anxiety over outcomes for children has been linked to the lack of knowledge and skills in rearing children as noted by Warrki Jarrinjaku ACRS Project Team (2002) in the research it conducted with Indigenous people in central Australia. The concerns of the Indigenous Elders in this area were the impetus to record the child rearing and parenting practices with the aim of strengthening their culture and improving the well-being, health and educational outcomes of their children. The ensuing report *Pipirri Wiimaku 'for the little kids': Innovative Child Care Report, 2000-2001* detailed the research conducted by local woman and their desire to improve the long term outcomes for their children (Waltja Tjutanku Palyapayi Aboriginal Corporation, 2001). The concerns of this community are not unique, and the desire to optimise opportunities for children is a strong theme with Indigenous people regardless of the location of their community.

As discussed previously in this chapter, the need, and the expressed desire, for specific Indigenous child care training in the documentation available at ITAB was supported through comments made in the interview with Theresa Ilsley. In addition to this information it was disclosed by Theresa Ilsley that the training had a "flow on effect" to the community with increased employment and the

development of skills (Theresa Ilsley, interview, 11 January 2008). The Indigenous child care training offered people the opportunity of employment, whereas in the past they had volunteered. It was stated by the interviewee that some communities were keen to engage the facilitation of the training in their community, as they believed this would provide their community with the opportunity to make changes (Theresa Ilsley, interview, 11 January 2008). Often with significant unemployment in Indigenous communities, having the chance to gain employment was highly regarded. The interviewee stated that the child care training provided women with not just a qualification but with the opportunity of “running a centre and running a service” where they would “get recognition for what they were actually doing” (Theresa Ilsley, interview, 11 January 2008). There were gains for the individuals, the communities and, subsequently, the children.

There was considerable motivation within communities to be involved in the Indigenous child care training as this training was meeting community needs and desires (Theresa Ilsley, interview, 11 January 2008). Appropriateness of the training to Indigenous people was paramount and this was attained through truly listening to Indigenous people in community consultations and respecting their thoughts and comments. Through the input of Theresa Ilsley, Western Australia had developed training that would enable participants to gain important skills to work as Indigenous child care workers whilst maintaining respect for Indigenous culture. Community was central to the training, which was to be delivered in the communities and adapted to suit the uniqueness of each. The pedagogical approach ensured the appropriateness of the training, which in turn engaged people. As a result, Indigenous people were trained as child care workers in their communities and, as referred to previously, the presence of Indigenous workers in child care increases the participation rates of Indigenous children in child care, and the benefits of attendance in child care are enormous.

Freire – teaching and learning together

Education is a powerful tool to address disadvantage and overcome oppression, yet it is not as simple as just providing education. As Freire suggests education has the power to liberate and change the world or to ensure that the status quo for

the oppressed remains (Pimentel, 2006, p. 8). It is the appropriateness of the education that guides the outcome. This is commented on by Freire (1972) who articulated that the key to emancipatory education is the way in which the learning takes place, the content of the learning and making sure the processes of learning are respectful and appropriate to the learner.

The Generative Curriculum Model has provided the framework for emancipatory education for First Nations communities. The training that forms part of this model embraces Indigenous knowledge, respects Indigenous culture and works collaboratively with communities. With this as a beginning point, the training provides participants with an impetus for confronting oppression.

This Canadian model reflects Freire's beliefs about education. With the desire to strengthen the capacity of the individuals and communities First Nations have turned their attention to early child care and education programmes and services to pass on skills, knowledge and understanding of their culture. This model utilises Indigenous knowledge and engages community members, particularly Elders, to work with the young in order to achieve their desired outcome. Freire suggests that the struggle to overcome oppression requires collaboration, as by working together the goal of liberation is possible (Freire, 1972). Bringing community members together creates unity as they work towards the collective goal of providing quality care and enhancing the well-being of the children. Whilst the oppressed remain divided, oppression cannot be confronted. Therefore an approach such as the Generative Curriculum Model assists the oppressed to unite and confront oppression.

As Freire (1972, p. 57) would argue, creating an environment that supports problem-posing education "roots itself in the dynamic present and becomes revolutionary". Problem-posing education, unlike the banking concept of education, implies that the learner is in the process of learning. The learner is learning to question and as suggested by Freire, the oppressed need to first understand their situation before liberation can occur. If people are passive they are less likely to question and this is detrimental as it creates a situation where the oppressors continue to dominate. People need to create their own consciousness

of reality so that they are then able to liberate themselves from the oppression that they are emersed in. They need to learn to think, to question and to challenge in order to achieve this.

The Generative Curriculum Model embraces this concept, as First Nations are actively involved in the development of the training in their community. This involvement is achieved through creating a learning environment that is appropriate and respectful for the learners. As learners engage in the training they are encouraged and supported to question. As they question they learn more which assists in asking more questions. This process is central to this model but also central to education that liberates the oppressed.

One of the key features of the Generative Curriculum Model is that the training associated with this model is delivered in First Nations communities. This action has contributed to the success of this model as the learning takes place in the learner's environment and this ensures that the learner's context of learning and their world view is respected. As Freire (1972) stresses, learning that takes place in context is learning that has more meaning for the learner as the topics of learning surround them. To further clarify, Freire (1972) summarises this point by stating that:

It is not our role to speak to the people about our own view of the world, nor to attempt to impose that view on them, but rather to dialogue with the people about their view and ours. We must realise that their view of the world, manifested variously in their action, reflects their situation in the world. (p. 68)

The Western Australian developed Indigenous child care training had the potential to achieve the success of the Canadian Generative Curriculum Model, but this has not been the case. From a Freirean perspective the training had the attributes of emancipatory education. The training was to be delivered in communities, utilising the local knowledge and ensuring the relevance of the learning to the learner. The community was to be involved in the learning process and the topics of learning were underpinned by the core beliefs around providing optimum developmental outcomes for the children.

It was clear from the documentation around the development of the Indigenous child care training and comments from the interviewee that this training was based upon a need for Indigenous child care workers and the desire of the community to support their children. Whilst there is strong evidence for the development of skills to alleviate disadvantage, from a Freirean perspective, there is equally strong evidence of the need for appropriate education and educational environments for the oppressed. Yet despite the potential, this training has not followed the path of the Canadian model.

The literature shows that there are a number of factors that significantly impact upon engaging Indigenous students and their successful completion of studies. As previously discussed, educational attainment is closely linked to attainment in other areas of life and overall well-being. If this education is associated with the attainment of skills relating to child rearing, the ramifications are more pronounced. The impact of gaining these specific skills extends beyond their actual development, as there are additional benefits for Indigenous people and communities. As people learn about child development, child rearing and general parenting skills the collective knowledge of the community increases, building the capacity of the community. Stronger communities are able to provide enhanced and enrichment environments, with more opportunities for children so they can grow to their fullest potential and this has significant positive outcomes on children, families and their communities.

Chapter 5 - Discussion

Two hundred years ago the colonisation of Australia began a path of destruction for Australia's Indigenous people. The past is not something that has happened beforehand or is separate from the present, as what occurs today contains traces of the past. The wake of this destructive path, begun many years ago, is evident in the disadvantage and oppression currently experienced by many of Australia's Indigenous people.

Interestingly, and despite a clear understanding of the breadth and depth of Indigenous Australian disadvantage, the strategies developed to tackle this issue have not successfully ameliorated the disadvantage (Australian Government Task Force on Child Development Health and Wellbeing, 2003; Daly & Smith, 2005; National Health and Medical Research Council, n.d.; Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care, 2005a; States of New South Wales and Queensland, 2004; Zubrick et al., 2004). With different approaches embarked upon over many years, significant positive changes and consequential outcomes remain elusive.

Under Howard's leadership, Australia focused on mainstreaming Indigenous affairs. Firm in the belief that the best approach to addressing Indigenous disadvantage was to engage the same strategies as used for other disadvantaged Australians, self-determination was removed and mainstreaming was embraced (Altman, 2007; Gray & Sanders, 2006; Rowse, 2005; Taylor, 2006).

This mainstreaming of services for Australian Indigenous people is interesting, particularly as this is in contrast to the international trend within early childhood services. With increasing realisation that programmes and services, derived from and controlled by Indigenous people are far more successful, countries such as Canada have taken a different direction in early childhood (Ball, 2004b, 2004c, 2005; Boven & Morohashi, 2002). Yet despite the clear evidence of success of these programmes, Australia continued on its same path of mainstreaming.

To suggest that addressing disadvantage is a simple task is unreasonable as Indigenous disadvantage is complex; there are many contributing factors. Each factor requires its own strategies and commitment in order to achieve positive changes and positive outcomes for Australia's Indigenous people. There is substantial evidence on the importance of the early years and the various beliefs behind investing in the early years of children's lives and therefore there is a strong argument for focusing upon young children and their families (Australian Government Task Force on Child Development Health and Wellbeing, 2003; Heckman, 2006; Heckman & Masterov, 2005; Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care, 2002; Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000). It has been discussed in this research project that investing early in the lives of children and their families is the most appropriate place to begin the process of addressing disadvantage. Investing early provides opportunities to reduce the impact impoverished environments have upon long term outcomes for children.

In order to begin this process of addressing disadvantage it is useful to turn to the successes of others and learn from these. As is evident in this research project, the Canada's Generative Curriculum Model is extremely successful in engaging Indigenous people, building capacity within people and communities (Ball, 2004b, 2004c, 2005; Boven & Morohashi, 2002). Furthermore, this model acknowledges the importance of families and of investing early to bring about long term positive changes. These factors combined with embracing the principle of respect and as Freire would interpret, creates an educational environment, in its broadest sense, and this respectful approach confronts oppression (Darder, 2002; Freire, 1972, 1975; Freire & Faundez, 1989; Glass, 2001; Pimentel, 2006). The Generative Curriculum Model is successful in effecting changes that address disadvantage and confront oppression.

Australia has access to information on Canada's successful early childhood model for Indigenous people, yet it would appear that the essence of this model is not part of the government's discourse. Talk around self-determination diminished over the years of the Howard government's reign as mainstreaming emerged as the approach to be embraced (Altman, 2007; Gray & Sanders, 2006; Rowse, 2005; Taylor, 2006). Mainstreaming provides the opportunity for the oppressors

within Australian society to ensure that the oppressed do not unite and work together. By ensuring the oppressed are “mainstreamed” they are not provided the opportunities to strengthen their capacities to be able to confront oppression.

Could it be that the majority are not committed to altering the status quo; that is empowering Indigenous people to challenge the dominant culture and to reach their fullest potential? This, as Freire would explain, is the way of the oppressor as they seek to maintain their power over the oppressed therefore maintaining the status quo. In order to achieve this, the oppressor must ensure that the oppressed do not have a voice, especially a united voice.

This point is further emphasised when consideration is given to the current status of the Western Australian Indigenous child care training. This training, developed along the lines of the Generative Curriculum Model of engaging Indigenous people in the development of the training, ensuring the training could be delivered flexibly and the content of the training reflected Indigenous culture within communities, has not enjoyed the success of the Canadian model. This raises the question of why, when considerable effort has gone into the development of this training, has success not followed. Furthermore, why, when this training is readily available to be used by communities within communities, has it not been embraced and used extensively? These are questions that remain unanswered.

An assumption can be made that within Australia that commitment to seeking empowering strategies to address disadvantage and ultimately overcome oppression is lacking. Or it may be that the enormity of the issue is overwhelming and therefore knowing where to start is difficult. But with access to such a successful model that works respectfully, begins with young children and their families and which embraces the principles of Freire’s philosophy to overcome oppression, heading onto this path should not be too difficult.

Australia is in an interesting time with a change in federal government and for Western Australia a very recent change in state government. This is a time ripe for further changes and within Australia the issue of Indigenous disadvantage is one that must be addressed. Surely closing the gap between Indigenous

Australians and non-Indigenous Australians must be one of the most demanding issues to be addressed for all Australians.

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Appendices

Appendix 1 – Letter ITAB Management

Date

Dear

My name is Susan Teather and I am a student at Edith Cowan University, completing a Bachelor of Social Science (Honours). As part of that course I am conducting research into the indigenous childcare training developed in Western Australia. The purpose of this study is to investigate the development of this training to determine if it was hoped that this training would empower individuals and communities or was this training intended to simply refine people's knowledge and skills in caring for young children. To determine this, I would like to gain information from people who have had an involvement in the Indigenous child care training. I hope to speak to people from ITAB as this will enable me to determine the role it was hoped that Indigenous specific child care training could play in ameliorating disadvantage for Indigenous people.

To enable me to undertake this research I hope to conduct interviews with at least one representative from ITAB who has knowledge of the development of this training. Therefore, I am seeking permission from ITAB to undertake this research and to be able to contact at least one staff member with this knowledge. The role of ITAB in developing the training would be made explicit in the thesis. This study has been approved by the Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Education and Arts, Edith Cowan University and therefore complies with the strict guidelines that the University imposes upon researchers.

I will contact you again within two weeks of the date of this letter to discuss this with you and hopefully I will receive permission to be able to contact the appropriate ITAB workers.

I look forward to speaking with you shortly.

Yours sincerely

Susan Teather (BSocSci)

Phone [REDACTED]

Supervisors:

Associate Professor Margaret Sims
Programme Director Joondalup,
Co-ordinator Children & Family Studies,
Co-ordinator Community Studies,

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Teresa Hutchins

C/- Associate Professor Margaret Sims
Details above

Independent Contact

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Edith Cowan University
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Email : jan.gray@ecu.edu.au

Appendix 2 - Industry Training Advisory Body permission letter

Date

Ian Andrews
Community Services, Health & Education
Industry Training Advisory Body
1152 Hay Street
WEST PERTH WA 6005

Dear Ian

I spoke with you recently about my Honours research proposal. I have had to make some changes to my original proposal and am now looking more generally at indigenous child care training developed in Western Australia. The purpose of my research is to investigate the development of this training and to determine if it was hoped that this training would empower individuals and communities, or whether this training was to be used to refine people's knowledge and skills in caring for young children. To determine this, I would like to gain information from people who have had an involvement in the Indigenous child care training, therefore I am hoping to speak to someone from ITAB / FaCSIA and this brings me to purpose of sending this letter.

I have submitted my Research Proposal to the Edith Cowan University Ethics Committee, but before they will grant approval I need to contact you and advise you that your involvement would mean that your organisation would be identifiable in my research. In order to comply with the requirements of the Ethics Committee, I wish to inform you that this will take place and I am seeking acknowledgement that you understand this and that you consent to this happening.

In order to progress with my research would you please sign this letter indicating your consent. Once this has been done I will forward this letter to the Ethics Committee who will finalise their consideration of my proposal. I have been advised that once this is received approval will be forthcoming and I will then begin the research process, including letters and consent forms to your organisation.

If you have any queries please contact me by phone on [REDACTED] or email at s.teather@ecu.edu.au.

Thank you in anticipation.

Yours sincerely

Susan Teather

I Ian Andrews acknowledge that I have been informed that the Community Services, Health & Education Industry Training Advisory Body will be identifiable in the research being undertaken by Susan Teather to complete a Bachelor of Social Science (Honours).

Signed : _____

Position: _____ Date : _____

Appendix 3 - Interview guidelines and questions

Beginning the Interview

- Thank the person for coming to talk.
- Explain who you are and provide background information on the research.
- Discuss all aspects of ethics with the participant.
- Ensure that the participant have signed the Consent Form and understand what this means.
- Explain the Consent Form if participant does not understand.
- Explain confidentiality and privacy to the participant
- Advise that the session will be tape recorded.
- Ask if there are any questions before you begin.

Interview questions

These questions are to be used as a guide when conducting the interview.

1. How did you get involved in developing this training?
2. Why have you been involved in developing this training?
3. How did you develop this training?
4. What did you hope to achieve through this training?
5. Do you think that what they hoped for has been achieved?
6. What do you think has impeded or constrained this process?
7. What do you think has helped facilitate this process?

Appendix 4 - ITAB requesting assistance in contacting identified people

Ian Andrews
Community Services, Health & Education
Industry Training Advisory Body
1152 Hay Street
WEST PERTH WA 6005

Dear Ian

Since being in contact with you and the Industry Training Advisory Body about my Honours research proposal, I have approached the Edith Cowan University's Ethics Committee in seek approval for minor changes to my proposal. In doing this, I have been advised to write to you and request your assistance in contacting those people who I have identified, through accessing your records, would be knowledgeable and add value to my research. As your records are not necessarily public records I need your assistance in contacting these people and inviting them to be involved. I will contact you in the near future to see if you are able to assist me here. If you are able to do this, I will provide you with the necessary letters and consent forms together with envelopes and postage so that the identified people can be contacted through ITAB, and invited to participate in my Honours research.

If you have any queries please contact me via this email address or by phone on

██████████

Thank you in anticipation.

Yours sincerely

Susan Teather (BSocSci)

Phone: ██████████

Supervisors:

Associate Professor Margaret Sims

Programme Director Joondalup,
Co-ordinator Children & Family Studies,
Co-ordinator Community Studies,
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Appendix 5 - Information letter to participant

15 October 2007

Theresa Ilsley
C/- Ian Andrews
Community Services, Health & Education
Industry Training Advisory Body
1152 Hay Street
WEST PERTH WA 6005

Dear Theresa

My name is Susan Teather and I am a student at Edith Cowan University, completing a Bachelor of Social Science (Honours). As part of that course I am conducting research into the Indigenous childcare training developed in Western Australia. The purpose of this study is to investigate the development of this training to determine if it was hoped that this training would empower individuals and communities or was this training intended to simply refine people's knowledge and skills in caring for young children. To determine this, I would like to gain information from people who have had an involvement in the Indigenous childcare training. I envisage that with the information I gather that I will be able to determine the role it was hoped that Indigenous specific child care training could play in ameliorating disadvantage for Indigenous people.

In collaboration with ITAB, it has been identified that you are someone who has been involved in the development of the training and that you would be able to provide relevant information for my research. Consequently, I am inviting you to be involved in my research. But in order to do this, I would like to conduct an interview with you. If you consent to being involved I hope to conduct one interview with you, which will take place within two months of the date of this letter at a location that is convenient to you. This interview will take about one hour and will be informal. I will be audio recording the interview so that I can transcribe it and the transcription will be coded. When the research is completed, all tapes will be stored for five years in a secure location at Edith Cowan University. The original transcripts and documentation will only be available to the researcher and her supervisors. Despite this, the researcher will be naming the organisation that you have worked for or currently work for, and by identifying this organisation it can not be guaranteed that your identity will remain anonymous.

If you would like to participate in this study, would you please read and sign the attached Consent Form and then return it to me in the enclosed stamped addressed envelope. When I receive the completed Consent Form I will contact you to arrange a time to conduct the interview.

Please note that that prior to seeking your participation, this study has been approved by the Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Education and Arts, Edith

Cowan University. If you have any questions in relation to this you can contact Edith Cowan University.

As a result of this study, I anticipate the information will be used to benefit Indigenous people and their communities and organisations wishing to develop Indigenous training.

I look forward to meeting you.

Yours sincerely

Susan Teather (BSocSci)

Phone: [REDACTED]

Supervisors:

Associate Professor Margaret Sims

Programme Director Joondalup,

Co-ordinator Children & Family Studies,

Co-ordinator Community Studies,

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Appendix 6 – Participant’s consent form

When you have read and understood the information letter (attached), please complete and sign the following Consent Form. Once signed please return it to me in the enclosed stamped and addressed envelope.

I (insert your name) _____ agree to participate in the research being conducted by Susan Teather, which has been outlined in the information letter. My contact details are:-

Address: _____

Contact Number: _____

I consent to the interview being recorded on tape and in writing.

I understand that only the researcher and her supervisors will have access to the information obtained from the interview.

I understand that every effort will be made to maintain my confidentiality but I am aware that the organisation that I previously worked for has agreed to be named and this may make it possible for me to be identified.

I understand that I can decline to answer any of the questions, that I can discontinue the interview at any stage and that I can withdraw and terminate my participation in the research at any time.

Signed: _____ Date: _____

Susan Teather (BSocSci)

Phone: XXXXXXXXXX

Supervisors:

Associate Professor Margaret Sims

Programme Director Joondalup,

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