The Impact of Flexible Delivery Styles and Competency Based Education on Indigenous Adult Students Studying in Esperance and Kalgoorlie between 1995 and 1997

A research paper

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by

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Candidates Statement  

"I hereby declare that the work herein now submitted as a thesis for the degree of Master by Research, is the result of my own investigations, and references to ideas and work of other researchers have been specifically acknowledged. I hereby certify that the work embodied in this thesis has not already been accepted in substance for any degree, and is not being currently submitted in candidature for any other degree."

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Abstract

This research examines the impact of flexible delivery styles and competency-based education on Indigenous adult students studying the Certificate of General Education for Adults (CGEA).

This research took place in Esperance and Kalgoorlie in Western Australia between 1995 and 1997.

The data reflects how the students reacted to the learning and assessment style, which resulted in how they attempted to operate in a flexible learning centre.

The research has focused particularly on the campuses of Esperance and Kalgoorlie Curtin University Technology.

The researcher does not imply that other sites that may provide the CGEA Framework and or similar mode or modes of delivery and client group, will experience the same issues.
Chapter One - Introduction
Chapter One – Introduction

This study has a focus on delivery styles within a Competency-Based Training curriculum (CBT). In particular, how such a curriculum and its attendant delivery styles impacted on Indigenous students studying the Certificate of General Education for Adults (CGEA). The study was conducted at Kalgoorlie College and the Esperance Tertiary Education Centre in Western Australia between 1995-1997. The sample group are adult Nyungar and Wongi students. The territory of the Nyungar extends from “...the Geraldton district south along the coast to Cape Leeuwin, continuing south-east almost to Esperance and then in line north-west to rejoin the coast at Geraldton. It is an area of almost 3,000,000 hectares”. (Green 1984:01) In addition, according to a Wongutha Elder (1999) the area of the Wongi spans from the west to Ravensthorpe and east to Eucla, north east of Cosmo Newberry and south of Wiluna.

In this chapter the background to the study will provide the reader with the history and context in which the study takes place. While somewhat lengthy this section will demonstrate the complex milieu in which courses for Indigenous students are embedded. The chapter will conclude with a brief description of the methodology used in the study, the significance of the study, and an outline of the chapters to come.

1 The terms Nyungar and Wongi represents the Indigenous clans living within these regional boundaries.
Background to the Study

Historical Perspective

During the early 1980's the Western Australian Technical and Further Education (TAFE) Division provided Esperance and Kalgoorlie with adult community courses. Kalgoorlie, due to its involvement in the mining industry, established courses that were employment orientated. For Esperance, at this time, courses focussed on personal or recreational development, with negligible links to employment or further studies skills. Indigenous adult education at both sites were involved in similar community orientated courses, and was accommodated by the creation of a separate class within the TAFE structures known as the 'Aboriginal Access Enclave'.

In the early 1990's, Kalgoorlie became an independent college while Esperance became the responsibility of Albany TAFE. According to the manager of the Tertiary Centre:

There was increasing disquiet among the Esperance Community about the services that were provided via Albany to such an extent that in 1990/91 then finally in 1992 there was a movement lead by the Shire Council to have the facility separated from the larger TAFE organisation and join with Kalgoorlie Independent College as it was then (Personal communication Tertiary Centre Manager 1997).

In 1993, further administrative changes occurred with the most significant being Esperance breaking away from the state TAFE organisation. Esperance amalgamated with Kalgoorlie School of Mines to form Kalgoorlie College/Esperance Tertiary Education Centre. This change had limited
immediate ramifications for Esperance staff and students. However, the
repositioning was seen as one with possibilities for the future.

In 1994, Esperance and Kalgoorlie offered Indigenous students the Certificate of General Studies and the Certificate in Transition Studies. As the Coordinator at the time stated, “Mid way through 1994 it was evident that the Certificates needed re-writing as the syllabus was too detailed and too demanding for the students” (personal communication 1997). However, the College had few resources in both time and money hence a decision to adopt the Certificate in General Education for Adults (CGEA), a CBT certificate already used within the Victorian Adult Literacy Basic Education (ALBE) was made. Consequently, by the end of 1994, the Aboriginal Services Bureau (ASB) and the Adult Literacy Service Bureau (ALS) within the West Australian Department of Training (WADOT) recommended the use of the CGEA for adult Indigenous students statewide. Then in 1997, Curtin University merged with the School of Mines and Kalgoorlie College to become known as Kalgoorlie Campus of Curtin University of Technology/Eesperance Tertiary Education Centre. Finally, in 1998 Esperance became known as the Esperance Campus of Curtin University of Technology. The focus of Indigenous adult community education in the Esperance/Goldfields region became vocational, and industry specific training.

Regional and Local Indigenous Learners Trends

The number of Indigenous students enrolled in TAFE courses has been disproportionate to the large number of students completing training courses.
Archived records showed that over the past decade the number of students withdrawing or not completing their studies has been estimated at eighty five percent. This figure could be greater as students formally enrol but tend not to formally withdraw. Therefore, past records show the student as on 'hold', or still in the system. This procedure has only recently been upgraded and students must now formally withdraw. Of the small number of students completing their studies, approximately fifteen percent of this group has been absorbed into a limited opportunity of relevant and sustainable employment within the community. Traditionally this employment has been within the local Indigenous corporations. Some students have returned or relocated to the Goldfields area to work specifically within the Revegetation Program within the mining industry.

**Indigenous Employment Trends**

According to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples’ Training Advisory Council (ATSIPTAC 1997), of the Indigenous people participating in the labour force, the public administration and community services and health sectors are the largest employment industries. Meanwhile the largest 'employer' of Indigenous people is ATSIC under the Community Development Employment Program (CDEP) or the *Work for the Dole Scheme*. This is supported by research conducted by Boughton and Duman (1997) in their study of the *Review of the Aboriginal Employment Development Policy* (Commonwealth of Australia 1994). Their findings showed that Indigenous people have a very low participation rate in the mainstream labour market and that this is not changing despite massive programs of government intervention.
Most importantly, it showed that when Indigenous people are employed, they are most likely to be working in and for their own communities. There appears to be specific Indigenous labour markets which ‘feed into’ an Indigenous ‘industry’ which is much less urban-based and much more community service focused than that of the mainstream industrial structure of non-Indigenous Australia.

In a more recent study, *The Job Ahead: Escalating Economic Costs of Indigenous Employment Disparity*, Aboriginal Employment Commissioned Report by ATSIC (Taylor and Altman 1997) verifies the importance of community employment, and argues that the employment situation of Aboriginal people is far from improving and is in fact deteriorating, relative to the population as a whole.

**Regional and Local Implications of these Trends**

The position of interest in this research rests with the fifteen percent of students who remained enrolled and persisted with their studies under conditions, which have often been problematic. This research investigated how students coped with the new mode of delivery, one that favoured individualism and styles of learning and assessment, which presented knowledge in discrete ‘packages’. As well, the research revisited the relevance of past courses (which had been delivered in a more structured and didactic format).

These courses were designed with a well-defined expectation that regular attendance was an integral component of the course format. Regular
attendance enhanced the opportunity for the sequential learning outcomes to be met. By not attending regularly the sequential course content would be delivered regardless and students returning to classes after some absence would have no idea where they were up to. Consequently, absenteeism lead to high non-completion rates. These high levels of non-completion rates concerned educators, who felt that the system of delivery was partly culpable. Indigenous students had difficulty completing learning requirements due to their lack of regular attendance. The unproved theory of introducing more flexibility into the learning environment made some andragogical sense.

Therefore, the introduction of flexible styles of delivery and competency based training, with the capacity to select and complete certain learning outcomes, over a period determined by the student, speculatively appeared more appropriate and in keeping with the entity of the students. Further, any strategy such as the establishment of a ‘passport of skills’ providing the students with recognition for the studies they had completed at other locations satisfied many educators. Consequently, the view that perhaps the new training paradigm was workable and presented more relevant delivery styles for Indigenous adult learners was accepted.

The sample group of Indigenous students from this study was a part of a representation, according to the Australian Vocational Education and Training (VET) statistics for 1996 and 1997, of an estimated total number of 1.5 million

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Andragogy derives from the Greek word 'aner' meaning man. Malcolm Knowles defined it as, 'the art and science of helping adults learn' (1983:43). Knowles distinguished the cognitive development of children distinct from the cognitive development of adults.
students. Indigenous students represented a total number, 38,000 or 2.6% of the TAFE population. In May 1996, Ministers for Vocational Education and Training endorsed an Australian National Training Authority (ANTA) Board decision to establish the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples’ Training Council (ATSIPTAC) to provide advice to the ANTA board on Indigenous people's vocational education and training needs. The Terms of Reference included the following:

1. To provide strategies to maximise outcomes for Indigenous Australians as sought in the National Strategy for VET.
2. To provide VET resourcing needs for Indigenous Australians.
3. To provide mechanisms to improve co-ordination between Indigenous related employment, economic development labour market and VET programs.
4. To provide measures necessary to ensure Indigenous people's achieve Educational Outcomes Equity in VET by the turn of the century and progress to the 21 goals of the National and Torres Strait Islander Educational Policy (ATSIPTAC 1997).

Further, that these terms of reference would take place in consultation with other key groups with an interest including the National Industry Training Authority Board and ANTA.

Prior to this, student motivation to access community adult education did not necessarily include the expectations of moving into VET courses. The Australian Bureau of Statistics Outcomes and Pathways in Adult and Community Education (ACFEB 1995) found that 15% of adult community participants have moved towards formal study qualifications within two years.
Indeed, Sharpe and Robertson (1997) found that, Adult Community Education (ACE) students are not a homogeneous group and use pathways, for a range of purposes, including entry, re-entry and ‘second chance’ entry to the VET sector. In their report, *Adult Community Education Pathways to VET*, Sharpe and Robertson identified ACE as the most important ‘second chance’ step to VET. They suggest that the view of Stream 1000 or Access/Bridging courses as ‘poor cousins’ within the state training profile denies the level of education or recognition hence its contribution to possible funding support. They go on to recommend that community education is ‘community’ driven and an important avenue for some students who have unpleasant school memories.

*Introduction of Federal Policies in Education and Training*

Community education programs in Indigenous communities with access to personal development style courses have operated in the past. However, government policy has shifted and training has become linked with discrete outcomes attached to rigid funding criteria. At this point government policy appears to be driven by economic rationalism (Kenny 1994) and economic managerialism Jackson (1994). Consequently, these factors produce centralised control over curriculum and an emphasis on competition and outcomes. As a result policies change within the VET sector directly impact and determine the style of delivery of adult education courses.

*Past Operational Practices in Indigenous Education and Training*

Prior to the introduction to Competency Based Training, the imparting of knowledge was conducted in small classes, with predominantly face-to-face
teaching. Recent policies promote self-paced, self directed, individual, flexibly scheduled learning at a range of times and locations. As the study will demonstrate, these changes to the pattern of formal face-to-face learning within the structure of a class or group generated fewer expectations of regular daily attendance. Students would claim that this lack of expectation reduced their pattern of attendance because there was no mechanism in place to encourage attendance. Further, not all participants in adult Indigenous training are necessarily vocationally inspired. Many students enter such courses to be a part of the cultural experience of 'being with their own mob'. Some return to formal studies in an attempt to improve their skills so that they can help their children, home and/or community (a significant number of students reported how good they felt about being able to help their high school aged children do their homework).

Implications of Policy and Practices

While increased self-esteem may be an important achievement to Indigenous VET students, increased self-esteem is not an element which is measured as a substantial outcome by the Australian National Training Authority. The current system accepts that the VET students' needs are, based on what it sees as a single desired outcome, orientated towards employment and or economic independence.

Arguably, as a consequence, Indigenous Australians continue to be highly under-represented in national employment, education, and training activity when compared with non-Indigenous Australians. ATSIPTAC 1997 figures
show that 80% of Indigenous Australians have no post-school qualification compared to 60% of all Australians. Fewer than 50% of 15-19 year old Indigenous Australians have no formal qualifications compared to 90% of all non-Indigenous Australians.

**An Introduction to Flexible Delivery Styles**

**A Local Perspective**

In the beginning, changes in national directions in 1995 compelled lecturers in the General Studies Department at both sites to present the CGEA in the innovative delivery style known as ‘flexible delivery’. Flexible Delivery was presented as a contemporary concept.

To the author’s knowledge, no other Western Australian campuses were applying this model of learning at the time. Consequently its effectiveness as an educational delivery approach was unknown in Western Australia. There were no guidelines available or in place about this style of teaching. This caused anxiety amongst lecturers that the academic year would commence with no professional development or guidance to foster an understanding to aid the implementation of the new certificate.

The author’s involvement as Coordinator of General Studies at Esperance Tertiary Education Centre, recognised that both lecturers and students were having difficulty understanding what ‘flexible delivery mode’ meant. It appeared that after years of culturally anomalous and inflexible structures in the approach to Indigenous adult learning, which included compulsory...
attendance and regimented timetables, a fundamental shift was taking place. Students were encouraged to attend classes when they were best able, and learning would take place on an individual self-directed, self-paced basis. In addition, the complexity of the language of the new General Education for Adults Certificate and the vast number of competencies which students would need to complete caused concern. Consequently, this research was undertaken to investigate how students perceived their new role in this open and flexible learning environment and its impact on their ability to operate within it.

Emerging Issues

Initially problems arose due to the proliferation of misinformation. Issues such as the impact of the introduction of flexible styles of delivery and the concept of competency based training with no professional development, was conflicting with lecturers previous practices. This had been found elsewhere:

Teachers are confronting the conflict between their pedagogical practices and commitments and the requirements of competency based assessments, which are constructed within a very different set of discourses than those which have constructed their pedagogical understandings and practices in the past (Sanguinetti 1994:41).

Therefore, as lecturers attempted to deal with this conflict, the ramifications were unclear on how Indigenous students would adapt to flexible styles of delivery and competencies based training. This provided the impetus to initiate a research project that asked:
• How relevant are these styles of delivery and learning to Indigenous students?
• How is this style of learning going to impact on the students’ ability to operate within the new VET paradigm?

Introduction to the Research using the Ethnographic/Naturalistic Method

Since it was vastly different from their previous experiences, the aim of the study was to investigate if Indigenous students were experiencing difficulty in relating to their new learning environment. Hence the research question emerged from this inquiry. First, to investigate how Indigenous students were coping with the recently introduced style of delivery known as Flexible Delivery Mode (FDM), and second, to investigate how Indigenous students were managing the competency-based training framework of the CGEA.

This qualitative research is based on ethnographic case studies. According to LeCompte and Goetz (1982) ethnography emphasises the interplay among variables situated in a natural context:

Ethnographers attempt to describe systematically the characteristics of variables and phenomena to generate and refine conceptual categories, to discover and validate associations among phenomena, or to compare constructs and postulates generated from phenomena in one setting with comparable phenomena in another setting. Hypotheses, or causal propositions fitting the data and constructs generated then may be developed and confirmed (1982:35).

Essentially this form of research must occur in natural settings and is often used to record change or processes.
Research structure

Initially the research was conducted as an attempt to understand what was occurring within both settings of the learning environment. The author’s involvement with the Indigenous students at the Esperance site was significant. The class had been established for several years before the research commenced and the students and researcher had developed a comprehensive relationship. As a result of this involvement the author’s role was partly that of a participant observer in the process of observing the students within their educational/learning context. The students had in part suggested that the author research this topic instigated by the changing practices to their enclave-learning environment. When the author began to prepare the structural framework of the research several students were able to provide some guidance.

There was a need to oversee the research and ensure that all ethical and cultural etiquette was being observed, and so a reference group was established. Two Indigenous Research Assistants, one from each site, were also recruited to consult and advise the researcher (both the research assistants were members of the reference group). The reference group had access to draft copies of the interview structure and written questionnaire schedule and contributed with improving the document prior to and after it was piloted. The questionnaire was designed, piloted, revised and then conducted with the aim to elicit information from students providing them with an opportunity to speak about their new learning environment. Both research assistants further
explained the intentions of the study to the students and encouraged them to participate. The reference group was responsible for the dissemination and collection of the questionnaires and followed up with any of the respondent’s inquiries. The research assistants:

- explained the procedures for human ethical clearance to participants,
- ensured that the document was written in plain English,
- explained that the information collected through the research would remain confidential with no identifying items such as names used and
- explained that once completed the documents would be shredded.

The role of the non-Indigenous researcher was to calibrate and respond to the requirements set by the reference group who were acting on behalf of the Indigenous community. The group provided guidance and information to best gain the most realistic and unambiguous communication from the Indigenous respondents.

Further, two local community newspapers provided a feature story and an overview of the researcher’s proposal and encouraged participation in the study.

**Study Overview**

The first chapter discussed the background to the study. It elucidated the need to align adult community education with changing Federal Policy, which became evident in the second half of the nineteen-nineties. These changes
were based upon training reform, which advocated economic efficiencies. Consequently, this promoted the creation of ANTA and an Indigenous group known as the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples Advisory Council. As a result, training with a vocational focus promoting economic development evolved. This was presented in the form of competency-based training and flexible learning styles in place of traditional paradigms of learnings.

The second chapter of this thesis gives an account of the background to the study. It discusses who the Nyungar and Wongi students are, and why the course of study was undertaken. This chapter also attempts to provide an overview of the structure of the CGEA within its competency-based framework. The chapter goes on to provide an overview of Federal policies pertaining to flexible delivery within the development of ANTA after the disbanding of the Flexible Delivery Working Party in 1994. It examines an evident lack of cohesiveness and direction, (Tinker, Lepani and Mitchell Commissioned Report No 43 1996). Further, Chapter Two provides a macroscopic perspective of the CGEA, introduced in FDM with a focus on vocation, education and training. Claims regarding irrelevance of a ‘market driven’ educational system are also reviewed. This shift from learning for personal improvement to learning explicitly to gain a ‘passport of skills’ or package of competencies, is discussed.

Chapter Three analyses the results within the methodology of the study. This includes how the research was conducted, the research sites, the timeframe, and when the study was carried out. It also discusses who were involved, what
techniques were used to illicit information, the limitations that arose during the study, the design of the questionnaire and interview schedules, and the limitations these techniques presented.

Chapter Four analyses the results. It demonstrates how the local students perceived changes in practice, from face-to-face delivery to self-directed learning (which incorporated a flexible approach within competency based assessment).

Chapter Five contains the significance of the study and makes connection with the local and national perspective. It will also examine the ramifications of the policy and practices that were partway responsible for the untenable situation that exists in Indigenous adult education and training.

Chapter Six will provide a general overview of the study and report back on the current status of Indigenous Education and Training in Australia and will reviews the implications of the research paper findings.

Summary of Chapter One

Chapter One provided the history and context in which the study took place. It demonstrated the complex milieu in which education courses for Indigenous students are embedded. It provided a brief description of the methodology used and the significance of the study on the Indigenous student community. Chapter Two will establish the background of the study both in contextual and conceptual terms.
This research paper was undertaken attentive of the cautious advice of:

Non-aborigines have always thought they know the solutions to Aboriginal problems and with the best intentions and, sometimes at great personal cost, devastatingly implemented them.

Whether or not they were 'good' or right solutions, they were always wrong. This is not a moral judgement. Change in society is brought about by decisions taken by individuals who judge, to themselves, whether or not to commit themselves to actions.

The people whom the change will effect are best placed to judge, implement and later accept the consequences of their decisions. Any decision taken by outsiders for others penetrate, if at all, only to the surface of the problems they seek to alleviate (Coombs, Brandl, Snowdon 1983:19).
Chapter Two - Contextual and conceptual background to the study
Chapter Two - Contextual and Conceptual Background to the Study

Section One: A Macro View

The previous chapter provided an overview of the study. This chapter will establish the background of the study both in contextual and conceptual terms. It sets out initially in section one to introduce the reader to the broader elements of the study. In this way it will provide an initial discussion of Flexible Delivery and its genesis. Further it will provide an overview of the Federal policies regarding the National Training Reform Agenda pertaining to Flexible Delivery and Competency-Based Training, within the development of the Australian National Training Authority. In addition it will outline the claims that VET became economically driven, potentially relegating students to a 'second chance' education. This chapter will examine the impact of the Flexible Delivery and Competency-Based Training paradigms on the VET sector and the relevance of this form of training to Indigenous learners. In attempting to illustrate this, it will provide background to Indigenous students in tertiary institutionalised settings and the implications this has had on their ability to manage their learning within the constraints of a non-Indigenous worldview.

The second section of this chapter will closely examine the history of the CGEA and its introduction to the Western Australian, adult literacy context. It will provide detailed explanation of the components of the framework identifying the underlying competency-based assessment principles. This will

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Contextual and Conceptual background to the study
occur within the specific contextual framework of the Indigenous students represented in the study commonly referred to as ‘second chance learners’. These learners bring to the classroom a unique set of needs, however through intervention, such students can acquire the necessary strategies to become transformed learners, instigating their own progression. Finally, this chapter will provide a micro overview of the students’ learning environments and reflect on how these students responded to the changes that operated in Kalgoorlie and Esperance at the time.

An International Perspective to the Genesis of Flexible Delivery

Evans and Nation (1993) believed that open learning emerged because the existing ‘Distance Education’ was institutionalising itself into the core of educational practices at a post secondary level. A cohort of learners remained who had not achieved post secondary education but required access to reformation. “The term ‘open’ in its title signified enrolment policies which allowed entry to those who had not completed secondary schooling and teaching methods which catered for students who could not attend campus-based programs on a regular basis” (1993:09).

In their book, Reforming Open and Distance Education: Critical Reflections from Practice, Evans and Nation, refer to Open Learning as reformed practices with new values, approaches and students. “It is characterised by teacher’s frame of mind, which lead them to teach courses in ways, which reflect the needs, circumstances and interests of their students” (1993:08). Open Learning represents reformed educational practices for more varied economic, political
and social purposes. They believe that the 'open learning push' in the United Kingdom was the result of 'entrenched educational practices'. Compounded by global trends, the United Kingdom Conservative Government pushed for reform. The 'open' concept provided an ideology espousing new forms of education, which would influence social, economic and political trends. The Senate Employment, Education and Training Reference committee in 1995 emphasised that open learning provides for a paradigm shift in making participation easier. Van den Brande (cited in Taylor, Lopez and Quadrelli 1996) uses the term "flexible and distance learning", but indicates the label 'flexible' refers to 'adaptation to the individual needs and leaning modes and providing full interactive facilities with tutors and other learners. Here the image is technological" (1993:1). That is, open learning alludes to an approach, which places student learning, needs and choices at the centre of educational decision-making. The recent shift from didactic teacher-centred to more student-centred calls for a shift in the models of teaching and learning. As a result students are expected to engage in learning situations using a range of communication and learning technologies. This suggests that new learning must be comprehensive and students must learn to communicate effectively, work in teams, search out and analyse new knowledge, and participate actively in the learning technology society. A number of authors bring various concerns to the discussion of this point, for example, Deckers and Andrews (1998) in their paper The influence of cultural variable's and learning style attributes on overseas students offer a differing view of educational success and satisfaction with technology-oriented learning environments:
This is providing challenges for students, many whom have only experienced strongly teacher centred teaching. There is wide evidence that many of these students are bewildered by the new teaching and learning approaches, unsure of the ground rules and no longer able to use previously successful formulas (p. 05).

Tinkler, et al (1996) in their Commissioned Research, state further research discovered that:

One of the problems arising from the use of the terms Flexible Delivery and Flexible Learning is that they are not supported by a body of academic literature. This lack of an accepted philosophical framework to organise debate about what the issues are and what needs to be done is of concern (p. 59).

The lack of debate and opportunity to delve into the specifics, for example, the design of flexible delivery courses and how they were structured, or an overview of clearly identifiable components the learners would need to operate within this context was lacking. Furthermore, Wickert (1997) contends that it is critical to be alert to the way increased ‘flexibility’ is the underlying principle that threads its way through the promises of training reform.

Flexibility is one of those words, like literacy - an empty codeword which gains its meanings from the uses to which it is put. Many of the powerful terms employed in policy texts are like this. In these texts language is used to naturalise complex issues - to make them appear obvious. The notion of flexibility is not presented as problematic and contested (p. 03).

As several writers have expressed, flexible delivery was problematic and it appeared that many adult educators were experiencing first hand the ambiguity associated with trying to come to terms with and know specifically what was supposed to occur with this style of delivery. Policy makers, it appeared,
assumed that the students would convert to and cope with the new learning paradigm within the vocational, educational and training domain. However it has emerged that this was not always the case and that students often found flexible delivery within competency-based learning problematic because they did not possess the skills of a self-directed learner using learning technologies. These and other views tend to suggest that:

The use of these terms is inevitably connected to value-laden decisions about supporting one initiative instead of another. Staff involved in planning any alternative approaches to teaching and learning are forced to consider philosophical questions about how people learn, what use can be made of technology for delivering courses and what use can students make of technology (Tinkler et al 1996:51).

The implementation of innovations using convergent technologies acknowledge that students are forced to respond to the changing traditional roles and this will be discussed later in the chapter. There is also a view held that the traditional format of group face-to-face instruction is still the preferred and most effective form of education. At the international conference: Learning Together-Collaboration Open Learning-in Perth in 1998 Emeritus Professor Richard Johnson stated that, (researchers notes) *inter alia* "... traditional classroom teaching especially if it is enriched by computer-based resources, produces by far the best educational outcomes ...". Johnson stressed that education is more than information and the dissemination of facts. In his paper, *Educational and Social Imperatives in Global Open Learning*, he claimed that the rich do not send their children to Website University or Microsoft University or Small Screen University. Those universities are being
promoted as a cheap way to provide instruction to the masses. He warned that there is a strong possibility of deep social divisions emerging, based on education. The rich will receive an education in the traditional format at a fully resourced institution that will fit them for challenging employment and influential leadership roles. The masses on the other hand will receive basic level of instruction, training and learning technologies, which will fit them for employment at sub-ordinate levels. Johnson believes this will lead to the reinforcement of privilege. Similarly, Bates (1995) believes the 'old' methods of smaller classes and a direct and frequent person-to-person contact between teacher and student worked well. He expands this view by highlighting how society is faced with a struggle for economic survival. The future of developed countries depends on large numbers of people being educated to a high level, not just in late adolescence, but also throughout their lives. People need to learn how to communicate effectively, participate actively in society, and generate and assimilate knowledge.

This however, acquires new approaches to teaching and learning that exploit the unique features of different technologies in order to meet the widely different needs of many types of learners. These approaches must be based on the considerable amount of knowledge now available about how people learn and how to design effective learning environments, as well as a good understanding of the educational strengths and limitations of different technologies (Bates 1995:17).

Further, Hargreaves (1994) believes that education must focus on imparting skills and qualities like adaptability, responsibility, flexibility and the capacity to work with others. “Flexibility is often portrayed positively as a way of creating work that is more meaningful and holistic for individuals because of
its economic, organisational and individual benefits, flexibility is frequently presented as a key goal for education and its restructuring” (p.50). Hargreaves emphasises the important challenges for teaching the knowledge and skills that are necessary for future generations to be equipped to organise flexible patterns of work structures. However, he warns that educators may risk becoming narrow and teach to quasi-corporate agendas:

Although flexibility has become an economic and educational buzzword, in practice it can lead equally to enrichment or exploitation, to diversity or divisiveness. To pursue the goals of flexibility with no sense of the various meanings for different sexes, classes and races in the workforce, and with no thought of its consequences for the unemployed, underemployed or undemanding employment to which many workers will be consigned, is to do so selectively and uncritically in ways that benefit some social groups and their interests more than others (1994:52).

Successive governments, Hargreaves suggests, have used the benefits of flexible delivery to promote expansion of opportunity, however, the real appeal comes in the reduction of the labour resources for delivery. The effects of downsizing the labour force in education, especially for the under represented learners reinforces inequity and reduces opportunity for vocational aspirations to improve life style, and choices. While most educational institutions have found ways to do more with less in recent years, there is presumably a point beyond it is no longer possible to preserve quality with diminishing resources. Hargreaves recommends that it is not possible to operate a quality education system purely on market forces. It is not possible to improve services to students, to widen access to develop Equal Opportunity policies without having the necessary resources. Further, he goes on to say that it is not possible to
maintain quality teaching materials if there are fewer staff available to develop them and to go through the processes of inviting, working and learning together which are essential to the production of high quality teaching materials. Evans and Nation also consolidate these claims by stating that "It is tempting to seize upon cheaper and easier solutions in the name of efficiency, but sometimes such savings are illusory" (1993:128).

Why Flexible Styles of Delivery and Competency Based Education and Training?

ANTA as part of a strategic plan based on the Flexible Delivery Working Party Reports of 1992 and 1993, developed a system for vocational education and training as part of the National Training Reform Agenda.

Issues pertaining to education and training had been the subjects of great investigation. The agenda was not a report in itself but a series of reports, which consisted of:

- A national framework for the recognition of training 1991;
- Review young peoples participation in post compulsory education and training (The Finn Review 1991);
- Seek out employment related key competencies: a proposal for consultation (Mayer Committee 1992);
- Address the Issues Paper: The national alignment of vocational education and training credentials to the Australian Standards Framework 1991 (Rumsey Report);
- Investigate the Australian Vocational Certificate training system 1992 (Carmichael Report).
The plan was to then apply the key competencies across the range of areas of learning in training programs to ensure the Australian workforce established a currency of skills to compete in the international training market place. For this to occur training needed to be available to the largest number of workers, cost effective and explicitly related to the needs of the particular industry:

Choice of content range to meet various learning styles method of learning, appropriate timeframe of course place of learning articulation across courses and the recognition of learners prior experience for the basis of this plan. Consideration of entry and exit points rather than traditional enrolment procedure permitted training to take place in a negotiated environment. The emphasis was to make vocational education and training more flexible, relevant and accessible. Originally established in 1995, Nine National Principles of Flexible Delivery were developed by the National Flexible Delivery Taskforce in late September 1996. The Principles are:

- Improving access for all clients;
- Providing informed clients capable of exercising effective choices about learning;
- Developing effective client/provider relationships;
- Quality assurance to maintain currency;
- Facilitating an effective training market;
- Supporting competency-based education and training;
- Employing appropriate and effective uses of technology;
- Developing and adopting efficient and equitable resource allocation models;
- Developing staff with new competencies.

(Source: Australian Training Vol. 3, Issue 4, 1996, p. 03)
Three years previously the National Flexible Delivery Working Party 1993 defined Flexible Delivery as being able to provide for learners:

- clear accurate and prompt information about program availability, delivery and access modes and cost;
- having access to what is relevant to their needs from a single module to a structured sequence of modules constituting an award;
- getting/beeing given credit for prior learning through a convenient process (to learners);
- having recourse to good advice in setting their learning goals, time lines and study methods;
- learning at times of their choice;
- progressing at their own rate;
- learning at a place of their choice;
- having quick and convenient recourse to expert tuition;
- having convenient access to peers for mutual support and group activities;
- having regular feedback about their learning progress;
- learning accessed at a time and place convenient to them;
- having prompt notification of results.
(Source: Staff Development Program October 1995:15)

Emerging from this memorandum are two main aims:

1. To increase the learner's access to the training of their choice, and
2. To ensure that this training is learner-centred, culturally relevant and applicable to individual learning styles.
Flexible Delivery within the Australian Context

Further investigations have revealed a difference in ideology exists between ANTA and Flexible Delivery Working Party (FDWP). Since the disbanding of the FDWP, a lack of direction has occurred, creating confusion about who was responsible for policy development and the information service role. "It is apparent that the Corporation is not satisfying the needs for those at the coalface who want 'basic' information on Open Learning or "much less provide advice for staff at lower than senior management level" (Tinkler et al 1996). This lack of clear direction at policy level resulted in a genuine concern for subordinate staff expected to operate Flexible Styles of delivery. Tinkler believes the codeword ‘flexibility’ was fuelled by a market driven approach to management which individualises the ‘consumer’, customises the options available so ‘clients’ can be tailored to suit particular profiles, as deemed relevant by the training department. The department of training then pays the provider by results per competent student.

ANTA promoted Flexible Delivery as an approach rather than a system or technique and that it is based on the skill, needs and delivery requirements of clients, not the interests of trainers or providers (ANTA 1996:08). Further investigations revealed otherwise. While the National Training Authority espoused this directive in all its communications, not all who were responsible for the implementation of this approach were convinced that the ‘requirement of the clients’ was in fact the significant focus.
Palmieri (1996) whilst also signalling that flexible delivery was not a single strategy, which could be applied anywhere and everywhere, expressed early warning of the foibles of the new system. “It is well to have this emphasised so that education providers do not subside into the convenient but faulty practice of following standard formulae which, through their adoption, would merely replace one form of rigidity with another”.

In fact, Jackson (1993) warned that the reform comes with an agenda. “Broad educational goals and considerations of pedagogy are rendered invisible, while concepts such as ‘efficiency and effectiveness’ come to reflect administrative rather than educational concerns” (1993:247). Canada and Britain were already a decade into the reform Australia was about to embark on. Reticence about the reform Jackson believed the deficiency of the approach needed to be made public. Wickert (1997) argued, “the new policy texts directly address the principle of greater flexibility but what work is flexibility made to do in them? “Claims are made, she believes “That clients will benefit from higher standards of service, more flexible and customised assistance and ultimately, better and more lasting employment outcomes” (1997:03). However as Hargreaves reminds us, “It is important for teachers and those who work with them to view ‘flexibility’ as an open democratic opportunity requiring commitment and critical engagement, not as a closed corporate obligation demanding unquestioned compliance” (1994:52).

The Flexible Delivery Working Party submission to the Senate Committee on Open Learning acknowledged that technical and further education staff are

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Contextual and Conceptual background to the study

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involved in Flexible Delivery regardless of the fact that they are still attached to fundamental issues such as:

- the curriculum being designed for face to face delivery;
- funding being connected to student hours;
- staff workloads being related to the number of hours of class contact;
- and buildings and facilities being designed for conventional delivery (Tinkler et al. 1996:65)

Educators were directed to adopt a new flexible paradigm, yet they were not given the appropriate tools to establish these innovative teaching styles. As a consequence, anomalies began to surface. For example, it is inappropriate that conditions exist such as funding directly connected to student contact hours (SCH), staff workloads relate directly to the number of face-to-face student contact hours and learning centres designed for conventional delivery with little or no injection of capital works for accommodating convergent technologies. In many learning environments these issues still require addressing.

**Commissioned Report Findings**

The final ANTA report on National Flexible Delivery Taskforce, June 1996, discussed the lack of a clear national focus for flexible delivery. In particular it blames, “Inappropriate Government resources, allocation models and a lack of a National approach to professional development” (ANTA 1996:17) as a barrier to the implementation of flexible delivery. Tinkler, Lepani and Mitchell (1996) in their commissioned report write; “This new push in Open
Learning is driven by bureaucrats who see gains with economic efficiencies but do not have an appreciation of the subtleties of Open Learning" (1996:61).

Policy makers do not necessarily perceive the issues as educators do, that is, for example the need to provide appropriate and ongoing support for students:

The changes in learning strategies, curriculum, assessment and organizational arrangements, which accompany Flexible Delivery, will impact profoundly on all those involved in training. Existing formal professional development programs are inadequate to address these changes (ANTA 1996:45).

Several former members of the Flexible Delivery Working Party believed many administrators, newly involved in Open Learning, were unaware of the complexities of the domain and were thus prone to making mistakes. "They were concerned that the Australian National Training Authority is now the key power in the vocational and employment sector in most regards, including Open Learning, but lacks specific expertise, experience and credibility in Open Learning" (Tinkler, Lepani & Mitchell 1996:61).

The 1995 August edition of the Training Agenda Editorial (Volume 4, Number 3) states:

...that the VET sector is embracing the FD approach that enables it to move away from the old work of a supplier driven training sector to a new world in which demand from industry and students determine what will be taught and how, when and where it will be taught.
Implications of Flexible Delivery for Indigenous Learners

In light of the previous statement, "... students determine what will be taught and how, when and where it will be taught" has far-reaching ramifications. Within the context of the authors' own experience and knowledge of living in Indigenous communities for a significant period of time, it could be claimed that communities are often in the best position to determine what training is required. What is taught and how it is taught encourages Indigenous community members to study for a 'second chance'. Community members often regard study as providing an opportunity to confirm what it is that they want to do their adult life. Students link study with the skills they seek to develop which are required to administer the services and organisations within their own communities. Equally, it provides members of communities with the confidence to negotiate with non-Indigenous people who represent government organisations. This can often lead to a sense of collaborative contribution, which in turn can initiate a fundamental shift towards gaining some control of their lives. This occurs simultaneously with attempting to improve living, social and economical conditions in their communities.

A recent study by the Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research analysed the result of a national survey of over 170,000 Indigenous people. It provided compelling evidence of the connection between better education provision and improvements on the other social indicators, concluding that, "Education is the largest single factor associated with the current poor outcomes for Indigenous employment. Indeed the influence of education
dwarfs the influence of most demography, geography and social variables” (Taylor and Hunter 1996:12).

A number of authors have linked education to improved social and economic conditions such as Boughton and Durnam (1997) who also found that Indigenous students taking part in an education or training program significantly reduced the likelihood of arrest or incarceration. Using the finding of the Ministerial Council for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs Boughton and Durnam, underline the importance of education for the economic and social well-being of the Indigenous people.

Likewise, Ah Chee, Beetson and Boughton (1997) support this further with additional findings from their study, when they say:

... that improved provision for education of indigenous represents a “second chance” for adults seeking to develop skills required to administer services and organisations within their communities, and to negotiate on an equal footing with representatives from government and other bodies as to the affairs of their communities http://www.koori.usyd.edu.au/fiaep.html [online].

A further example is presented in Schwab and Teasdales’ study (cited in Boughton and Durnam 1997) suggest that Indigenous students make different choices and follow different outcomes, and that one of their most preferred pathways is to get an education so they can work in their own communities.
Competency-Based Training Defined

In the introduction to *A collection of readings in relation to competency based training* Brown (1994a in Sanguinetti 1994) believes that there is no single definition of Competency Based Training (CBT) but in fact there are degrees of 'competencyness' and different versions of it. The CGEA was based on the VEETAC industry definition of Competency Based Training, which can be defined as, “Competency-based training is concerned with the attainment and demonstration of specific skills and knowledge and their application to minimum industry specified standards as endorsed by the National Training Board (NTB)” (VEETAC Working party on the Implementation of Competency Based Training, 1992).

The NTB states that, “A competency comprises the specification of knowledge and skill and the application of that knowledge and skill within an occupation or level to the standard of performance required for employment” (1990:18). Further to this, competencies can be broken up into smaller elements. “They describe, in output terms, things that an employee who works in a particular area is able to do, that is, and action or outcome which is demonstrable or assessable” (1990:19). Consequently, a competency must be expressed as an outcome. It must be capable of demonstration and observation and assessment. Therein, it must reflect a demonstrable behaviour. It could be said that competency based training becomes a mechanical list of functions or

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1 CBT is currently referred to as Competency-Based Training and Assessment
behaviours. Students are set learning tasks, which they are required to master at their own pace to a standard or 80 or 90% accuracy. The time taken to learn is varied but the standard is not. Although the theory sounds plausible, its implementation in a curriculum may be another matter.

**Implications of Competency-Based Training for Indigenous Learner**

Significant research conducted by Harris (1980), Hughes (1987), McClay (1988), McTaggart (1988) and Ah Chee (1991) in the paper, *Aboriginal Learning Styles and Adult Education: is a synthesis possible?* by Byrnes (1993) indicates that Indigenous learners often need consideration of their cultural learning styles within the broader training context. As well, it has been noted by Harris (1980) and Hughes (1987) that Indigenous learners need time to learn and time to establish a trusting teacher/student relationship. Due to the flexible entry/exit design of CBT, both of these components, time to learn and time to establish a mutual teacher/student alliance, could be built-into the training programs over a longer time frame.

Therefore, CBT originally stood to represent some flexibility in the structure of the VET domain in that the competency could be achievable over a timeframe conducive to the needs of the learner. Additionally, archived Student Service records indicate students' mobility tended to be continuous and often there was no portability of skills because once students moved from one community to another they were not given recognition for their skills. This often resulted in long-term involvement with a variety of learning institutions, which lead to little or no recognition for their participation.
Nicholls, in the 1991 Education Policy Report, supports this claim when he remarked that “Competency based training is intended to provide greater flexibility in training so that individuals can move more easily from one training or employment stream of another, armed with explicit recognition of their previous achievements in working and training” (1991:03). Therefore, time, resources and recognition of skills are saved.

In 1992, using the Finn Report (1991), the Mayer committee developed work related key competencies. Seven were developed. These competencies were; collecting, analysing and organising information, communicating ideas and information, planning and organising activities, working with others and in teams, using mathematical ideas and techniques, solving problems and using technology. These competencies became the foundation of the CGEA framework. This emanated from a somewhat erroneous history given that the CGEA evolved out of Migrant Education and yet there was no inclusion of a declaration denoting 'cultural understanding'. The CGEA document states that the Mayer committee had considered an eight competency recommending it to be declared inherent within the seven other. “The cultural understanding competency which was proposed by Finn, deleted by Mayer, was reinstated (provisionally) by Ministers in July 1993”. In 1996, the minutes from a meeting of the Ministerial Committee on Employment, Education, Training and Youth Affairs noted that, “… further work on the definition of an Eighth Key competency should cease but that ‘Individual States and Territories undertake studies of the applications of Cultural Understanding in curricula for lifelong learning and non-work situations’ ” (p. 252).
As noted in Chapter One, Koori’s gained only a passing mention as a suitable client group in the original CGEA framework document where the focus was on ‘naturalised’ learners. It is perplexing given the CGEA target audience, that the eighth competency was not incorporated at the conception phase of the Certificate. As the report Cultural Understanding of the Eighth Competency noted in 1994, “Competency frameworks which treat cultures as everywhere, tend to recognise them as no-where” (1994:23).

**Competency Based Training: A Cultural Perspective**

Preston and Walker (1993) discuss the characteristics of the behavioural approach to competencies which they say calls for activities which are discrete and observable and ‘... in which there is no room for the element of judgement and where no account is taken of the impact of group processes or of surrounding culture’. However, educators working closely with students from cultural backgrounds have noted that ‘group processes’ and ‘cultural requirements’ are pivotal components for an effective and dynamic learning environment.

This claim can be reinforced by the study conducted by Cope and Kalantzis (1997) who maintain that, “Competency standards, based on competency descriptions, leading to competency assessment as the diagnostic tool for competency-based training represents a systematic response to complexity” (1997:148). They support their view, with an example from the Groote Eylandt Mining Company (Gemco), a division of BHP based on Groote
Eylandt (NT). Gemco, which operates the world's largest manganese mine, is keen to get indigenous/traditional owners working in the mine in order to extend its lease. Public relations are very important. To accommodate this policy the company designated land rehabilitation as the area needing the least skills. For this Aboriginal employees need only to demonstrate a limited number of competencies, (written and oral) this is in spite of the fact that they already have extensive knowledge of their local environment, in their own language, Anindilyakwa:

... competency frameworks frequently fail to recognise the experience that can only be seen through other cultural prisms. The people of Groote have been working with that particular natural environment for tens of thousands of years. They know more about seeds and their germination than their white trainers, though not in English and not in step by step procedural and scientific terms that make sense in terms of western horticulture (Cope and Kalantzis 1997:95).

Inevitably the competency approach produces new ways of exclusion where people with Indigenous knowledge fail because they are unfamiliar with the written scientific discourse of 'white fella' horticulture. The competencies, therefore, potentially hold underlying mono-cultural assumptions, which have profound implications on the 'surrounding culture'. Stevenson (1993) has developed a critique of the Australian vocational education and training that supports this. The Australian mode of implementation of CBT emphasises the need for training to empower students with domain and strategic control knowledge rather than programming students with procedural knowledge. “Domain and strategic control knowledge equip students to diagnose problems and determine which types of procedural knowledge are required for an
effective solution” (1993:65). Stevenson claims that CBT, which tends to atomise task performances, does not place sufficient focus on developing knowledge in learners. The narrowness of the National Training Board’s concept of competency-based standards has little regard for cultural values, cultural attitudes and underpinning cultural knowledge.

Ah Chee (1991) refers to this method of learning as, “...denying Aboriginal culture, and identity and making Aboriginal people into ‘White Blackpersons’ (look like Aboriginal but think, act, perceive everything around like a Non-Aboriginal)” (1991:12). Further, Ah Chee has no doubt that mainstream VET is driven by the needs of globalised industry. Regardless of this Indigenous people must still be recognised as peoples who have distinct development needs and aspirations of their own.

Kirkby (1993) links education to economic growth imperatives and the bandwagon of economic rationalism driving competency-based training. The ideology of economic rationalism is characterised as a worldview, which interprets the attribution of value to a subject. According to Kirkby this value is an ‘economical’ one. This value is seen as an attribute, which must be measurable:

Attributes which cannot be quantified such as, for example, Aboriginal culture, is perceived as being of negligible or inconsequential value. Evaluation, therefore, becomes the process of recording the measurable inputs and outputs of a system and the assessment of the efficiency of the input in terms of measurable output. The higher the efficiency, the greater the value. Education becomes a tool for the production and refinement of ‘human resources’ to suit político/economic ends, consensus on the value of which is assumed (Kirkby 1993:03).
Schwab (cited in Boughton and Durnam 1997) reinforces this claim, stating “There exists in Australia a significant tension between the nature and definition of government goals of education, which are substantially economical, and the essentially social goals of Indigenous people”. Again, this is maintained by Shore (1988) who believes that the link between personal/political development and academic skills, are being marginalised in a political and economic climate. Consequently, this encourages funding of educational programs based on products of the learning journey. What this ignores is the journey itself and the achievements recorded along the way. She believes that within this climate, “… educators are being coerced to adopt narrow conceptual definitions of learning to fit with economically driven policy and planning strategies” (1988:03).

Similarly Bourdieu and Passeron (1977) explore the trend of economic rationalism in education as an attempt by the state to reduce education to a purely economic function, ignoring its social and cultural aspects. This is strongly endorsed by Ah Chee (1997) who alleges that mainstream VET system is designed to facilitate a particular kind of economic and social development that we are all having to live with. These include rising unemployment, environmental destruction and a widening gap between the rich and the poor. Economic factors are increasingly becoming the rational for educational policy decisions and the means of ensuring their success. Therefore, Ah Chee claims, both vocational preparation and education in general are being challenged by concepts of relevance. Relevance is
increasingly conceived of as related to work preparation and to the standards needed for competitive output from work. The concern for life preparation is overshadowed with the predominant focus on economical rationalism. “There are broad humanist objections to economist criteria dominating education and training curricula to the exclusion of other dimensions of education that empowers both the learners and their mentors” (1997:67).

Thomson (1991) give emphasis to the importance of a holistic approach to learning and emphasises as unfortunate the tendency in competency-based training towards the breaking down of programs into discrete skills effectively trivialising the educational processes, which attempt to deliver those skills. Participation within the education process, investigating the needs of curriculum development, assessment, delivery does not always sit comfortably with Indigenous people. These non-Indigenous traditions of knowledge and analysis are problematic. Without imposing ethnocentric bias Hughes (1987) (cited in Byrnes 1993) suggests Aboriginal epistemology or ‘worldview’ comprises of especial characteristics. One of these especial characteristics is that Indigenous people view their learning as holistic and cannot easily be segmented and broken up in ways to suit competency-based training. If learning is reduced to discrete parcels of knowledge to serve only to meet the criteria in an assessment within the learning process, something valuable is lost. Clearly the main challenge is to consider the needs of black Australians whose value system, learning styles and modes of expression are different from those of white Australians who run the educational and training institutions.

Foley believes:
"... it seems clear that a curriculum which values difference and encourages reflection about stereotyping will have more equitable outcomes than a curriculum that ignores them" (1992:86).

How this all impacted on learners of the Certificate of General Education for Adults

In 1994, defining ‘Flexible Styles of Delivery’ and ‘Competency-Based Training’ was problematic. Initially Flexible Styles of Delivery was viewed by management as flexible ‘attendance’ enabling students to come and go as desired. It implied that the students could elect to study in a variety of locations, such as at home or in the library. Comments by Heads of Department from the study sites reflected this uncertainty, “There wasn’t any professional development because we did not know what to expect” (Personal communication: 1997). Similar ambiguity was experienced in Esperance. As one of the Heads of Department noted, “There was nothing more than a concept and I can say to you that when we started off, the concept of Flexible Delivery was nothing more than this vague notion that people can stop and start and then pick up the thread” (Personal communication: 1997). Further, a lack of information accompanied the introduction to CBT with insufficient professional development or leadership. It appeared policy makers were bringing about major changes without adequately informing educators and without appropriate consultation or application to student needs. Some of the frustrations experienced were as a result of information not permeating down into the institutions regarding strategies to implement CBT.
This was the situation with the CGEA. It was problematic in that there were so many competencies that lecturers felt as though they never got to teaching because they were constantly preoccupied with the assessment checklists. Consequently, many lecturers reported that when conducting the assessment of students' work they used the excessive criteria checklist carefully but would intuitively proportion their professional judgement as an additional tool guiding the final assessment outcomes. However, for the students the constant assessments and criteria for assessments caused confusion.

**Indigenous students operating in Tertiary Settings**

At the time of the research many educators began to question why the especial characteristics Hughes refers to were not taken into account in the way that Indigenous adult learners learn. Boughton and Durnan (1997) support the view that participation in the social and cultural life of the community is an integral aspect of the student's education. It is not a separate 'outside' obligation that interferes with or interrupts learners' education. Giroux, (1981) for example argues if a pedagogy is inattentive to the histories, dreams and experiences that students bring to their learning place, it will not promote trust and respect. These characteristics must be inclusive in the learning environment so to substantiate the reason for why the student has come back to learn in an attempt to improve the quality of human life. Freire and Macedo (1987) speak of literacy and education as cultural expressions explaining that one cannot be conducted outside the world of culture because education in itself is a dimension of culture.
Education has to take the culture that explains it as the object of a curious comprehension, as if one would use education to question itself. And every time that education questions itself, in response it finds itself in the larger body of culture (Freire and Macedo 1987:52).

Again, Ah Chee, Beetson and Boughton (1997) in their paper Indigenous Peoples’ Education Rights in Australia presented to the Indigenous Rights, Political Theory and the Reshaping of Institutions Conference, Australian National University clearly support this:

Educators have long been aware that culture and identity are central to learning. To deny someone’s identity is to deny them their right to learn from within their own experience, their own culture, their right to read the world, from within ones own framework, rather than one imposed from the outside.

For Indigenous learners it appears that group processes and interpersonal interactions, both formal and informal, are critical to the satisfaction that is derived from learning. In this context, learning in not merely for the acquisition of information. Shore (1988) specifically examines the Indigenous identity as a personal and social context shaped by historical and political influences. Social and group processes and family pressures can determine the range of options Indigenous students perceive available to them. Consequently this influences how students articulate their educational needs. Further, Shore reinforces this view by asserting that; “... if we perceive literacy to be a function of language and our language as a means of defining our reality then, as a consequence of this, culture and the way we perceive culture will shape our perception of the literacy process and its purpose” (1988:09).
Competency-based programs and student negotiated learning contracts, in which the responsibility for learning rests with the individual learner, emerge from within behaviourist and humanist approaches to adult education. Some elements of humanism are more compatible with Indigenous ways, for example a preference for cooperation rather than competitive learning environments as discussed further in Chapter Five.

Boughton and Durnam (1997) support this belief that methods of reaching consensus are preferred. 'Aboriginal decisions' or that they decide things in the right way according to their own cultural rules, which are rarely made explicit, rather, it is something people simply know how to do by virtue of being Aboriginal. This claim is strongly endorsed by Sykes (cited in McConaghy 1991:132) who writes, "However the emphasis on the individual in humanism is clearly contrary to Aboriginal notions of the central importance of ‘community’ clearly articulated by Aboriginal adult educators and members of the black community”

Others such as Coombs (1984) and Harris (1990) support the view that Indigenous social behaviours encourage conformity to the group rather than the individual. According to McConaghy, the emphasis on the individual which has pervaded Aboriginal education in the past decades is perhaps the most destructive aspect of state based education.
Ah Chee, Beetson and Boughton (1997) go further and claim that there is deep-seated racism in the Australian education system and that it has been one of the most destructive weapons employed against Aboriginal people.

Australia's non-Aboriginal education systems have been deeply implicated in the systematic efforts over more than two hundred years to take from us our languages, our cultures, and our children, and therefore our essential identities as Indigenous peoples.


A similar view is promoted by Burns (1995) who refers to learning as the way in which people acquire, interpret and assimilate information, skills and attitudes. It is the way people construct meaning in their lives from the experiences that they endure. Learning takes place daily, formally, informally, planned and fortuitous. Consequently adults can judge the value of a learning activity and its relevance to their own lives and as a result learning becomes a cooperative endeavour. “That is not to say that the learner possesses knowledge equal to that of a teacher but that the teacher respects and values the experiences and understanding of the adult student and uses them as a basis for the learning process” (Burns 1995: 234).

Correspondingly, western viewpoint domination has to be re-conceptualised as Habermas (1984) cites, “energise the silenced proletariat by appealing to its innate competence in self-determining thought and action”. When students are encouraged to see their own world through their belief system that underlies that world or that their prior knowledge is sanctioned in the milieu of mutual respect, a greater awareness for self-improvement suddenly becomes possible.
The study now moves from a global viewpoint towards a local in-depth description of how the current federal government policies shaped the local learning setting.

Section Two: A Micro View

While the above section introduced the reader to a number of the overarching contextual factors affecting the study, the following section will provide a closer investigation of the contextual and conceptual issues at the field level.

A Brief History of the Certificate of General Education for Adults

In 1992 the Certificate of General Education for Adults (Foundation) and the Certificate of General Education for Adults were accredited and placed on the Victorian State and National Register of Courses. It was the culmination of three years of extensive research and consultation based on the need for a Victorian Adult Basic Education Certificate and a common framework to inform the curriculum development in adult literacy, numeracy and language learning.

Originally, the document set out to describe four potential functions. Firstly, one of its functions was to provide sequential learning arrangements for students in a range of contexts. Secondly, another function of the certificate was to aid the articulation of students who were able to continue their learning into employment, vocation education and training options. Thirdly, the certificate was seen to be instrumental in facilitating personal and community
development needs, as its function was to encourage adaptability in how the learning outcomes could be met. Finally, the certificate was definitive in that its function was to provide a common language for practitioners to use when reporting on student progress. As such, the document is a set of competencies across four streams and across four levels. It includes learning outcomes, criteria assessment, conditions of assessment and examples of assessment tasks. It is not a syllabus but the basis of assessment and a framework for a curriculum.

**Structure of the Certificate of General Education for Adults**

The Certificate of General Education for Adults was designed for adults with an under-developed, post primary education. It was designed in consultation with industry, business, community members, unions, education providers, Adult Migrant Education Services and credential authorities. The accreditation of the course pivoted on the ability to attain nine accreditation principles. Migrant education represents a substantial focus of the adult literacy and basic education (ALBE) sector in Victoria.

The CGEA framework was intended to be developed by local practitioners to focus specifically on the local student population's needs and resources. It could be said that the educational needs of the Indigenous community were not as greatly represented in the creation of the document as perhaps could have been. Ironically, since the certificate has been offered in WA, it is to a significant Indigenous student population.
Head of Department - Kalgoorlie (1997 Personal communication) noted that “There is an underlying assumption that these principles are automatically relevant and appropriate for adult Aboriginals: in fact Koori’s gain only a passing mention as a suitable client group.” in the original CGEA document.

A senior member of the Aboriginal Service Bureau in the Western Australian Department of Training reinforced this comment:

In the early 1990’s there was a push for Aboriginal communities to do nationally accredited training so the Certificate of General Education for Adults was seen as a certificate that could provide some continuity across the locations and was adaptable to Flexible Delivery. We recognise that the CGEA is not the answer but it was a good start where it could be used to reflect a local flavour. We see competency-based training as problematic. Perhaps it is time to revisit the CGEA and its relevance to Aboriginal students now we have had time to reflect upon its worth (Personal Communication 1997).

Many educators had been signalling for a considerable period of time the need for appropriate training on a national scale that would provide both skills and a portability of these skills for people to improve their undeveloped literacy and numeracy levels. They also recognised that the people most effected by low levels of numeracy and literacy were the marginalised groups including Indigenous people and migrants. These groups represent a significant number of the population and possess unique cultural requirements. A number of educators such as Byrnes (1993) believe that:

For many years’ programs have been instituted in Aboriginal Communities primarily by non-Aboriginal people, which have not worked as intended. This suggests that the process of program development has been flawed because both the intended outcomes (the objectives) and the teaching methods were based on false assumptions. They were based on the values of non-Aboriginal culture that the values
of Aboriginal culture. It would appear therefore that the process of program design and development in cross-cultural settings needs to be fundamentally reconsidered (p. 158).

It was strongly endorsed by educators that the needs of these groups had to be incorporated into the learning paradigm if education and training was going to provide the changes to improving the economic and social base from which the students operated.

*Individual Components of the Certificate of General Education for Adults*

In an attempt to simplify the construction of the certificate the overall framework will be discussed in some detail below. To begin, McCormack (1994) claims that literacy focuses on the capacity to make social meaning out of text. In making meaning out of text, the user must read and write, speak, listen and think critically. The Reading and Writing stream is organised to correspond to the four main social contexts in which adult's function within Australian society. These are family and social life, workplace and institutional settings, educational and training contexts and community and civil life. For adults to be able to actively participate in the four main social contexts they draw on the components of literacy for self-expression, practical purposes, knowledge and public debate. Therein, McCormack (1993) believes that to be literate we have to learn about the social contexts, we have to learn more about the world.
Reading and Writing

Within the Reading and Writing stream or unit of study, there are four domains as follows.

- **Reading and writing for Self-expression**, develops and encourages self-exploration
- **Reading and Writing for Practical Purposes** develops literacy as procedure, sequence directions and instructions.
- **Reading and Writing for Knowledge** encourages the development of collecting and collating factual information, researching information and learning how to present information in the form of analytical and informative reports.
- **Reading and Writing for Public Debate**, examines the discourse of debate, discussion, and argument and encourages participation within the wider community especially areas of controversy and contention

Oral Communication

"The CGEA framework has been developed for the needs of adults with incomplete secondary education whether they be of English speaking backgrounds or a language background other than English" (CGEA Framework document 1996:131).

Students bring with them a wealth of life long experience but at the same time because of their limited literacy skills and access to education they often have gaps in their general knowledge and have been denied access to the powerful dominant discourses of Australian society. Goulborn and Manton (1995) claim that students have a need not only to learn language but also to learn through language and to learn about language. The strength of the Oracy stream is that
the learning outcomes can be mapped over content relevant to the needs and interests of the adult students. Spoken language is jointly constructed in real time between speakers and listeners with all participants having an active role and is process focused in contrast to writing that is product focused.

Oracy stream has been amended to include Oracy for Active Listening, Oracy for Practical Purposes and Oracy for Exploring Issues and Problem Solving. The document emphasises that the four streams, Reading and Writing, Numeracy and Mathematics, Oracy and General Curriculum Options do not act independently of each other and that an integrated approach is encouraged.

*Numeracy and Mathematics*

In contemporary society there is an increasing awareness of the need for numeracy skills which are valuable to the majority of people and seen by them as valuable and relevant to their daily lives. Such skills should reflect the culture, in which they live and work. Adult learners should be taught in a way that recognises the cultural and historical origins of mathematics. As Clements and Ellerton suggest mathematical knowledge is not acquired merely by listening to teachers performing abstract repetitive task. It is:

...something that learners construct through actively seeking out and making mental connections. When someone actively links aspects of his or her physical or social environment with certain numerical, spatial, and logical concepts, a feeling of ‘ownership’ is generated (1992:04).
Johnston (1994) confirms this view by encouraging educators to establish relationships and connections for their learners:

...we can establish wider meaning by making connections to the real world-through use in daily contexts, through understanding cultural and historical origins, through asking questions about the consequences of our and other’s use of mathematics. (CGEA Framework Document Page 174).

In Numeracy and Mathematics the four learning outcomes are as follows:

- Numeracy for Practical Purposes parallels the Practical Purposes domain of the Reading and Writing module. This addresses aspects of the physical world to do with designing, making and measuring. Numeracy for Interpreting Society corresponds to Public Debate and relates to interpreting and reflecting on numerical and graphical information.

- Numeracy for Personal Organisation is an interpretation of the reading and writing for Self-Expression and focuses on matters relating to money, time, travel and personal issues.

- Numeracy for Knowledge is introduced at level three and matches the reading and Writing domain of Knowledge. It deals with mathematical skills for further studies. In most cases the domains are divided into more than one learning outcome at each level.

- For example, Numeracy for Knowledge at level four can be divided into Further Studies, or Algebraic Techniques, or Formulae and Graphs or Problem Solving.

General Curriculum Options

The use of the Mayer Competencies\(^2\) as learning outcomes are designed to provide links between adult basic education and vocational education and training. The key competencies assume a basis of knowledge, skills and

\(^2\) Mayer Competencies a set of eight outcomes derived from the Finn Report used by the Mayer committee.
understanding which need to be integrated and applied to achieve a purpose or compete a task.

The notion of competence hinges on the capacity to ‘do’ rather than just to ‘know’. The competencies describe the processes by which knowledge and skills are integrated and applied. Knowledge is an essential foundation for competence but bodies of knowledge do not themselves constitute competencies (CGEA Framework document 1996:254).

In the General Curriculum Options Module there are eight learning outcomes. These learning outcomes differ and are based on ‘key competencies’. These key competencies derive their meaning from the outcomes of the 1991 Finn Report, which was used by the Mayer Committee to develop work related competencies for the Australian education and training committee. Originally there were seven competencies and in 1996 DEETYA recommended that “Identify, analyse and apply the practices of culture should be developed for life long learning be included”. Greater discussion of this eighth competency will be discussed in Chapter Three in conjunction with the underpinnings of CBT.

Assessment Principles

Assessment of learning outcomes in the CGEA is based on the following principles:

1. Assessment tasks/activities should be grounded in a relevant context and not be culturally biased.
2. Students should be assessed across as wide a range of tasks/activities as possible, in order to increase reliability and validity of assessment.
3. One off assessment task/activities does not provide a reliable and valid measure of competence.

4. Instructions for assessments should be clear, explicit and ordered.

5. Students must know what is expected, and the criteria by which they will be judged.

6. Time allowed to complete the task should be reasonable and specific, and should allow for preparation and re-drafting as appropriate to the activity.

7. Some assessments will need to take place over several weeks.

8. Assessment tasks should be open ended and flexible enough for students to show competence at different levels.


According to Sanguinetti (1994) the CGEA represented the first real attempt to define standards of attainment in adult literacy and basic education. Similarly, it was a significant challenge to students, as it demanded a contrary approach to learning.

Students Represented in the Study

In 1995 the Certificate was presented at both Esperance and Kalgoorlie campuses. Esperance CGEA class was made up of both Nyungar/Wongi with non-Indigenous students. This had only just occurred in conjunction with the advent of the CGEA. Previously there had been no basic adult numeracy and literacy for non-Indigenous students. Kalgoorlie College had a Nyungar/Wongi student enclave and a separate learning facility for non-Indigenous students.
Identifying the need to make local and regional changes to the current system

At both sites the majority of lecturers had significant years of teaching experience and had ongoing involvement in Adult Aboriginal Education. These educators recognised that the students had specific needs advocating particular approaches to learning. Further, that these needs had not been aligned to the new prescriptive learning outcomes locked into Module Load Output Rate (MLOR). These rates set by the Department of Training are stringently linked to funding formulae. Lecturers appeared unsure of how best to implement the new certificate in flexible styles of delivery or how to secure MLOR statistics.

In the past courses at both sites were more teacher-centred, with the focus on an augmented didactic approach to imparting knowledge. This was perceived to be to an extent contradictory to how Indigenous learners preferred to learn. In fact it was noted that "In Aboriginal Society, communication is continuous and directed to the group rather than to the individual. This contracts with the dyadic (one to one), contained interactions of non-Aboriginal society and in particular of classrooms" (Walsh 1991 cited in Collard and Rochecouste 1997:3). A consequence of the non-dyadic or communal patterns of discourse is the sharing of knowledge where "... most of the time everyone knows what others are doing" (Sanson 1980:103). Aboriginal culture is therefore a 'high-context' culture and consequently different assumptions are made as to the

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3 Module Load Output Rate is a term to describe the ratio of students that must be deemed competent within a module. Funding is then made available to the training provider on basis of these rates.
amount of information a verbal or written message carries. Maley (1980) claims much information is such societies may be implicit and may be transmitted as ‘ambiguous and fragmentary clues’. This supports the preference of Indigenous learners to a collaborative approach with numerous students within the group providing and sharing the learning outcomes with others whom had not necessarily contributed to the assessment.

In Aboriginal society the initiative lies with the learner rather than with the teacher (Harris 1980:77). Learning therefore is holistic and not as in Anglo-Australian culture, broken down into component parts each of which must be mastered before moving on the next (Collard and Rochecouste 1997:08).

Further changes were also being introduced. In the past, attendance was an essential course requirement. At this time, management instructed that rolls were not to be kept. There was a notion that in a Flexible Delivery learning centre, lecturers would not need to record student attendance because of the flexible nature of flexible delivery. According to management, flexible delivery was, among other things, flexible attendance. Students were being notified that procedures had changed. The students could study where they felt most comfortable and that attendance was not a course requirement. Various lecturers were cognisant of the way Indigenous students attended classes in the past. Many, including the researcher, saw Flexible Delivery as part way relevant to the learning style of the students because it permitted cultural and community obligations to be met at the same time as the demands of their studies.
A complication surfaced in relation to the students' financial assistance - Abstudy. Austudy lacked clear policy guidelines concerning Flexible Delivery and what constituted an 'active' student. Previously Abstudy had determined an active student was on the basis of student attendance and, if students did not attend for up to four weeks, they would be notified they would not be paid and lose financial support. While this rule may have provided contrived motivation, non-the less it often produced a quasi-regular pattern of student attendance. With flexible delivery students did not need to attend to get their payments and as a result many stopped coming to classes but claimed they were still studying.

**Development of Resources**

Esperance and Kalgoorlie lecturers in the General Studies Department designed and created self-paced, self-directed individual workbooks for the numeracy, literacy and oracy streams across four levels. This was to provide a basic resource while it was understood that Victoria would provide further resources that had been developed to assist in their implementation of the CGEA. However, with no resources forthcoming lecturers began hastily refining the existing workbooks. Less relevant assessment and practice tasks were omitted in line with the framework assessment criteria tasks. Preparation for the implementation was frantic during the last few months of 1994. This was carried out midst the orientation of a new academic year, new student groups, new mode of delivery, new assessment procedure under a newly amalgamated organisational structure. Adult Literacy Service Bureau funded a series of short projects to develop curriculum, although nothing was available.
in 1995. Consequently students at their respective levels were encouraged to contribute to the development of the workbooks by recommending and providing culturally appropriate material and tasks. The introduction of localised content provided the students with a sense of ownership, as well as assisting them identify the learning outcomes and understand the specific assessment criteria.

Preferred Approaches to Learning

Boughton and Durnam (1997) refer to the conducive learning environment as one in which:

... students had the right and the power, and the time and the freedom to negotiate their learning amongst themselves and with their teachers, on the basis of different affiliations to land, their different network of kin and family, their different ages, status and gender http://www.koori.usyd.edu.au/FIAEP/acerpt.html [online].

It could be argued that the time of the research the CGEA classroom resembled such a place. Also at this time there was significant debate about the nature of delivery and large number of competencies required to be met. In particular, the competencies needed to be compliant to meet the needs of both the students and the community. For example, to ensure learning was relevant the influences impressing on the student's work and assessments needed to be related to the issues within their community and family framework. Tasks aligned to specific learning outcomes were negotiated with students and peers and where possible conducted within groups.
Shore (1988) suggests that literacy is set alongside all the other experiences and skills students seek to acquire and must take into account of the social and political context of learner lives. “Students are encouraged to negotiate the knowledge they perceive to be important, whilst recognising the demands made by powerful forces which have a degree of control over their vocational and educational choices” (1988:09). This was perhaps the most interesting development resulting from the lack of resources expected from Victoria, that it immediately provided an opportunity for the students to participate in the development of their own learning framework within the CGEA document.

Learning for adults makes preparation for implementation coterminous with life. Student’s experiences count as much as the teacher’s knowledge. This ‘two way’ learning is also reflected in sharing authority in which learners assist in formulating the curriculum (Burns 1995:233).

The workbooks were designed to incorporate a tutorial prior to the commencement of each new domain. The shared group session was intended to provide stimulus and an opportunity to brainstorm collectively so that the students were familiar with all the necessary information needed to understand and complete the particular learning outcomes. Consequently, this embedded the learning outcome within a collaborative, holistic approach conducive to the way students indicated preference to learn while addressing the essential elements of the CGEA framework requirements. The principle reported by Christie (1988) that “any focus on individual achievement, which ignores the meaningfulness of the Aboriginal group, is unacceptable” was operative in this learning situation. At this time of the research, the CGEA student enrolment at
both sites was stable, which may reflect the genuine preparedness of the groups to undertake to trial the new styles of delivery and assessment format.

Course Presentation

The CGEA had the potential to be presented in ways that respected Nyungar and Wongi culture, and to accommodate the diversity of the local students' experiences, aspirations and needs. Therein, their influence in the design of the CGEA content was reinforcing the sense that education and community life were not two separate domains.

Ramifications of the new style of delivery for the Learners

While a sense of ownership may have been generated by the creation of local context for the new self-paced workbooks the fact remained that they re-invented the customary distance education-learning format. According to the 1996 Research Report ‘The Optimum Operational Practices for On-Campus Flexible Learning Centres’, “… this style of learning should not be initiated until learner support and administrative procedures were in place. They are imperative to its success”. Unfortunately Esperance and Kalgoorlie did initiate this style of distance education format learning as directed by the Western Australian Department of Training. Further to this, there was no induction sessions orientating the students to self management and self directed learning, no multi skilled team that would provide the students with subject content, no technical expertise and motivation, no access to a wide variety of resources rich in diversity required to suit different learning styles ranging from print based to computer based, easily customised and on demand. Nor was there an
effective learning management and tracking system that kept both the lecturers and students up to date on their stage and progress. As a result the validity of a mode of delivery with such flexibility for certificate level students presented a concern. Significant numbers of students had returned for a ‘second chance’ after considerable years away from formalised and structured academic learning. Arguably they did not at that point have all the skills necessary to be independent, self-directed learners.

**Adult Learning within a Theoretical Context**

*Self-Directed Learning defined*

Self directed learning according to Herbeson (1991) is a process where the learner accepts the responsibility for planning, seeks out resources, implements and evaluates a learning episode. Brookfield (1984) takes this definition further. From the outset, he believes, self-directed learning must be clarified, “…to talk of self-directed learning is not to describe a particular kind of change in consciousness, but to refer to the activity involved in acquiring particular skills or knowledge” (1984:16).

Consequently, self-directed learning is reliant on developed study habits, refined time management skills, self-induced motivation, and the ability to effectively prioritise tasks. Indeed, Tough (1971) determined which variables affected a learner’s propensity for self-directness in learning. He deduced that such factors involved past experience, psychological characteristics, other people and community and societal factors. These factors were derived from the basis of his research where twelve tasks were used in the research Learning
without a Teacher (1967). He believed that, “Students should be trained in self teaching in order to become competent self teachers. Probably a person who has been trained to identify the task and difficulties that confront a self-teacher will teach himself more effectively” (1967:76). Tough’s findings also held several implications about how self-teachers need to be viewed by the institution. For example to prevent students from abandoning their desire for lifelong learning:

…the institution should facilitate by making arrangements to obtain assistance from staff members and/or non-human resources. Consideration of extension staff such as educational counsellors whose role would be to plan strategies, library staff to assist, select and find resources. These support staff would need to well trained to recognise the specific needs such as identifying, sympathising and helping the self teaching student (1967:76).

**Self-Directed Learning: Studies conducted**

Former studies conducted in the United States of America at Stanford University during the 1930’s evaluated independent study programs as capable of progressing students faster. They also had the capacity to correlate and integrate their learning and promote an increase in student interest. However, the study found that although the student sample was taken from a superior student population issues such as lack of perspective, organisation and thoroughness prevailed. In tandem, the desire to avoid difficult tasks or be tempted to flit from task to task influenced the outcome. The Stanford faculty became aware of the importance of including sufficient counselling and supervision into an independent study program. The study concluded that;
“Independent Study in the Lower Division at Stanford University 1931-1937
the committee emphasised that the student should be directly and closely
supervised. Independent study does not mean ‘independence’ of either subject
or teacher” (1937:14).

Later research on past experience has provided one variable to show
conflicting results and that is the number of years of formal schooling. There
appears to be disagreement as to whether self-direction increases as the level of
formal schooling is increased. Research conducted by Finestone (1984) and
Hall-Johnsen (1985) found no relationship between the amount of formal
education and readiness for self-directed learning. Hall-Johnsen (1985) in a
study of university extension service professional staff indicated that readiness
for self-directed leaning did not differ due to educational levels beyond a
Bachelor’s degree. While cognisant of past studies such as the National
Society for the Study of Education in the United States in 1962 a declaration
was made:

The teachers role must change for any experiment with self-teaching to
be successful. As students assume more responsibility for planning and
directing their own learning, the teacher’s role becomes that of
consultant or resource person. The new concept of teacher may be
moving towards a non-directive position (1962:270).

Skills Indigenous students need to operate within the paradigm of Self-
Directed Learning

There is some research that investigates favoured Indigenous approaches to

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Byrnes 1993) interpret the especial characteristics of such learning approaches and claim these approaches tend to be based on informal group learning, incorporating various age groupings, learning by demonstration, mimicking and observation. Further, strategies such as sharing of information, collaborating to reach group consensus, modifying the content to suit the needs of the group ensuring that it is person and not information orientated, are approaches generically associated to Indigenous preferred learning styles. However, the theory that these learning styles are preferred by Indigenous learner is contested. The work of Henry and Brabham (1994) for example believe:

The message inherent in Harris' polarising, comparative, stereotyping and, therefore, distorting account of Western schooling and Aboriginal culture reproduction was that Aboriginal cultural ways are inappropriate and limiting ways for people having to now cope with the demands of the 'modern' world. The ethnocentricity of this message is mind-boggling to say the least (1994:99).

Mindful of this debate, institutionalised, individual self paced learning without elements of informal group learning, or learning from demonstration, observation and mimicking, within various age groups, with a person not information focus, may not be as successful as it could have been, if these elements were built into the course. These elements will be discussed in greater detail later in the study.

Chapter Summary

Initially, the chapter defined and discussed the framework of flexible styles of delivery, teaching and assessment instigated by the National Training Reform.
Agenda, and so provided background to the study both in contextual and conceptual terms. It set out initially in section one to introduce the reader to the broader elements of the study. This national reform appeared to be driven by worldwide economic forces and was an element of globalisation.

This chapter then went on to examine the relevance of flexible styles of delivery to Indigenous students, (who came from learning environment with specific needs). The chapter went on to discuss 'second chance' learners, and whether they had developed sufficient skills to confidently organise their own academic program. With the focus on self-directed and self-paced learning, this alienated students from working through the traditional familiar processes. The chapter also considered the appropriateness of institutionalised settings of tertiary education and training to Indigenous learners, suggesting ways in which to improve their current standing.

The second section of the chapter closely examined the history of the CGEA and its introduction to the Western Australian, adult literacy context. The origins of the chapter CGEA curriculum framework were discussed. Also examined were the components of the CGEA framework to exhibit the complexities of the design and language and draw attention to the large number of competencies the students needed to compete within each assessment task. Having established the conceptual and contextual background of the study, Chapter Three will provide an outline of the methodology used in the study and a description of the research structure used.
Chapter Three - Methodology
  Conceptual Background
  Interpretive Approach
  Case Study
  Research Framework
Chapter Three - Methodology

Chapter Two outlined the setting in which the study took place, both in a macro policy and theory sense, and also the local or micro setting. Chapter three now establishes the methodological basis for the study. This chapter is also divided into two sections. Section one considers the conceptual underpinnings of the case study methodology, and explains the basis for conducting this case study research. Section two will provide a review of the research framework with particular focus on the research sites, the interview schedule, the timeframe, the informants, the participants, the research and the techniques applied. Finally this chapter will explore the constraints and limitations impacting on the study.

Section One: The Research Approach

An Interpretive Study

This study is based on an Interpretive\(^1\) approach to research, derived from long and established traditions of social and political thought. The traditions of hermeneutics, phenomenology and ethnomethodology dominate. Hermeneutics focuses on the social and cultural world through interpreting and understanding the products of the human mind that characterise them. Phenomenology and Ethnomethodology focus in different ways on delineating the world of everyday reality. This approach is characterised by a set of goals and assumptions.

\(^{1}\) Interpretive Approach attempts to illuminate the significance that certain actions have for the participants from a perspective, which is as, close as possible to that of the participants themselves. Malin (1989:130)
Bordow and More (1992) suggest that the goals of this approach are to understand human consciousness and the study of meanings, the uniqueness of everyday realities. The assumptions are essentially non-scientific and non-empiricist. This approach denies a mechanistic or cause and effect relationship view of social life and disparages the notion that it might explain any human behaviour in terms of cause and effect or stimulus and response as deterministic and mechanical motions. This paradigm adopts a relativistic view of the social world. According to Bordow and More, "Reality-meaning is not considered, as independent from human consciousness but is the negotiated result of individuals interpretations of the world" (1992:54). They claim that the social reality is not seen as an external reality but as an interpretation or assumption from the interpretations of individual actors. In order to support the argument it is necessary to examine and understand the human mind within the realm of the cultural and social context. Investigation is 'from the inside' (Evered and Louis 1981 cited in Bordow and More 1992) whereby the researcher participates in the daily occurrences and uses research expertise to understand and analyse. As well, investigation is inductive rather than deductive and occurs through a variety of techniques, the most common being participant observation, interviewing or self-reporting methods, conversations, journal and diaries. In short, one cannot study action without understanding the meanings that such action embodies. "Rather than focus on a psychological concern with the individual, the emphasis is on the way the social world is made
intelligible and sustained in our conscious awareness through agreements among collectivities of individuals” (Bordow and More 1992:54).

Consequently, the outcome is generally a replication of individuals’ interpretations of social reality. This Interpretive approach observes social interaction as the basis of knowledge. The researcher immerses him/her self within the culture in order to understand the subjective worlds of others and the beliefs they hold. The Interpretive approach is primarily concerned with qualitative methods and employs strategies of observation, and interview to document the data. Leininger (cited in Connole) summarises the qualitative approach as:

In general, qualitative research methods focus on identifying, documenting and knowing (by interpretation) the world views, values, meanings, beliefs, thoughts and general characteristics of life events, ceremonies and specific phenomena under investigation…(with its goal being) to document and interpret as fully as possible the totality of whatever is being studied in particular contexts from the people’s viewpoint or frame of reference (1993:105).

According to McConaghy (1991) the Interpretive paradigm includes the schools of solipsism, phenomenology, hermeneutics, ethnmethodology and symbolic interactionism. However the schools that are of most interest in Aboriginal adult education includes hermeneutics, ethnmethodology and symbolic interactionism. For example within the school of hermeneutics, which is concerned with interpreting, the relationship between hermeneutics and Aboriginal culture raises some similarities. “Aboriginal people have a very keen historical consciousness. They are frequently recreating and reliving the past through
ceremonies and story telling. Permanently fixed expressions exist and are critical to their understanding" (McConaghy 1991:140).

**An Ethnographic Case Study Approach**

Sandy (cited in Meek 1990:10) suggests ethnography can be defined as, "a way of systematically learning reality from the point of view of the participant". In this study ethnography is used to both record and interpret primary data. It is frequently associated with participant observation. However, ethnography can utilise a wide range of research techniques, in fact no single technique or combination of techniques can be described as the ethnographic approach (Wolcott, 1990; Woods, 1986).

Ethnography, as described in this study, is a form of naturalistic inquiry. Naturalistic inquiry is an inductive process based on two alternative sets of hypotheses (Owens, 1982; Wilson, 1977). These are the naturalistic-ecological hypothesis and the qualitative-phenomenological hypothesis. The former perspective suggests that it is the context, which has the most powerful influence in shaping behaviour, not differences between individuals. The second set of concepts, the qualitative-phenomenological hypothesis asserts that there can be no understanding of human behaviour without understanding how individuals interpret their environment. This requires, in turn, an understanding of people's actions, feelings, values and perceptions.
These two sets of concept form a particular way of knowing that is reflected in the approach to research. It is research that is carried out in the world of practice, where the relationship between researcher and research is known, where qualitative methodologies are the main form of data collection, and theory emerges from the data over a period of time.

**Case Study Methodology**

The case study approach (based on the above ethnographic principles) as noted above, follows phenomethodological methods and seeks to satisfy two conditions. According to Yin (1994) is the use of close-up, detailed observation of the natural world by the investigation, and secondly, the attempt to avoid prior commitment to any theoretical model. However, case studies are not limited to these two conditions. Case studies are the preferred strategy when the investigator has little control over the events and when the focus is on a contemporary phenomenon within some real life context.

The data sources for this case study include:

- Student interviews/Student questionnaires.
- Lecturers notes on incoming work from students in the reading and writing streams (1995-1997).
- A reflective journal kept by the researcher, recording observations of students in class, during informal conversations, telephone conversations and non-verbal responses to the context and content of the class.
Archival records.

- Documentation: memoranda, agendas, and minutes of meetings, written reports and administrative documents.

The opportunity to gain access to the event not normally possible provides a viewpoint from the ‘inside’. Yin states that, “Many have argued that such a perspective is invaluable in producing an accurate portrayal of a case study phenomenon” (1994:88). Yin (1994) also argues that case studies have long been stereotyped as a weak sibling among social science methods. However, those in the field acknowledge that regardless of what Yin may conclude, naturalistic inquiry probes deeply with a view to establishing generalisations based on intensive observation. In fact, observation studies or Participant Observation generally take place over an extended period of time allowing researches to develop more intimate and informal relationships with those they are observing. Consequently case studies according to Cohen and Manion (1997) allow generalisations to be made and in fact, their particular strength lies in their attention to the subtlety and complexity of the case in its own right.

Similarly, Leslie (1985 cited in Cohen and Manion, 1997) believes quantitative data needs to be supplemented by qualitative data as each approach has limitations used exclusively. “Policy makers demand the appearance of ‘hard data’ and the market categories of evaluation research numerical tables that satisfy demand. The categories dissolve, however, when one knows more about the reality they refer to” (1995:926). Researchers who elect to use this approach do so because
they want to ensure that the results are a true reflection of the sample. Coles and Grant believe the fundamental purpose is to ensure one thing above all else. "The ultimate, single most important criteria (to establish validity of qualitative findings) must be whether those who have been the subject of the investigation feel that what is reported reflects the educational reality that they themselves experienced" (1985:414).

Multiple sources provided multiple measure of the same phenomenon encouraging corroboration. In this research the notion of triangulation is verified by what the students have said and by the information given by the key informants. "With triangulation, the potential problems of construct validity also can be addressed, because the multiple sources of evidence essentially provide multiple measures of the same phenomenon" (Yin 1994:92).

Yin, Bordow and More (1983) found that case studies using multiple sources of evidence rated more highly in terms of quality than those which relied on a single source of information. "All sources of evidence were reviewed and analysed together so that the case study's finding were based on the convergence of information from different sources not quantitative or qualitative data alone" (Yin 1994:91).
Section Two: The Research Structure

This section will provide an overview of the research framework. These elements consist of: researchers background, research sites, interview schedule, time frame, the informants, research techniques, interviews, the constraints, ethical requirements, design of the questionnaire, limitations impacting on the study and the pilot study.

The Researcher’s Background

The natural basis of this research emulates from the author’s own experiences. Observing the characteristics of a specific group of students at a ‘down to earth’ level, undergo changes in an undemocratic manner provoked ‘a step to action’. By carefully attending to the situation the author became a participant observer, engaged in activities set out to instigate a case study in an attempt to document the ‘reality’ of the students’ claims.

The researcher completed a Bachelor of Education specialising in Indigenous Education, and lived in several Indigenous communities for thirteen years in North Eastern Arnhem Land in the Northern Territory. Further, the researcher had been working with the Esperance Indigenous students for several years and developed a solid relationship with the predominantly female class. This background in part provided sufficient trust and a basis to elicit honest responses from the students concerning how they viewed the changes occurring in their learning environment.
For almost a decade the teaching and learning approach within the Aboriginal Access class had experienced only subtle changes. The enclave was formed to provide educational opportunities for the two local but often opposing clans. It was designed for students to come together to study on the ‘neutral ground’. Funding was exclusively from the Aboriginal Services Bureau. Abstudy provided for extra curricular activities for example interstate and out of state excursions and provided the students with a well-equipped learning environment.

In the past there were no Department of Training modular learning outcome rates (MLOR) linked to funding profiles. Federal Government policy changed. The enclave became accessible to all Indigenous/non-Indigenous community members, learning became linked to discrete competencies, students had to pass and progress up to the next level or funding would not be available. It became evident to the students that major changes were about to be implemented which would impact on the way they had operated within the enclave for the past ten years. The research provided the impetus to get the students involved in the changes and have their concerns heard.

The Indigenous students at the Kalgoorlie Campus had no established relationship with the researcher. It was evident by their responses that they were curious and wanted to know who the researcher was and why a ‘wadjella’ would want to know how Indigenous students were responding to the new directive. Their opinion had
not been sort before and they were inquisitive as to why now. The researchers own cultural style was distinct from the Indigenous students, which influenced the delivery of the interview schedule.

As Harris writes: “It is bad manners to be too inquisitive in a society which has ways other than walls and fences for maintaining privacy” (1990:39). Indigenous students had no obligations to respond. Similarly as they reserved the right to speak and they also reserved the right to listen. According to Collard and Rochecouste (1997), “In Aboriginal society, the listener is not obliged to look at the speaker and does not have to nod and make polite noises to say they are listening. Conversation is ongoing and listeners can tune in and out as they please” (p.09).

This is also evident in the writings of Eades who warns, “Direct questioning strategies for eliciting information especially on personal matters and significant areas, by people with whom they have no close relationship, is totally inappropriate” (1988:107). Interviewing Indigenous students as opposed to non-Indigenous students, who freely make information available, highlighted the strong social constraints in which the Indigenous students operate. In Aboriginal society, for example, there is no obligation to answer a question as pointed out by Harris, “to get an answer is a privilege, not a right” (1977:442). Eichhorn (1990) also noted that Aboriginal participants will tend to tell a non-Aboriginal person
what they think that person wants to hear rather than their own opinions, if they are prepared to respond at all.

Eades describes feedback in Indigenous exchanges as occurring only when “information seeking is a part of a two way exchange in which people give information in order to get information” (1988:106). In view of this, the researcher adopted a style of questioning which provided the interviewee with relevant information to elicit a response. To further counter difficulties of cross-cultural communication Indigenous research assistants were appointed at both sites to ask appropriate questions in a culturally appropriate manner.

**The Informants**

A reference group was formed including members from both Esperance and Kalgoorlie communities. The group consisted of the Esperance Research Assistant, the Kalgoorlie Research Assistant, and the Acting Director of the Eastern Goldfields Development Commission, Wongutha Regional Councillor of the Aboriginal Torres Strait Islanders Commission, Committee Member Kalgoorlie College Aboriginal Employment Education and Training Council.

The purpose of this group was to oversee the research and provide various levels of support for the non-Indigenous researcher. This support ranged from mediating with the Indigenous community to assisting with the structure of the questionnaire to ensure it was appropriate. An overview of the research proposal was discussed...
and amended in line with the consensus of the reference group. Consent and endorsement were subsequently given.

Letters were sent to 61 Wongi/Nyungar students who had been or were involved in the Flexible Delivery of the CGEA at Esperance and Kalgoorlie explaining the study and inviting them to participate in the research. Of these, forty letters were sent to Kalgoorlie students. Seven agreed to be interviewed and seven completed the questionnaire. Of the twenty-one Esperance students, nine students consented to be interviewed and eight students completed the questionnaire. Plain English Guidelines were used for all written correspondence.

The first study population were all Wongi/Nyungar students enrolled at Kalgoorlie and Esperance Campuses in the Certificate of General Education for Adults operating in self paced, self directed mode. Supplementary key informants were senior officers, heads of department, managers, librarians, student service officers, student support workers who work or are responsible for the operations of vocational education and training policy implementation at the institutions. (The Interview Schedule can be located in the Appendix A, figure 1.)

**Other Participants**

As well as the thirty-one participants, of whom sixteen students were interviewed and fifteen students completed questionnaires a range of other people (education
managers and leaders and support staff for example) were involved with the research.

**Interview Schedule**

A semi structured interview schedule was used to gather data concerning factors impacting on Indigenous students studying the Certificate of General Education for Adults at Kalgoorlie and Esperance Campuses of Curtin University of Technology.

The questionnaire grew out of noting that the students were experiencing a sense of confusion resulting from changes being made. The traditional enclave-learning environment was being replaced with a self-paced competency based learning style with an open learning centre where students other than Indigenous learners were going to attend. The objective was to observe the repositioning both in the physical environment and the delivery style of the course and note the changes. The questions were designed to systematically draw on the rich and varied student’s experiences what Cohen and Manion (1994) refer to, as ‘strong in reality’. In doing this, the researcher was able to collect information that portrayed the real situation that existed and not one that appeared to exist to appease the Department of Training. (See Appendix A. figure 2. Student Questionnaire).
The Interview - Open ended Structure

The open-ended structure of the interview allowed comparisons to be made among respondents, providing increased validity of results. All Kalgoorlie respondents were interviewed over two days. The Esperance respondents were interviewed over a period of two weeks. Several Esperance students elected to be interviewed at their homes. The interview method also meant greater rapport could be established with the respondent and a richness of response noted compared to the brief responses obtained from the written questionnaires. Many students provided in depth responses allowing fuller descriptions of their learning experience and environment.

The Questionnaire

Each respondent was asked the same question in the same order they appeared on the interview schedule. Each respondent replied to the question with slight variation based on personal experience. Different answers to the same series of questions indicated differences between respondent’s experiences and not necessarily differences in the questioning technique. Two respondents suffered from Otis Media.

Notes on the Questionnaire

All the ethical factors, which applied for the interview also, applied for the questionnaire. The research assistants became pivotal in the dissemination of
questionnaires in the community. Their diligence in getting students to respond and return their completed questionnaires was instrumental in increasing the number of respondents increasing the reliability of the study. The structured questions gave the respondent a limited number of answers from which to answer a question.

**Ethical Requirements**

Northern Territory University Human Ethics Committee consent forms were signed prior to the interview ensuring that:

- no names and/or addresses were used, each respondent being numerically coded
- information would not be released in an identified form
- individual information would not be released
- respondents were free to withdraw at any time
- all information was would be kept strictly confidential
- all respondents would have access to their own interview transcript on request
- information from respondents was kept in a locked case
- responses were shredded at the conclusion of the research
- permission would be sought to audiotape the interview and the respondents would sign a consent form.
Each research assistant was responsible for communicating with the interviewees, establishing a time and place for the interview to be conducted. They also kept a list of each sample group and when necessary brought students in to be interviewed. Some students living out of town, who indicated a desire to participate in the research, completed questionnaires rather than not have their say. Each research assistant was 'on hand' to conduct the interview in the event that the interviewee felt uncomfortable in responding to the non-Indigenous interviewer.

**Research sites**

*Esperance site interview schedule*

Four students were interviewed at Esperance. Three students invited the interviewer into their homes and two students participated at their workplace.

The interview schedule was adhered to, while prompts built into the schedule elicited more information. Several of the respondents diverted from the question to expand upon their topic.

*Kalgoorlie Site Interview Schedule*

Four respondents were interviewed in the classroom on the first day and three were interviewed in a quiet room, away from the classroom, on the second day. This was the choice of the interviewees.
A micro tape recorder was placed between the interviewer and interviewee in a small, loose weave dilly bag – not to hide the fact that the interviewees were being taped (they had given permission for such), but to intentionally prompt a warm up chat as the respondents were extremely curious in the origins of the bag and interested how it was made.

It also provided a lead-in to substantiate the researchers long-term association with Indigenous people. It was hoped the more comfortable the respondents were with the researcher, the easier it would be to elicit information. The warm up chat preceded the interview, which lasted approximately twenty to thirty minutes. The tape recorder was turned off after the final response was given. The last three students each spoke for an hour after responding to the final question on the interview schedule. It was evident that they felt very strongly about the impact of the Flexible Delivery mode on their style of learning, but did not wish to go ‘on record’.

**What occurred after the Interview and Questionnaire was conducted**

Firstly, the questionnaire results were tallied, totalled, analysed and presented in a table and bar graph. A sample of several of the results can be found in the Appendix, see figures 3 - 6. The results were recorded graphically to highlight the variation in respondents’ comments.
Questions ten and eleven explored possible relationships between how students envisaged their future and how they related that to their present studies. This relational analysis has been presented as a collection of random responses on a summary sheet. See figures 7 and 8 in the Appendix A.

**Questionnaire Format**

The questionnaire format was the ‘fill in the response’ style. For many questions this required the respondent to write part of the answer. The questionnaire was three pages, made up of twelve questions. It was typed and the layout provided sufficient white space to make comment. Also other writing in Plain English guidelines included active rather than the passive voice, short sentences and paragraphs, that words used was familiar to the reader with no technical jargon. Furthermore, questions were written to prompt one response at a time and sequenced in a logical order. Several respondents disclosed additional information that perhaps suggested that they were anxious to see the promotion of Indigenous adult learning styles and their recognition within the broader context of the learning environment. The research assistants then collected the questionnaires and returned them to the researcher.

**Pilot Study**

Prior to the commencement of the study a pilot survey was conducted. The purpose of the pilot was to recognise any uncertainties or unintelligibility in the wording of the questionnaire, any possible misinterpretation of the questions by
the interviewees and to correct any anomalous affecting the cohesion of the questionnaire. The questionnaire was then tested on a small group of Esperance respondents who were a part of the intended sample group. The trial respondents were not audio taped, unlike the final sample group.

Based on the recommendation of the pilot group and the researcher's analysis of the trial the questionnaire was revised and rewritten. This review procedure occurred three times. Refining the questions to ensure they provided no ambiguity for the respondents was critical at this stage of the research. The researcher also needed to ask specific questions and not bring in additional information causing the initial question to be extended. This extension distorted the question, causing the respondent to 'forget' what the researcher had originally asked them. The results of the pilot study allowed for a vast improvement in the researcher's technique with the most valuable aid being the inclusion of probes or prompts into the questions.

A further aspect that required improvement was the pace of the interview. It became apparent in the pilot study that the researcher was moving through the questions too quickly for the respondents and needed to moderate the speed of enthusiasm of the delivery. Although as Warwick and Lininger point out "if the interviewer is interested in the study, enthusiastic about his or her work, and likes the respondent, these feelings will usually be communicated to the respondent with positive effects on the latter's participation" (1975:189).
Finally, an encouraging aspect of the pilot survey was that the length of time predicted for the interview was in fact suitable. In addition, the descriptive responses, which were evoked, provided an over-view of the realities of the learning environment for the Indigenous adult students of the CGEA at Kalgoorlie and Esperance.

**Procedures to Interpret the Data**

The first stage of the analysis was to transcribe the audiocassette tapes of each interview. Allocation of a letter and number was used to code each respondent for example Esperance student one became ‘E1’. From the transcript, each line of dialogue was given a number, as was each page. For example, 42:3139 represents page 42 and dialogue line 3139. The transcripts were then cut and categorised so that all number 1 responses were placed together, all number 2 responses were placed together until all the thirty one responses where collated. The response to each question from the interview and the questionnaire were matched and patterns began to be identified within the data that formed categories.

By connecting categories of information in a meaningful way they formed theoretical ideas or themes. Such theorising, defined by Goetz and LeCompte (1984) as ‘the cognitive process of discovering or manipulating abstract categories and the relationships among those categories’ was a fundamental aspect of the analytical process of this study. The significant issues, or themes that
emerged from this analysis describing the students' experiences while studying the CGEA in Flexible Delivery mode. These broad themes consisted of:

Category 1: Students response to Competency Based Assessments.
Category 2: Students response to the Flexible Paradigm.
Category 3: Students response to the lack of student motivation.
Category 4: Students preference for collaborative learning.
Category 5: Students response to the Enclave.
Category 6: Students response to career and employment goals.
Category 7: Students response to the establishment of role models.
Category 8: Students recognition for personal basic literacy and numeracy.
Category 9: Students response to their lack of regular attendance.
Category 10: Students response to financial motivation to study.
Category 11: Students response to personal reasons to achieve.

The overview of these categories will be taken further in Chapter Four. These themes will provide the starting point for an extensive examination of what the respondents were signalling during 1995-1997 in Esperance and Kalgoorlie.

*Limitations impacting on the study*

Firstly, the Kalgoorlie students had no prior contact with the researcher. In an attempt to overcome this, material in the form of posters and brochures were sent in advance to inform the students about why and when the researcher was coming.
This process had limited effect however the Research Assistants played a critical role at this stage of the study continuing to pursue students on and outside the campuses. They visited several students at their homes to get the questionnaires completed.

As well, a prominent community elder’s funeral was on the second day of the interviews. All students were involved at some level with the ceremony. No formal interviews were scheduled but it did provide the researcher the opportunity while everyone was together to ask questions. When speaking informally to students a common response about the study program was:

A lot of lack of interest here. Everyone is just taking it for a ride. I would like to see, when I came back here five years ago, had a friend in the general study area and there was always a lot of people here, there was always something happening here. It was really exciting and now it’s really boring (K6:63:4416).

Further, many students were living in outstations or were part of a transient population, it was difficult to locate a sample group confidently. Postage and printing costs posed a concern given that many letters inviting involvement were returned marked ‘not at this address’. This indicated how mobile the students were throughout their year of study.

Finally, relying on respondents’ reading and writing skills was a further problem associated with the questionnaire method. All students from Esperance were enrolled in CGEA Level 2, 3 or 4 and had considerable literacy skills while several...
students from Kalgoorlie operated at Levels 1 and 2. Some Kalgoorlie students were also a part of the Introduction to General Education, which operated at a prior to Level 1 CGEA standard. This level which adopted the design and format of the CGEA, ranged from beginning literacy to level 1. For some Kalgoorlie respondents the limitations of their low literacy skills may have prevented them from providing their true account. Generally the oral interview permitted the participants to give diverse and rich responses while the questionnaire often elicited short one-sentence answers.

Summary of Chapter

This chapter reflects the methodological foundations of the research. Further, it examined in detail the research framework, the site, interview and questionnaire schedules, the informants and the participants and the limitations that were experienced. Chapter Four will provide an analysis of the results of the study.

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Chapter Four - Analysing the Results
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In the last chapter the methodology and the research structure was reviewed. This chapter examines the outcomes of the research that was undertaken. Initially, the chapter reports on how the local students perceived changes in practice, from face to face delivery to self directed learning (which incorporated a flexible approach within competency-based assessment). The study used the questionnaire and interviews to discern the authentic experiences as reported by the students. As such, the chapter will provide student’s declarations and reflections on the changes and their learning experiences.

While some policy makers were making statements pertaining to the necessity for flexibility and diversity in education, Indigenous learners where reporting other needs. These needs centered on fundamental issues leading to appropriate changes necessary to improve social and economical conditions. Indigenous students recognised that improvements to their living conditions were likely to come through increased participation in education and training, hopefully leading to meaningful employment. However, the approach to this training needed to be ‘in sync’ with their preferred ways of learning and studying. The changes that were introduced to the learning environment had significant impact on the Wongi and Nyungar students. This chapter will describe the studies outcomes as they emerged through eleven principal categories or prevailing issues that impacted on the student’s ability to operate.
within this learning domain. These categories emanate directly from the data collected throughout the study.

**Eleven Emerging Categories:**

*Perspectives on Competency Based Assessments*

Competency-Based Training is a key feature of the VET system. According to the Australian National Training Authority, the 'traditional' approach to training was inappropriate and focussed on the completion of courses, set over a specified period of time. The Authority also believed that the training emphasis was not directly linked to workplace requirements and this element was critical. The concept of competency thus focuses on what the employee is expected to do in the workplace rather than on their learning process. In keeping with this format training became outcome focussed.

The first emerging category evident from the participant’s responses was in relation to the series of discrete outcomes or ongoing formative competency based assessments. The majority of student participants (over two thirds) preferred discrete or smaller continuous competency based assessments rather than one final assessment at the conclusion of the module. The following is a selection of comments from the transcripts illustrating the students’ reasoning.

"I forget easy, so smaller assessments through out the module is good" (K3:76:3648) or “Going through each segment is a lot easier” (K1:73:3481) and that it was less stressful having to remember and recall information. Also, several students spoke of the confusion they experienced due to the immense number of assessments and the ongoing checks and measures that they needed.
to work through. "Except for all the bits of work we have to do. I would rather just learn it and get it all over and done with" (E9:70:3337). Further, apart from the confusion arising from the large number of competencies within the framework they also had to contend with the various domains, which caused several students to feel bewildered, "It is broken down into domains. It's not well... I get muddled up. Yes I get muddled up". (K1:73:3481) Several of the respondents provided comments that matched the Cope and Kalansis (1997) study conducted on Groote Eylandt when Indigenous workers were made to reach individual competencies within the rehabilitation program. "I hate doing it that way. Like somethings (sic) I have to do to say that I can prove that I can do it. Where really if I just got the test then I know I could do it" (E9:69: 3250).

Students at one site were often required to demonstrate a specific skill within an assessment even though they had real life experiences that clearly demonstrated their competency. For example, a student was working at Level 2 for Reading and Writing, which was approximately equivalent to year nine, even though he held several driving licenses for operating heavy mining equipment. These licences were proof, evidence of his real life literacy level.

Therefore, the first emerging category noted how learning was broken down into discrete and observable assessment outcomes couched in a format influenced by industry demands. As this was not necessarily the format of the learning environment, initially it had the capacity to cause students some confusion. However competency based assessment also provided students with ongoing formative assessment, which many preferred to the summative assessment format.
Perspectives on the Flexible Paradigm

The second emerging category was the issue of flexible styles of delivery. Previously the Indigenous students attended an enclave with a structured timetable with full time, face-to-face teachers. Regular attendance was a critical component of the course and if students did not attend after a stipulated period of time without a reasonable excuse, they would be penalised by having their financial support, in the manner of Abstudy payments, terminated. However this style of delivery was not always attentive to the specials needs that Indigenous learners brought to the learning environment. Often in honouring cultural obligations, movement of students for example to outstations or to the attendance of ceremonies resulted in a lack of regular attendance to their classes. As a result, when the learning environment changed to self-paced, flexible attendance the majority of students interviewed at both campuses were in favour of the flexible styles of delivery. Many students believed that structured timetables and compulsory attendance were not valid ways for Indigenous students to learn. When respondents were asked, "How would you like to learn?" a majority of them (some 60%) responded that they much preferred flexible delivery to structured classes. However, interestingly, when asked the question, "Would you prefer compulsory classes?" a majority of students responded affirmatively (again some 60%) agreeing they would like to have a structured, regular class time. This uncertainty in regard to flexible delivery was summarised by one of the participants who stated:
I like it flexible but with me I like turning up at nine o’clock in the morning like the times I have got here, Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday because that leaves me free Thursday and Friday to do my washing and vacuuming and I like sitting down from nine o’clock to three o’clock on those days that I am here to get my work done (K1:72:3401).

Moreover, general observations indicated that the flexible paradigm was a valid approach with regard to allowing Indigenous students time to learn at their own pace and attend to family and community commitments and obligations.

To digress briefly, the author conducted concurrently to this research, a small-scale research study, which investigated the impact of the flexible paradigm on lecturers delivering the CGEA. Seven of the nine lecturers interviewed at both sites believed that CGEA students on both campuses lacked the self-directed study skills required to operate effectively in a Flexible Delivery mode (McCarthy 1997). Indeed when conducting the student interviews for this research paper the majority of Indigenous students responded affirmatively to wanting compulsory attendance. They simply perceived Flexible Delivery as being far ‘too flexible’ as it allowed time to be distracted and to procrastinate.

I would rather the structured classes every day because I had more of a responsibility to be there rather than the flex. You think... you know, I can afford to have today off or, you know... I found it harder being that flexible. In a structure I felt I really had to be there. It was more responsibility than the flex so the structured form suited me better (E1:50:2338).

Another student commented: “Because no one is pushing you and you just slack off and don’t even come in” (K4:81:3940). Further, the students wanted
to have more pressure applied to them by the teaching staff. Many students saw that the role of the teacher had become one of 'passive facilitator' as distinct from that of an 'active teacher' who was there to motivate and guide.

With the onset of the self-paced learning guides the teaching focus was more often instructing the individual student from the page where they were working from, resulting in students undertaking the work book task in isolation rather than in small groups. The teacher went from one student to another on demand rather than addressing the whole group at once. The frustration of this way of learning is reflected by one of the participants:

*You got to get this book and go out and do it and you don't understand what you are doing. I am just wasting my time really because I don't know what I am doing and you work off a book. I want everything broken down to small bits and you get taught how to write an essay but you don't get taught that. I liked it when there were structured classes there was a teacher out the front teaching you. Writing on the board and you got that there and you could take notes from it* (K5:55:3998).

A further comment in relation to the self-paced individual style of delivery was that if a teacher spent considerable time with a student this then increased the waiting time significantly for other students. Students were coming into class intermittently and seeing the lecturer 'on demand'. This proved an untenable situation, as students had to wait for considerable periods of time for the lecturer to finish with individual students. The sheer number of criteria for assessment for each of the competencies was daunting, compounded by the time required to explain what was necessary to achieve the learning outcome. Lectures which could have been addressed to the entire group where being conducted on an individual basis. As a result, much time was wasted and the
lecturer was worn down by the repetition of the task. When asked if you could change the way you are being taught what would it be, the response from the student was: "to have a lecturer always there to help because now they are always in the room there and they are in the middle of a conversation you like go back to your desk and you are waiting" (K4:61:3834). Another student when asked the same question responded stating: "Definitely teachers, yes, they don't spend enough time with you..." (K5:57:4110). One participant who had attended the enclave class in the early nineties then started work with the mining company, later returned to complete the CGEA and noted a great difference in the delivery format:

"A lot of lack of interest here. Everyone is just taking it for a ride. When I come here five years back had friends in the General Studies area and there was always a lot of people here, there was always something happening here. It was really exciting and now it is really boring. From making study interesting doing different programs it start from the teachers really to get that strength in the class room, more or less, excitement" (K6:63:4416).

He goes on to say that: "Whereas if you had a teacher there all the time, sitting down in front of you, teaching you, pushing you all the time at school"

(K6:63:4406).

As directed by the Department of Training, it became evident that the function of 'teacher' had become one of 'facilitator' and the time to establish and foster tutoring for students both in class and outside of the stipulated class time was difficult. Therefore, many lecturers commented that if this element of teaching time was not available within the Flexible Delivery schedule for the students it
was highly probable that they would not be able to maintain the academic demands of their course. Consequently, the students would withdraw from their studies because their learning experience was promoting a sense of frustration.

**Lack of Motivation**

The third category emerging from the research was in relation to a student’s individual and personal commitment to complete their studies quite outside of the characteristic desire to succeed for the common good of the group/clan/family. The change to flexible styles of delivery mode generated a greater requirement for personal self-discipline. If the student lacked self-discipline this often lead to the inability to maintain a high level of motivation. As a consequence, if students experienced instability this often lead to truancy. The following range of responses best summarise how the students spoke of the lack of motivation that prevailed in the learning centre. Comments from both the questionnaire and interview generated responses such as “I notice that we start off with a big class and end up with only a few coming” (E9:3365), “You can set your own pace. But sometimes get too slack.” (K6:62:4393) and “Because no one is pushing you and you just slack off and don’t even come in” (K4:53:3940) were commonplace. There were several respondents who were focussed on making specific changes to their behaviour so to accomplish their goals.¹ This included activities such as placing their small children in day care and attending every day even when classes where not scheduled.

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¹ Most recipients of awards pursued further studies and several moved into undergraduate courses and studied at a level higher than they had ever thought possible.
I don't want to go through life just being a housewife, uneducated and not doing anything with my life. I have to, otherwise I am no body. Or I feel I am no body. I would rather the structure (class) because I had more of a responsibility to be there rather than the flex. In a structure I felt I really had to be there. With the flex you are missing out, you know, you are giving yourself the opportunity to miss out (E1:50:2339).

Often mature students curtailed their family obligations such as caring for young children and regularly attended class:

“I'm more happier now that I am going out and doing something because before when you are raising your children up you didn't have that opportunity you know. We started young. Now that they have gotten older I have got time for myself to do study and that can further my education” (E3:28:2611).

And:

“My wanting to, receiving certificates and receiving good feedback on what I am doing. Its encouraging me to be more open-minded to learn now where before I didn’t care if I didn’t have any learning. I am just a different person because I am educated-getting educated anyway” (E9:42:3298).

In several situations, such as public recognition by way of awards and/or commendations opportunities were created, often motivating students to continue with their studies. Therefore, it could be said that generally Indigenous learners tend to comply with the needs of the group recognising they are more consequential than those needs of the individual student. However the desire to attained individual fulfilment was evident in several of the respondents who used personal motivation and formulated deliberate strategies to succeed in their own studies.
Preference for Collaborative Learning

The fourth category to emerge was that flexible learning presents itself as problematic for many marginalised learners because of its underpinning philosophies of individualism, competition and user pays. Consequently, the dilemma facing Indigenous learners is a tension between the ‘flexible’ paradigm, which translates into individualistic learning pivotal to the ‘user choice/user pays’ ideology, and the ‘communal/familial’ paradigm that appears central to Indigenous living and learning. As eluded to in the previous category, for many Indigenous learners these philosophies are diametrically opposed to their worldviews and collaborative approaches to learning, where the needs of the group remain central. Hughes (1987) (cited in Byrnes 1993) refers to this concept of ‘world view’ as significantly impacting on the acquisition of skills such as numeracy and literacy. He suggests that characteristics such as group rather than individual orientation impinge on Indigenous students’ motivation to learn.

Historically, achieving the Department of Training Module Load Output Rates (MLOR) hence activating the institutions funding, was not crucial on student outcomes rates consequently the urgency to meet them was not as frantic as it is now. As a result students were frequently influenced by the lecturer and completed their studies within a co-reliant relationship. Generally learning was a collaborative interactive experience where the majority of students exhibited positive attributes that demonstrated they gained from the exchange. Moreover in the past, Indigenous students modified the educational program ‘on-demand’
determined by their needs and/or community events of the day or previous night. Often the program provided more 'value' to the students if it was revised and alternate learning activities were proposed. If the learning outcome(s) did not meet the assessment criteria activity on the day, they would be included at a later stage. Students tend to have a collaborative focus, and often an apparent non-committal to deadlines but this does not imply they lacked serious intent to achieve. At both sites flexible class times encouraged students to work on their self-paced independent program and at various times of the day. Often students would be leaving when the family group or other students were arriving. This greatly reduced the opportunity for students to work collectively as students reported they liked to learn in groups, as group work was an effective way to share knowledge. Of the thirty-one respondents to the interviews and questionnaires two thirds indicated that they would prefer to learn within a classroom with other students or in a group. It was apparent that the majority of students preferred to learn in classes or groups rather than individually. Students participating in the questionnaire, for example, supplied the following comments:

- "I like learning with a group in the classroom. You learn more by listening to other ideas".
- "It's really good to join in group discussions and working with other people".
- "Definitely as a group we learn from each other".

Similar responses were gained from those respondents to the interviews. Comments included:
• "I like to learn in groups" (E3:55:2530).
• "I like it in groups with a lecturer sometimes on my own but I prefer a group" (K3:76:3624).
• "I work harder in a group with a lecturer" (K4: 76:3783).
• "In a group, in a classroom group" (E4:30:2681) and
• "I like it in a group, in a classroom situation, yep" (E7:37:2982).

While some preferred the current individual self-paced learning style only two of the respondents showed a preference for a combination of these styles of learning environments. Those who preferred not to be stimulated by a lecturer (n=7) indicated they could take responsibility for their own work plan. The following range of comments best describe what some students experienced:

• "I like to work on my own program in my own self paced book" (E6:34:2896) and
• "I like working out of the workbooks but it is good to have the idea if you are on the right track or not" (E7:36:2987) or
• "I like to just be with myself and teaching myself with my own one" (E8:38:3093).

Particular students responded to the question in a convincing manner clearly expressing that they felt capable, for example:

• "I like to find information myself. If I need help then I go to the lecturer and ask for help" (E9:41:3233).
• "I find it easier with a friend but I prefer to work by myself because I can concentrate better" (K3:48:3630).
Therefore, historically it may have been appropriate for Indigenous learners to stay together and learn within their own cultural groups in their own timeframe in a collaborative manner but training is now driven by an agenda of competition and use-pays ideology. This new agenda is often in direct opposition to Indigenous worldview and as a result training is not necessarily as relevant or begins to capture the range of aspirations for the student, much less their families or communities, as once thought possible.

**The Enclave**

The fifth emerging category was the issue of the enclave. The enclave is defined as a separate learning area for Indigenous students only, established by a separate vote of funding specifically for the educational needs of Indigenous adult learners. The study shows that here was an unequivocal majority of students who wanted to learn with other cultural groups moving away from the traditional enclave learning environment.

Many students felt strongly that it was not to their advantage to learn only with other Indigenous students. They spoke of welcoming the opportunity to learn from as many other cultural groups as possible:

- “I enjoy it, I enjoy it you know, with anyone there, it’s different” (E3:27:2577)
- “Yes its good with others because you learn-like we have got a Norwegian girl and I have learned a lot about her culture, so it is good. I like learning with different people, you know about your own culture its good to learn about other people, what they eat and what they do” (E9:42:3281).
Several students felt that the enclave-learning environment was irrelevant to the world in which they lived and set an unfair precedent about how they entered mainstream employment after they graduated. The following comments come from the respondent’s questionnaires:

- "I am definitely a cultural group person I don’t like segregation at all." (E1:51:2384) and
- "It is an English country we need to adapt to the changes" (ER10:Q11) or
- "I would have mixed races so we all might learn a lot more" (KR1:Q10).

As one informant conveyed at some stage in their future employment, they would encounter non-Indigenous people and having a better understanding of their culture was to their advantage:

- "You have got to live out in the world with all different races no matter what" (K5:57:4098) and
- "No I am definitely a cultural group person I don’t like segregation at all" (E1:23:2384).

Of the six students not favouring opening the enclave up to the wider community prompted responses such as:

- "I like the old ways when just only all Aboriginals were in" (E5:33:2887) and
- "I like Aboriginal students, working with them, cultural students, they are interesting, yes, I don’t know" (K3:48:3665).
Therefore, while there were initial concerns at both research sites in regard to integrating the enclave into the broader campus, the overwhelming response from the Indigenous students was a strong preference to study with all peoples, regardless of creed. Further that the need to also understand non-Indigenous culture was important to twenty-three of the thirty-one respondents.

*Careers and Employment Goals*

The underpinning concept of the sixth emerging category was identifying career and/or employment aspirations within the inter-generational enclave classes at both sites. Many of the mature-aged students were enrolled specifically to learn basic numeracy and literacy for their own personal accomplishment, as this had not been possible when they were younger due to a range of socio/economic/political issues. On the contrary the younger students tended to have relatively good numeracy and literacy skills and their goals in relation to aspiration and intention were to go on to mainstream study.

The following range of comments explain how the students planned on using their current studies to achieve their long term goals:

- "Learn things to be a receptionist or learn the easy way to get a job and all that there, and learn all that, and more about computers stuff like that" (K4:54:3965)
- "Well I am doing a Sports and Recreation course and I would like to finish that and become a gym instructor I what I really want to do" (K6:64:4461)
- "Yes I want my own business sewing and manufacturing" (K2:49:3713).
Students did not want to be disadvantaged by not learning from the nationally accredited modules within recognised levels of study ie. certificate or diploma courses. They did not want to complete courses that were made up of modules of nil pre-requisites. When asked, “What do your want to achieve in the future?” the range of responses is best summarised by the following quotes:

- “A job and a career” (R6:Q12)
- “A well payed (sic) job” (R12:Q12)
- “To be my own boss” (R14:Q12).

Several students spoke about wanting the opportunity to move into private enterprise and considered the idea of setting up a business. One respondent had applied for an Aboriginal Enterprise Grant to set up her own Apparel Business but realised she needed certain skills to successfully conduct her business. She enrolled in the mathematics and numeracy domain of the CGEA to achieve these specific qualifications. As well, there was a cohort who believed that there needed to be an alternative to the current structure of vocational, educational and training. Several of the respondents wanted to develop skills in the trade’s area but found it difficult to enter into mainstream TAFE trade training. The preference for training within their own Aboriginal organisations such as through CDEP programs was commonly expressed. Therefore the need to address the aspirations of the inter-generational students was an essential element when designing their course of study. For many the certificate was sufficient to establish student’s level of basic life skills such as
reading and maths but for others it was the bridging course necessary to move
them into mainstream nationally accredited courses VET and higher education
courses.

Role Model

The seventh emerging category is partly in accord with the previous category
in the sense that within the enclave there were numerous family groups that
ranged over several generations. This created a strong family association
within the enclave with many elders taking on the role of the patriarch or
matriarch accordingly. It was not uncommon to observe subtle cultural
obligations being enacted by way of exchanges designed to motivate and
encourage, course work being completed by competent family members for the
less competent and so on. It was apparent that academic success was the
responsibility of the broader student community. While it was revealed in the
previous category that securing future employment prospects was critical to
individual aspiration, equally as important was the desire to be a positive role
model. The respondents were asked why they returned to learning, and while
their overall answers differed slightly, it was noticeable that they all contained
a common commitment. This commitment was in the reoccurring dynamism
of their responses to assert their appeal to provide a strong role model for their
children. This is perhaps best summarised by the following selection of
quotations:

• “I can’t teach my children their maths or anything at home when I don’t
  know myself. That’s why I study so I can teach my kids” (E9:70:3322)
• "Even being a role model for your kids too, that sort of thing you know" (E3:56:2615)

• "Putting an example towards my own children" (K3:77:3708) and

• "To prove to my grandchildren that I can go back and study too" (E2:54:2515).

An interesting observation to note was that several of the CGEA students' children attending the local high school at one site, were actively participating in their schools extra curricular activities. The selection into these activities was on the basis of regular attendance and positive involvement within the high school program.

Therefore while studies provided a potential pathway for students to move into sustainable and meaningful employment, a significant element was motivated by the desire to be a positive role model for their children and for the wider Indigenous community.

Adult Literacy and Numeracy and Basic Education

The eighth emerging category from the responses in the questionnaires and the interviews was the respondents' personal recognition of their own level of 'education' within the context of formal institutionalised learning. While Indigenous people may use numeracy and literacy, they are often using it in 'Aboriginal ways'. McDaniel (1995) writes that these ways serve an important purpose in Aboriginal societies past and present, and ways that apply to Aboriginal communication regardless of the language or dialect used.
However, regardless of how competent Indigenous learners felt within their own cultural context, the respondents were cognisant of their own inability to operate within the broader literate world. Many students acknowledged literacy and numeracy shortcomings in their ability to function within the standard Australian English community. Several students felt that they had no chance of reaching their goals while their level of numeracy and literacy was so undeveloped:

- "I am doing education practice. I am doing that so I can go up to level three because I have been stuck on level two for four years. And to me that is definitely no win" (K1:74:3519).

Students emphasised the necessity for classes that addressed the need for Aboriginal learners who missed out on understanding the fundamentals of the English language.

- "I want everything to be broken down into small bits and you get taught how to write an essay and how to write a paragraph and things like that but you don’t get taught that. Well I want to learn my English a lot more but what’s the point? I am not getting anywhere. I want to learn how to spell and how to write properly and go back to the basics of English. Like ‘their’ and ‘there’ what they mean and things like that you know. But not getting anywhere" (K5:4043).

Her final words were:

- "I kept on saying to the teacher, “I don’t want to learn this, I want to learn the basics. They just don’t take any notice of you so what’s the point?” (K5:4199).
This frustration was experienced due to the necessity for students to meet learning outcomes determined by forces outside of the learning environment. Numerous students complained about doing Department of Training ‘profile’ courses that had no relevance to their needs, many wanted to come to class and focus on basic adult literacy and numeracy skills. In fact, twenty-four of the thirty-one respondents had come into the learning centre specifically to improve their personal knowledge of numeracy and literacy:

- "Especially when you want to learn how to, like, I don’t even know how to write a letter. I come here to learn how to write a letter and how to do the essay and heaps of paragraphs. I am just wasting my time really because I don’t know what I am doing. They all say just go and do this and do that and you work off your book. That’s something that I don’t want to learn. I want to learn the one thing that I want to learn, see. Not getting anywhere really" (K5:3998).

The inability to communicate in English appeared to have a negative result on participation rates. If the aim is to bring Indigenous people into the mainstream labour markets this aspect is a significant barrier.

Therefore, several of the mature-age respondents’ continue to see standard Australian language as a problematic. Whilst they can operate in their own cultural sphere applying the rules of communication, they have difficulty integrating and constructing meaning of Standard English.

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2 Profiles are specific courses deemed by the Department of Training as relevant to the local workplace. Payment for these hours is how the training provider is funded.
Reasons for non attendance and lack of Schooling

The ninth category to emerge concerned primarily the more mature students in the group. These students were in the age range of the 'Stolen Generation' or who had grown up on Missions and/or in foster family environments. This small group of students had indicated a fear of learning because they continued to suffer the reoccurring memories of their primary school experiences. Students believed the cause of their underdeveloped skills was a result of circumstance. Many had not attended school regularly and the following selection of reasons demonstrates the controlling factors that impacted significantly on their daily lives. The contribution of the respondents can best be summarised by the following reasons:

- Needing time to manage family commitments, regular moving between homelands, communities and missions, problems with de facto partner/wife/husband, having babies and small pre-school age children, 'didn't have shoes',
- or that they had a 'dirty dress' and that they had to
- attend funerals in other communities for extended periods of time or
- that they simply did not have a school to attend in their early childhood years.

Forced to deal with a myriad of distractions and obligations clearly interfered with these adult students meeting any of their primary and early secondary schooling study commitments. Two of the matriarchs noted that they were too frightened of school because of their early childhood memories. Frequently insensitive educators in institutions exacerbated their anxiety, and as a result
some Indigenous learners were unable to address their fear of school while such memories existed. Therefore, respondents needed to acknowledge that they would probably at some stage in their return to study encounter emotional bouts that could impact on their ability to function, at least for a time, in their new learning environment.

Financial Motivation to return to Study

The tenth category that emerged was pivotal for the well-being and personal organisation of the students. This was in relation to being able to study full time without the additional stress of having to work to support themselves and/or their families. Being eligible for financial support enabled respondents to attend class regularly, manage their studies and still provide for their family. As adults returning to study, the respondents recognised the issues that interrupted their earlier schooling years could reoccur if they did not maintain motivation and regular attendance. An issue at the time, which was extremely pertinent to student motivation, was that of the Abstudy payments. Abstudy payments were designed to support the students with financial assistance and had traditionally been paid only to students who attended regularly. Hence, attendance had been the criteria for eligibility. However this was complicated when attendance no longer became compulsory in the self-paced flexible learning centres. Numerous students continued to draw their Abstudy payments but reduced their active participation until eventually they produced no work at all. Abstudy had no system in place to deal with attendance discrepancies and nor did Student Services at both sites. The Student Services officer at Kalgoorlie said:

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Our database can't cope with flexible delivery. There is a program 'Student One' to be put in place at Bentley by 1999. However, they forgot about the VET sector. I envisage something similar in place by 2001 for us (KSSO:4885).

The response was similar for the Student Support Officer at Esperance who stated that:

"I am not equipped at all, my system does not allow for Flexible Delivery" (ESSO).

As a result an active student policy was developed and students were expected to complete a specified number of assessments each week based on their level of study. These assessments also provided sighted or signed documentation when Abstudy requested evidence of attendance. Therefore, while Abstudy did provide beneficial financial support for those students who did sustain the active student policy there were some students who did take advantage of the system. However until Abstudy established criteria for financial eligibility based on the new flexible training paradigm, students' were still able to gain financial support, even though certain students were not technically eligible.

**Individual and personal reasons to achieve**

The eleventh and final category to emerge from the research did not involve all respondents. A small but significant group who signalled that their intent to return to study was motivated by an underlying need for individual gratification. These respondents openly disclosed their previously private inclinations about attempting to learn for personal satisfaction. From the
researcher's observations and experiences, it was seldom that students spoke about the desire to put aside the needs and obligations of the clan or community to pursue studies for wholly individual reasons. However, at both sites this occurred. A consideration for this may be that each site had significant numbers of female students over forty years of age. The following selection of quotes best sum up their experiences:

- "I missed out on a lot when I was young" (E2:53:2508),
- "I thought I had forgotten and it has done a lot me personally because I can go into my own little world, sort of thing, that's not family, not kids, school, work, its just mine. Something that I have to do for myself" (E1:2406)
- "I am more happier now that I am going out and doing something because before you are raising your children up you don't have that opportunity you know. We started young. Now that they have got older I have got time for myself to do a bit of study and that, can further my education" (E3:2611).

Many of the respondents over forty-five were widows or several were long time separated from their partners and found their studies provided a range of opportunities that they had never been exposed to before. Further, these students were regular in their attendance and this provided a stabilising influence on the younger students. Therefore while it has been documented that Indigenous students tend to study to be apart of 'their mob' many, especially women, came into the learning centre to fulfil a long time desire to do something for 'themselves'.

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Summary of the Eleven Emerging Categories

When the results of this investigation are systematically examined there occurs two distinct themes best defined as operating at a micro and macro level. At the macro level the thrust of training was to establish economic imperatives, to generate industry work based training within a prescriptive and highly detailed competency-based outcome focus. As part of this national training reform plan was the introduction of economic rationalism policy that insisted on wide ranging reductions hence, the decision to amalgamate the smaller, poorly equipped Esperance campus with the larger well facilitated Kalgoorlie campus. As Bishop (1997) reflects:

Esperance had no budget, it had been expended at the end of term three in 1992. There were no course being offered, there were no part time course offered and there was literally twenty-eight full time students. I formed the view that this place was either going to go under if it had to survive by itself or it needed to be apart of a much larger organisation if it was going to have any chance of attracting any significant funding.

Secondly, a further economic decision was to integrate the Aboriginal Enclaves at both sites to become a part of the wider campus, the broader overarching motivation came from the need to provide all students with some basic facility and at the least amount of financial expenditure.

Thirdly, the Department of Training was introducing the Victorian curriculum framework of the CGEA; a competency based training program in an attempt to limit the hundreds of different certificates being provided. According to the
Director of Aboriginal Service Bureau (1997) "a smorgasbord of programs and services were being provided yet there was no provision for the transfer of skills across the state and no accredited nationally recognised training. We recognise that the CGEA is not the answer but it was a good start where it could be used to reflect a local favour". In doing the CGEA this course would provide a nationally accredited training program, something that was becoming the focus statewide for Aboriginal communities.

On the other hand, the other theme emerging from the eleven categories at the micro level was that irrespective of what omnipotent decisions were being directed by industry onto the training agenda, the broad complex cultural patterns of Indigenous behaviour of sharing and reciprocity was not effected. Inter-generational family groups often sharing knowledge and assisting those less competent were turning up for classes in an attempt to improve their own personal levels of numeracy and literacy skills. In fact, twenty-four of thirty-one respondents willingly returned to study for a 'second chance' with no specific interest to pursue or link their newly acquired literacy and numeracy skills to gaining employment immediately. As well, there was a definite preference to learn skills, which improved basic literacy and numeracy with no inclination to move into employment in the near future. A sub set of this group returned to study for personal reasons such as to learn with the view that they could help their own children with their schooling needs with perhaps long term plans to move into further studies.
However seven of the thirty-one respondents who did return to study indicated an interest to work within predominantly Indigenous organisations for example within CDEP, Aboriginal organisation programs, employment initiatives programs, whilst a small percentage welcomed the opportunity to work outside of Indigenous organisations.

To recapitulate, the outcome of this study predicted that the impact of these two themes would have a decisive result, from large, stable classes accommodating inter-generational family groups in 1994 to a almost non-existent Indigenous presence in the CGEA classes at both sites in the late nineteen nineties. While the former changes had a significant effect on the student’s world, the students had an inconsequential impact on what was occurring and the changes that were being implemented at a national level influenced by global trends with an acute focus on economic growth. Economic growth without improved social condition denies students the opportunities to improve their personal self-esteem, and/or the opportunities for meaningful and sustainable learning to occur so that the students become conscious of the social forces at work, to then learn to understand the need to reflect on these forces and then challenge the social system towards transforming it to make sense in their world. Further, economic growth without regard for ensuring the establishment of appropriate support structures so that Indigenous people can, if they choose to, pursue meaningful and sustainable job options will not encourage Indigenous peoples employment participation rates to improve.
An overview of the results of the student data can be viewed in Appendix A, Table 1.

**Chapter Summary**

This chapter examined the results of the research. It reported how local students viewed the changes in practice from traditional face-to-face delivery to self-directed learning within the flexible approach with competency-based assessment. It reported on the main categories that emerged from the comments and reflections of the study participants.

Chapter Five will continue the analysis by deriving significant themes from the respondents’ data and reviewing these in terms of the literature. These themes will be linked to both the relationships of Indigenous aspirations as a culture and the unique needs this group require to achieve within the National Vocational Education and Training context.
Chapter Five - Significance of the Study
Chapter Five – The Significance of the Study

Introduction

Chapter Four provided a description and analysis of the data obtained from this study. This chapter will provide further analysis of the student data and review the study findings. The analysis of the student data can be re-examined to track how the eleven categories that emerged from the students testimonies, fell within two overarching micro and macro themes.

Next, the chapter will examine the ramification of the policy, practice and curriculum makers decisions of the day, which were perhaps part way responsible for the deficient situation that exists in Indigenous adult education and training. Further, the chapter will explore possible ways in which the current situation can perhaps be re-appraised by presenting alternatives to education and training that are in keeping with the ethos of Indigenous learning preferences.

Hence, future changes advocating strategies such as regional development while maintaining distinct Indigenous culture will be discussed. It has been suggested that Indigenous vocational education has been directed and influenced by national policies, developed with little regard for the unique needs of this specific client group. Finally, the chapter will report on several published investigations demonstrating how Indigenous Australian cultural identity has its own order and aspirations.
Emergent Themes

To briefly review the previous chapter, the students in the study provided testimonies that established eleven categories of response. On examination, these categories denote two distinct themes. The first theme revealed a big picture, a macro scope of what occurred at the study site. This included how the learning environment was thrust into the training reform to establish economic imperatives to increase productivity. It involved the integration of the enclaves into mainstream learning centres to save money and reduce duplication of resources. It concerned the introduction of a nationally accredited competency-based curriculum framework, where training was funded specifically on the basis of module load output rates.

The second theme, the micro level, revealed a more visceral picture that involved the students' beliefs and aspirations as Indigenous peoples'. Here a number of categories emerged including ranging from what Hughes (1987) refers to as especial characteristics. These characteristics include for example, a desire to learn in groups rather than by themselves, a spontaneous as opposed to structured approach to learning, a preference for personal interaction than impersonal, to list a few. These characteristics reveal what Indigenous education over time had managed to evolve into.

Analysis revisited

To recapitulate, in the nineteen-eighties, adult Indigenous education in Esperance and Kalgoorlie was established in enclaves, consisting of inter-
generation family groups of Nyungar and Wongi students. The broad overarching focus of the students who enrolled, was often simply to be with their 'own mob', as the enclaves became increasingly important meeting places for the Indigenous community. The case study results attest that within the fourth category, which discussed students' strong desire to be with family groups, two thirds indicated they would prefer to learn this way. Also during the mid nineteen-nineties, motivation to attend, especially for the younger students, was to learn about the new technologies that were being introduced into the classrooms such as computers and the Internet. Concurrent to this, students worked collectively with their families, improving their basic literacy and numeracy skills.

This study also establishes that, based on the second category supported by archived records, discussed the ramifications of honouring cultural and family obligations resulted in the courses studied tended to occur over several years. It appears that students engaged in a transient pattern of attendance, moving in and out of study, although more often than not, eventually returning to their classes. There was significant movement from the main centres to outstations at particular times of the year or for specific events that were occurring at the time.

While generally, the enclaves were important places were Nyungar and Wongi students met and engaged in consolidating plans and projects, the fifth category emerging from the study, does support a shifting attitude towards an amalgamation with the wider campus. The enclaves enjoyed significant
funding from Aboriginal Services Bureau, resources such as guitars, sewing machines, cooking facilities, visual and graphic art equipment and an extensive range of creative learning tools provided a stimulating learning environment. In addition, students participated in excursions, taking them outside of their familiar world. These excursions often provided the catalyst for powerful learning experiences, which impacted positively on the students, increasing their personal knowledge and self-esteem.

The enclaves were the hub for the development of activities or celebrations, Indigenous or otherwise, and the students were often invited into the wider community to set up exhibitions. It was also valuable for organisations that worked closely with Indigenous people such as the Education, Health and Juvenile Justice Departments, who often needed advise and support. The students regularly provided contact and assistance with the families and parents of those involved.

Planning and organisation of the courses was developed in collaboration with the adult students. As the study results revealed in the first category, the introduction to competency-based learning broke the learning task into discrete and observable outcomes couched in a format designed by industry to meet their demands. Traditionally, learning had not been constructed this way at Esperance or Kalgoorlie. Often different projects were determined each year, depending upon the various dynamics in the groups. Projects, both long term and short term, were developed to tap into the experiences of the students and evolved from what interested them. As a consequence, courses such as

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mechanics and welding, sewing and cooking were popular and well attended. Students mentioned that they were applying their new skills and carried out activities in their personal lives such as budgeting or cooking that they had learnt in class.

The seventh category of this study reflected the important role of elders in the learning domain taking on traditional patriarchal or matriarchal roles. Often subtle cultural obligations were enacted by way of exchanges design to motivate and assist was noted. The continuity between the inside learning community and the outside living community was imperative. Students enjoyed bringing their milieu into their learning and their cultural connection with nature and their community was the central theme in all of the work they produced. The students provided lively debate and interaction with families and partners throughout the day and the development of social and cultural relationships to exchange ideas and communicate was ongoing.

While the curriculum may not have been negotiated, responsive and emergent educational importance was placed on the process or the journey rather than the product or the destination. The learning outcomes were adapted to create a desire to seek new knowledge, connected to the students’ valued learned knowledge. The enclave had its own pace, not restricted by a clock. Teachers and students respected that learning took time.

All this stopped in the late nineteen nineties. Butler and Connole reason that, “Training was presented in the official rhetoric as the panacea that would right
the wrongs of inequity and restore the ‘level playing field’ (Dawkins, 1988)” (1992:21). They believe that the task of training was to produce productivity, establishing an outcomes-based model to up-skill and multi-skill the workforce. However training comes with an agenda Jackson notes (cited in Butler and Connole 1992), “The crux of the matter is that training is never neutral. It is a battlefield for a broader struggle over knowledge and power in work. The questions at stake are how working knowledge will be organised, whose experience will it represent and whose interests will be served.” (1991b:30).

All of the micro issues that emerged from the study pivoted on having a learning environment that was conducive to the way Indigenous Wongi and Nyungar students prefer to learn, to feel included, or to be in a place were they could be an important part of. According to this specific research site, students were directed to adopt flexible delivery and self-paced learning regimes and adapt to this system regardless of how incongruent it was to their familiar or ‘preferred ways’ of learning. In due course, many students abandoned their studies.

Much literature specifically about “practice” in Aboriginal education focuses on questions related to culture and culture appropriateness. Aboriginal people have their own specific “learning styles” or preferred ways of learning; that personal relationships are crucial; and that people have very different attitudes to knowledge and its transfer from those of Western-style educational philosophy (Achee in Boughton and Durnan 1997).
For example, in 1997 there were sixteen Nyungar/Wongi students studying the CGEA at Esperance Campus and a similar scenario occurred at Kalgoorlie campus. In fact, Kalgoorlie traditionally attracted annually around seventy-five CGEA enrolments. In 2000 Esperance campus had one Indigenous student while Kalgoorlie has no Indigenous students in the CGEA class.

The Macro Theme

Having established the participants’ response to the case study, a range of issues emerged. Those that relate to the macro or broad national issues include longitudinal studies and reports published re-telling the stories of what Indigenous people were saying they needed to best operate within their communities’ or within the broader context of mainstream society. For example, in the study the sixth emerging category testifies that students did not want to be disadvantaged by not having sufficiently developed numeracy and literacy skills.

Several students spoke of the desire to own a business and as a consequence where studying to learn the skills needed to apply for an Aboriginal Enterprise grant and to operate their own business. As well, in category six it was noted that there was a cohort of Indigenous students who wanted to develop skills in the trades but found it difficult to enter into mainstream TAFE training. Their preference was to train through their own organisations such as with CDEP programs to gain their certification.
It is apparent from the evidence and submissions put to many inquiries including, 1991 Senate Inquiry, Miller Report 1985, AEP Taskforce 1988 and the FIAEP 1997 Reports, Aboriginal people are placing emphasis on getting better educated with the intent to overcoming their circumstances. This traditional lack of eligibility is widely experienced in areas of housing, employment, education, health, rates of incarceration to name a few, “For many Aboriginal people including students currently studying, education is literally saving their lives. At the community level education is seen as a key to empowerment, and to the achievement of better outcomes such as increased employment and better health”. (Boughton and Durnam 1997). These writers claim that research into the relationship between education and other factors in Aboriginal development, such as employment for example, Foley and Flowers (1990), Schwab (1995), (1996a), (1996b) (1997), Hunter (1996) must begin to be considered seriously. In the 1991 Senate Inquiry evidence was heard that:

It is abundantly clear that the main purpose for which Aboriginal people seek education and training is to assist them to take control of their own communities, to develop and manage those communities in ways consistent with the aspirations of their members (Commonwealth of Australia 1991).

For those working and living with and in Aboriginal communities this statement does not come as a surprise. The recognition that in many cases community members are able to deal with the myriad of issues confronting their contemporary society is long over due. Further, that Indigenous people can then also contribute to the solutions of these issues based on ‘their’ ways. This also applies specifically to the development of educational programs
consistent with the needs of the learners and not determined by outside
organisations unfamiliar with the complex cultural systems and various
dimensions of community requirements. Supporting this further is the
Aboriginal Social Justice Commissioner's First Report:

The recognition that social justice is about the enjoyment and exercise
of human rights establishes the framework in which Indigenous peoples
cannot be regarded as passive recipients of government largesse but
must be seen as active participants in the formulation of policies and the

It could be said that Indigenous people's cultural uniqueness has been
systematically undermined, while respect for Indigenous difference has not
been given due consideration. In the past the axiom for traditional Government
intervention has been based on the beliefs central to western perspective. To
digress momentarily, this can be established in the event of making the
workplace applicable for Aboriginal workers. By adapting western law to
accommodate Indigenous lore, many changes needed to occur. One example is
Aboriginal specific clauses in industrial awards and agreements, such as
provision for ceremonial leave and for extended bereavement leave. Initially
government policy makers attempted to 'Aboriginalise' the workplace. They
imposed a white worldview on many aspects of the work environment and
tagged them as 'Aboriginalising' the job. Boughton and Durnam (1997)
comments reflect the essence of this action, "'Aboriginalising' positions and
jobs, which means something more than simply putting an Aboriginal person
into a job previously done by a non-Aboriginal person. Rather it includes the
idea the job itself will be 'Aboriginalised' and able to be done in a more Aboriginal way."

Further, Harris (1990) hold the view that Aboriginal perceptions of work are quite different from western perceptions where work is one of the major components of the latter's economic system. Aborigines do not draw clear distinctions between living and working. He refers to the individual word in the Northeast of Arnhemland for the word 'work' 'Djama'. It is derived from the visiting Macassan trepang fishermen. Today the word is used when referring to work done by the Balanda-non Indigenous Australians. In the Indigenous view work is very close to participation. This attribute was noted in the case study within category four, where the students frequently completed their studies in a co-reliant relationship. Learning was a collaborative interactive experience where the characteristics of the group rather than the individual orientation provided the motivation to get the work done. As in Indigenous culture, there is no clear distinction between one who outlays more or one who outlays less. The issue is that both participate as in the ritual. "Participation rather than productivity is critical. In more traditional times, and even today, a high proportion of the work of mature men involves ritual activity. It is therefore no accident that the Aboriginal English word for ceremony is 'Business'" (Harris 1990:35).

In capitalist western society, work and economics are driven by time. In fact, past President of the United States of America, Benjamin Franklin, coined a phrase 'time is money'. This adage embellishes the powerful picture of
corporate capitalism, by its very nature, providing the perspicacity of time, enhancing the value of economic growth hence development, turning work into a moral imperative. Capitalist, free enterprise, materialistic Non-indigenous Australians tend to be future orientated, equating hard work with increased opportunity. According to Harris (cited in Byrnes 1993) Indigenous Australians on the other hand are mostly past continuous time orientated. Harris (1990) refers to this system as an acceptable social order without need for further evolution and believes work is only a means to a social or religious end, never an issue of personal gain or personal identity. To make oneself an ‘attractive investment for the employer’ or increasing ones stock of human capital and becoming ‘job ready’ does not conform to Indigenous ideology.

The FIAEP 1996 submission to the Australian National Training Authority Access and Equity Report, *Equity 2000* stated, “We believe the fundamental rationale for developing a VET system which meets our peoples’ needs should be the recognition of our own basic human rights, and our special rights as Indigenous peoples” (FIAEP 1996 cited in Boughton 1998). This translates as recognising Indigenous peoples’ differences in aspirations, value systems, language, economical, social and religious organisation, as a cultural unit distinct from non-Indigenous culture. Therein these differences are not assimilated into, or excluded from the mainstream non-Indigenous culture, rather accepted for essentially what they are. Boughton and Durnam (1997) state that:
... perhaps the most challenging issue of all is to ensure education is available to all Aboriginal people in a manner that reinforces rather than suppresses their unique cultural identity. The imposition on Aboriginal people of an educational system developed to meet the needs of the majority cultural group does not achieve this (AEP Task Force 1988:2).

Yet, a directive from the Department of Training in the mid nineteen-nineties to adult educators was that a style of learning, known as flexible delivery mode, was to be introduced and implemented. In Western Australian the Aboriginal Service Bureau endorsed the competency-based CGEA course, however, at that stage no one was cognisant of flexible delivery methodology and its cultural relevance on Indigenous adult students. Studies to date have found that a major problem for Indigenous adult education is that its providers have to work within 'mainstream' systems of VET or ACE or higher education (HE). As this case study has revealed, the first category that emerged from the student testimonies was in relation to how their learning was broken down into discrete and observable assessment outcomes, couched in a format determined by industry requirements. The competency-based format caused students to experience confusion due to the sheer number of assessments criteria that needed to be met. However, it also provided students with ongoing formative assessment, which many did prefer to the previous summative assessment format.

The second category that emerged from the study that also reflected the apprehension experienced by the students was that of the mode of delivery. The individual, self-paced, flexible program encouraged greater procrastination amongst students who ended up not achieving as much as they would have
liked to. They also documented that they missed the regular motivation that evolved from sharing and working with both the lecturer and the group. Consequently the overall policy context and the administrative and funding arrangements still continued to operate with a lack of regard and reference into Indigenous education and its complex relationship to the development of preferred learning styles. According to Boughton and Durnam (1997) many policy makers and practitioners in adult education see programs for Indigenous students simply as an ‘add-on’ to existing systems of provision. They believe the design, delivery and evaluation of quality Indigenous adult education programs is a highly specialised area. For this reason, neither local providers nor state ACE and VET systems are likely to experience much success if efforts to improve Indigenous participation in or outcomes from adult education are restricted to including a few ‘Indigenous’ courses in the profiles. This becomes immediately obvious, state Boughton and Durnam, when relevant literature is identified. For example, The 1988 Report of the Aboriginal Education Policy Task Force, The 1989 House of Representatives Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs Report A Chance for the Future (HRSCAAA 1989), The 1989 Joint National Policy on Aboriginal Education (Commonwealth of Australia 1993), to name a few.

Reports of research in the area of Aboriginal adult education and learning, specifically research which documents Aboriginal peoples’ own perspectives and preferences, for example, Harris (1988), Henry (1991), McIntryre et al

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1 Boughton and Durnam (1997) refer to studies and reports that indigenous communities are recommending and signaling what needs to be incorporated into establishing appropriate programs.

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Significance of the Study

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(1960, Martiniello (1996), Schmider (1991), Teasdale and Teasdale (1996) Tranby (1994) if consulted, could result in a more culturally acceptable course design and content. Further, research into the relationship between education and other factors in Aboriginal development, such as employment for example, Foley and Flowers (1990), Schwab (1995), (1996a) (1996b) (1997), Hunter (1996) must be seriously considered since these reports denote a broad overview of what Indigenous peoples’ and educators working in adult education are signalling. As this study indicates, of the eleven categories that emerged from the students’ testimonies, the unalterable relationship between Indigenous adults returning to study and the collective needs to develop strategies towards strengthening their Indigenous community remains central.

Ah Chee (1991) believes that current strategies are not working and that Aboriginal unemployment is going up, not down. Regardless of past government’s efforts at intervention and the spending of significant amounts of money Indigenous people are still not getting the training they need, and as a result they are not getting the jobs.

Tesfaghiorghis and Altman, state that, “... the percentage of Aborigines with certificates has increased from 2.9 to 6.6 per cent for males, and from 0.6 to 4.2 per cent for females. With respect to Aboriginal gender differences in qualifications, males had higher qualifications than females, especially in certificate qualifications, while tertiary qualifications levels were similar”(1991:07).
Boughton (1998) in his paper, “Review of Research: Alternative VET Pathways to Indigenous Development” suggests that there is an acute need for an alternate approach than the one being pursued by ANTA:

Rather than defining Aboriginal non-participation in mainstream VET and labour markets as the problem, and concentrating therefore on strategies to remove “barriers to participation”, the mainstream is defined as ‘the problem’, and Indigenous peoples’ non-participation taken as a measure of the system’s lack of relevance to the development needs and aspirations of their communities (1998:10).

Up to now the applicability of the learning and training reform has been an improvident approach. Courses contrived as uniquely designed to be sensitive to the training and educational needs for Indigenous learners, have simply been a last minute ‘add on’. Most educators working in Indigenous education over the past decade or more have recognised that the course material was seldom new, adapted from course to course, year to year. Many dated TAFE courses provided the fundamental material for the supposedly new responsive modules. The design of the courses portrayed the superannuated formats and the delivery style acquired a new name.

To recapitulate, without appropriate, Indigenous sensitive methodologies in place, success for the adult Indigenous VET students appears unlikely. A deliberate and bracing approach is axiomatic if outcomes and targets were ever going to be attained. These changes needed to take place in collaboration and in consultation with proficient and experienced course and curriculum designers who have had long-term investment and involvement in Aboriginal Education. AhChee (1991) writes:
Indigenous people have missed out on basic schooling and most are never going to get to university. The VET system is really their only chance. However the vast majority of resources going into VET for Indigenous people is still mainly being channelled through big TAFE systems, into courses which are not appropriate to Indigenous peoples needs, because they are courses decided by the ITABs and the State Training Authorities and ANTA on the basis of what industry needs.

While the State Training Authority and private providers are sanctioned to continue on the present trajectory, influenced by industry and the global economy, Indigenous educational and training requirements will continue to be inappropriate. “Today’s VET system has developed historically the way it has so as to better reflect the changing needs of industry” (Boughton 1998:16). Boughton believes that the VET re-design has in effect helped to contribute to the increase in Aboriginal unemployment. He elucidates this point by reasoning that it is too simplistic to believe, “as current VET policy appears to, that if people in Aboriginal communities had the same ‘skills’ or ‘qualifications’ profile as exists in non-Aboriginal society, then they would also enjoy the same rates of employment and the same rates of income.” (1998:16).

The apparent low economic status of Western Australian Aborigines, writes Tesfaghiorgis (1991), is partly due to the eurocentricity of the social indicators used which assume that Aborigines aspire to the same economic goals as other Australians. Tesfaghiorgis begs the question, are the social indicators flagging the right signal to policy makers? “The key policy issue
that will then require investigation is to what extent program expenditure and outcomes are correlated to economic success?" (1991:23).

Over the latter part of this century, millions of dollars have been spent to supplement intervention programs that are designed to improve standards of numeracy and literacy for Indigenous Australians. This second attempt at an education is a result of their first attempt of an education not succeeding. It can be argued that had sufficient provisions, for example, the recognition of appropriate teaching and learning styles, been widespread and directed into secondary and post primary education, many students may have managed to succeed in their earlier schooling. This attempt of 'catch up' results in a greater number of Indigenous adults accessing VET courses. As category nine within the study shows, based on the students' testimonies, many were from the 'Stolen Generation' or who had grown up on missions and/or in foster homes. This group of students spoke of a fear of school or any learning environment, due to the experiences they suffered because their skills, as children were so undeveloped as a result of circumstance.

A further issue is that the majority of VET courses are now stringently linked to a module learning outcome rate (MLOR). This means that students are expeditiously moved through their studies in order for the training provider to achieve the MLOR, hence payment for the institution or training provider. It is believed that as a result of this practise, many Indigenous adult students are constrained by the system, which tends to exhibit little regard to their specific learning needs within the training environment. The motivation for getting
students through the course in the nominal hours is to ensure that the institution secures its funding. One lecturer commented that the federal funding is outcome driven and not a positive way to operate. “I feel frustrated. Seventy-five per cent of the students must pass and because this is tied to our funding profile the initial response was that we had to tighten things up, go away from flexible delivery, get people in for tutes, make them pass” (KC1:21).

Consequently, while participation rates may look significantly high on closer deliberation successful completion to gain graduation is low. “The success rate of Indigenous TAFE students in 1994 was low, with only 49% completing one module, compared with 70% for non-Indigenous students: and full time employment of graduates was 33% compared with 55%” (Matijevic 1996:28 in Boughton 1998:08).

Therein, with insufficient skills and a lack of opportunity to gain meaningful employment prospects remain dire. For example, in Esperance, the majority of Nyungar and Wongi graduants work within the small pockets of the domestic industry and various Aboriginal corporations. In Kalgoorlie, some of the students work in the mining industry primarily within the Rehabilitation Programs. Many of the students after graduation are not employed partly due to limited employment opportunities that exist in small towns. Daly believes that, “the results show that the effects of Aboriginality on attachment to the labour force is greatest outside major urban areas. This adds weight to the argument that different policies are needed for Aborigines in these areas than in the major urban areas” (1991:16). This is taken further by the argument Daly presents noting that in the areas where labour force attachment is low, the
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scope for improvements in social welfare in the formal labour market is limited and Government policy needs to recognise this.

Studies indicate that the proportion of the Aboriginal population employed by Federal, State and local governments is increasing while the contribution of the private sector appears large but is low relative to the total population. Employment limitations within the local industries and community organisations can not or will not employ Aboriginals, resulting in some students believing their educational and training becomes superfluous keeping them reliant in the social welfare system. Daly believes, "...that it is more difficult for Aborigines to find employment than to be counted in the labour force which includes both the employed and the unemployed. This is not a surprising result as the social security system does not discriminate according to race but employers may do so" (1991:13). Others take this opportunity to contribute to the unconstrained cultural activities meeting their communities' aspirations and needs.

This view is further endorsed by Boughton who explicates that:

...providing more subsidies to private employers, or to VET providers, to expand their offerings to Aboriginal people across the full range of mainstream courses and qualifications is unlikely to lead to the outcomes intended, because it does not accord with peoples’ aspirations and needs. On this analysis, it is more cost effective to target subsidies towards the courses and programs that people actually want to do, especially those which allow them to make the kinds of choices about working in and for their own communities that they and their communities appear to prefer (1998:13).
The key to providing alternate pathways towards economic sustainability is to use the strengths of locality. Daly (1991) points out that the participation of rural Aborigines in the CDEP schemes is creating employment and has continued to increase based on the data of the last three Censuses. In 1996 a total of 28,326 Indigenous adults participated in the CDEP scheme registered by ATSIC. If Indigenous people had more and better jobs according to Taylor and Hunter, then they would be able to meet many of the basic needs that governments now provide for them, from their own incomes. They believe that:

If all the Indigenous people outside the labour force who wanted jobs found them, then the Indigenous participation rate would increase to 67.2 per cent of the adult Indigenous population. This would mean that the government would save an additional $301 and $341 million on government payments in 2000-1 and 2005-6 (1997:21).

The significance of these savings should have been cause for enquiry instigating policy makers to re-examine their best practice strategies for the involvement of Indigenous adults in education and training. This fact alone could possibly result in reversing the theory that qualifications are the exclusive criteria for increasing employment probability within Aboriginal communities. Daly (1991) claims that:

...in order to achieve employment equity by the year 2000, it may be necessary to further redefine ‘employment’ to take account of cultural differences among rural Aborigines wishing to pursue traditional lifestyles. The recognition of the productive employment of hunter-gathers outside the formal labour market is a necessary part of equality of employment opportunity, although such recognition may have a negative impact on income support options which would counter the

By redefining the perception of employment, CDEP programs, Employment Initiatives, Aboriginal Enterprises Schemes and the like, would be centred on the community's aspirations and not on outcomes attached to Western ideals. Due to mission and government intervention, the term 'communities' constitute the gathering of many clans and language groups within a locality. For reference purposes, the author will refer to communities implying family groups or homelands or specific organisations, cognisant of the differences within Aboriginal clans. It is not assumed that members within the community inherently provide coherent support for each other or each clans employment enterprises. Rather, jealousies can and do exist and have the capacity to cause ongoing conflict with continued vendettas being waged. This becomes self-defeating and contrary to the potential economical success as envisaged by advocates. As problematic as it may be, Rowse (1992) speculates that these changes will generate some complexities. Many changes will come with a positive aspect:

That abundance of 'unemployed' labour time, not having to be sold for subsistence, can be devoted to projects which are rewarding in themselves. Some time might be experiences as no more that depressing idleness; on the other hand it may be one of the richest resources of a materially poor people, the opportunity to pursue an Aboriginal sociability in which the connections among kin and friends are maintained in their amicable density (1992:83).

With this, local and regional planning processes can develop in conjunction with clear community objectives. These processes need to be carefully
integrated into the Vocational Educational Training model with goals that are bottom up. In choosing to operate in this way community members can become active agents in creating a generation that is truly living to their way.

Chapter Summary

Over the past decade, the transformation of vocational, education and training has been extensive. The criterion for training, singularly influential by industry, has been shaped by international trends towards multinational, corporate globalisation. This transformation or shift in emphasis, has not entirely sat well with the needs of Indigenous adult learners. Studies show that Indigenous people are not gaining employment regardless of substantial fiscal intervention, nor are they responding to the training reform of extensive ‘up-skilling’ that is occurring at a national level. In fact, it has been noted that Aboriginal non-participation in mainstream VET and labour markets is a problem. Advocates of Indigenous training respond by claiming that it is in fact the system’s lack of relevance that is indeed the problem, as it disregards and neglects to understand the needs and aspirations of Indigenous peoples’s. This chapter has linked the testimonies of the Indigenous adult students studying at Esperance and Kalgoorlie and reflected on what can be categorised as providing a micro and macro scope of change.

At a micro level many Indigenous adult learners recognise that further education will provide for them the opportunities that will improve their social and economic conditions. As parents, many value a good education for their
children as the link to a life with greater prosperity and opportunity. While classes in the past may have been gradual and methodical, Wongi and Nyungar students were enrolling in large numbers and moving through the adult education system. This is no longer the case in Esperance and Kalgoorlie. Up until 1995, the student group has been constant. It consisted of both Nyungar and Wongi clans, groups of families ranging across several generations. The variable has been the introduction of a flexible style of delivery conducted in the competency based instruction style. Due to its inappropriateness, this variable resulted in the total demise of Indigenous learning in the CGEA, basic literacy and numeracy domain in Esperance and Kalgoorlie.

At a macro level, the changes to teaching imposed upon educators and the change to learning imposed upon students reflects an economic rationalist agenda. The societal, cultural, spiritual welfare of a community is secondary to the tangible returns resulting from increasing productivity and increasing markets to generate greater income. The parallelism for cognition has become competence while enlightenment has been reduced to efficiencies.

The future of Vocational Education and Training for Indigenous learners means more than training for work for money but for strategies to incorporate the uniqueness of Aboriginal culture and the right to preserve its differences. Alternate pathways that promote the development of education and training that is relevant and applicable to the particular places in which people live will provide the basis of sustainable local economies. Initiates that raise the living standards in their own communities with special emphasis for promoting
employment for the youth come through programs such as; employment
initiatives, Aboriginal enterprises, and CDEP to name a few.

Chapter Six will provide a general overview of the study and report back on the
current status of Indigenous Education and Training in Australia and will
reviews the implications of the research paper findings.
Chapter Six - Summary of the Study
Chapter Six – Summary of the Study

Introduction

While Chapter Five reviewed the eleven categories that emerged from the study by way of a micro and macro impact on Indigenous adult education, Chapter Six provides a conceptual perspective specific to the study sites of Esperance and Kalgoorlie. This chapter also revisits the two overarching themes (micro and macro) noted in Chapter Five. The chapter then briefly compares the learning needs that emerged from these sites with the existing flexible, self-paced, competency based training milieu, (a training milieu heavily reliant on convergent technologies, increasingly influenced by global trends) and contemplates the compatibility of these positions. Further, the claim that the current VET Competency-Based Training (CBT) style of delivery, grounded in behaviourist theory, is providing access and equity is questioned. The Chapter sums up the study reiterating what the learners at the study sites identified as relevant to enable them to facilitate their educational success. It is important that these changes occur in accordance with the aspirations and beliefs of adult Indigenous VET students so that a balance between the economical imperatives of government and culturally relevant goals can be achieved.
Implications of the Study

There is no one formula for the delivery of education and training for Indigenous students. In a world driven by global events and trendscompounded by informational technology, issues such as cross cultural transfer and appropriate learning strategies are seldom discussed. Yet in recent developments in informational technologies and the expanding potential for international practices, the issue of cultural neutrality comes up for discussion. In fact, concern about equity and access in education and training needs to be seen in the context of a wider concern about the relevance and cultural appropriateness of the learning.

From selected research conducted, some Indigenous students excel under the western paradigm while others need to be operating within their own cultural context to succeed. However, based on this study and the relevant examples incorporated in this paper, there is evidence to suggest that what students want and what they are getting are generally two different things. For example, the most noticeable aspect of the study at both sites within the microanalysis was that the students emphasised the need for learning within group settings. Initially the students approved of and wanted to experienced flexible learning but found later that they did not want to operate without specific direction, traditionally provided by the lecturer, reinforced by regular classes and a definite programme of outcomes to complete. The students put the submission very strongly that they wanted to learn altogether and not individually or in a self-paced mode. They
wanted to work through their studies collectively and share their learning and knowledge. This is not to say all Indigenous students feel this way. In fact a project titled *Flexible Delivery in Vocational Education and Training* conducted at Pundulmurra College in Western Australia in 1997 investigating the “Implications and Issued for Aboriginal Students and Communities” assert that, “It should be pointed out that not all Aboriginal people want or need to study as part of a group. These students move into and through the mainstream system as individuals—much as mainstream students do” (ANTA 1997:11). Nonetheless, for many urban and remote Indigenous people the emphasis tends to be on the wellbeing and needs of the group and not necessarily on the achievement of the individual. One way of ensuring this sanctioned method of learning is by maintaining the characteristics of the group therein delivering training in their own communities. Students from various locations in the project reported the importance of feeling comfortable with others whom they knew or whom they could relate to. Konai Helu Thaman (1998) in her paper *Equity in, and access to, what kind of education? Some issues for consideration in the Pacific Islands* also raises the point that Pacific Islanders traditionally learn from one another, through their interaction with each other as well as with their environments. However, the current method of learning in VET emphasizes the benefits of flexible learning as encouraging learners to proceed by themselves, rather than keeping with other learners.

Another important point emerging from the study was the move away from flexible styles including self-paced, individual and often competitive learning.
practices. Student's felt disappointed in their performance generally because flexible delivery styles provided too much freedom and choice and the students often did not satisfy their study commitments.

A further aspect to this entity was a desire to study within a formal face-to-face learning environment promoting close-at-hand teacher/student interaction. As described in the Pacific study, most islanders' request personal contact with teachers and tutors, despite attempts by instructional designers to make learning materials completely stand-alone. Consequently the notion of the learner who is independent of a teacher is a relatively difficult for islanders to appreciate.

Indigenous Australian society is no different. In fact, in the 1998 Research Report *Djama and VET, Exploring Partnerships and Practices in the Delivery of VET Courses in Rural and Remote Aboriginal Communities* (Arnott, Clark, Clarke, Dembski, Henry, Langton and Wells) the authors state that: "There is recurring evidence that VET providers and funding agencies often underestimate the importance of interpersonal relationships between themselves and their Aboriginal clients" (p. 56). They refer to the words of Tom Collis, experienced educator with Bachelor College, who claims that course coordinators need to spend a period of a few years establishing relationships to intimately understand the appropriate relationships between the parties involved.

This relationship between the teacher and learner is a crucial element in students success or otherwise. It can be contested that this element is even more important
that whether the curriculum is good or that the self-paced materials are more effective. Nonetheless, this is not advocating the return to a teacher-centered focus, rather the adoption of various flexible approaches that will help lower the barriers to participation by students who are often constrained by the inflexibilities of the conventional system. In fact, one of the outcomes of the Pundulmurra College report was that if students are to enjoy higher levels of flexibility and wide margins of tolerance where interrupted programs are revisited, there will be a need for substantial levels of support both at the institution and closer to the students’ home environment. As Burns suggests:

… despite the diversity of learning contexts, and learners, the problem of work and home constraints, of accessibility, any model must provide individualised communication sustained personal support and facilitate persistence. The climate of learning must be one of respect, support and safety that enable adults to maintain their sense of identity, status and power (1995:295).

VET reform that promotes flexible choices as a benefit to learners, in fact, the choice to choose where and how they learn and whichever provider suits their circumstances is well known. Indigenous people know where they want to learn, and that their learning is intrinsically linked to their land. As Rowse (1992), (Rose 1996) (cited in Arnott et al) believe:

“Linked to this perspective of land is a belief amongst Aboriginal people that they will have more control over the course development process if it is situated in their country. The training course, in such a setting, may be hard to differentiate from the other work-related actions of the community” (p.57).
Another factor in the reform to establish flexible delivery styles to assist the VET student is that learners can access a range of learning support services, which are known as ‘just in time’ learning provisions. To use this support structures the learner must be competent with the relevant convergent technology and must be prepared to pay for the service. Often in rural and isolated Indigenous communities’ access to reliable telecommunications is less than adequate, much less affordable. Thaman (1998) raises a pertinent point. In the Pacific, the issue of rural and isolated students affected by distance and geography has been partly conquered by the invention of modern technology.

Over the satellite we can be transported to any number of member countries without ever being in them. With new electronic media the traditional sense of place, normally emphasised by Pacific people is lost and an artificial sense of being is introduced. We are aware that such a loss of geographic centredness or ‘place’ is a feature of modernising cultures but in our region it may mean that some people can become disoriented because where people are physically will no longer determine who and where people are socially (1998:49).

The implication of this loss or artificial sense of ‘place’ becomes a significant issue to Indigenous islanders. The thrust to provide this technology as a tool to overcome distance was driven by a blind dominance of western educational models of teaching and learning. It appears that this invention was both insensitive and oblivious to other’s worldview on how such technology can in effect, impact significantly on people’s metaphysical lives.
Burns (1995) believes the origins of this dominant western model evolves from a mechanistic view of the world in which people are believed to be passive reactive robots who respond predictably and unthinkingly to stimulation. The rational for competency-based training is grounded in the behaviourist approach which attempts to explain learning within a scientific tradition. This ‘top-down’ approach to learning places the learner as subordinate to job performance objectives and the needs of the economy:

The CBT approach is essentially located in an empirical and analytic paradigm that assumes reality to be objective and that individuals and the world are separate. Knowledge involves objectively proven facts, and what cannot be legitimately quantified is not worth knowing. It is the dominant western scientific approach, exemplified in education and psychology as behaviourism (p.42).

Consequently as a methodology, CBT appears irrelevant to some Indigenous learners. Thaman believes that the continued dominance of a western model of teaching and learning has both directly and indirectly lead many Pacific Island people to think that the wisdom of their own cultures is worthless or at least irrelevant to modern education and training development:

Most school leavers will have learnt little that is of practical value to them in the contexts of their own societies. For example most will not know the uses let alone the names of their plants and animals, or how to fish or pursue agricultural practices-knowledge which once formed the basis for the subsistence affluence that gave many Oceanic societies their cultural and economic resilience (Fisk, 1972) and which may remain as the foundation for sustainable living in most Pacific societies throughout the 21st century. We cannot expect Pacific Islanders, as the international community does, to protect and conserve their environments, if they no longer understand them or are bent on destroying them for a quick dollar (pp.47).
There is no way of avoiding that CBT represents a systematic attempt to restructure learning around a set of principles that are fundamentally derived from economic pressures. These competency requirements are skills, which are viewed as capital, leading directly to economic benefits. This narrow perception of learning neglects to incorporate the underlying component of human potential. An alternative to this narrow, mechanistic view is an approach that recognises that people value and give personal meaning to their experiences, and that meaning grows from the way individuals interact with their world. Events can be interpreted in different ways by different people because they have different past experiences, characteristics and interests. Burns believes that if the reform continues to be based on the narrow CBT model, this may lead to a dangerous assumption that current unemployment is due to a lack of relevant skills and that once this situation is improved, jobs will be available:

This is a flagrant deception perpetrated on the unemployed. A training-lead recovery is very unlikely. Neither is there any validity in the assumption that more skills will lead to higher productivity. In any case, education reforms should lead not only to an economically richer nation, but also to one that is culturally enriched (1995:43).

As discussed at length in Chapter Five, if cultural attributes continue to be invalidated and ignored, any attempts to achieve higher rates of Indigenous employment through current training reform strategies (such as subsidies or by offering a full range of mainstream courses and qualifications) will be unlikely. This is due directly to the irrelevance of the training and its lack of accord with Indigenous peoples aspiration and needs. The most cost-effective strategy is to
provide education and training courses and programs that people actually want to do and in locations where people actually live. As Rowse (1992) has established, 'unemployment' is a western perspective and that perhaps in an Indigenous context this abundance of 'unemployed' labour time is one of the richest resources of a materially impoverished people.

It may be naive to claim that community-based education and training will provide deliver sustainability, however, both the recommendations from the project conducted at Pundulmurra College in 1997 and the Eight Principles from the Western Australian Department of Training Aboriginal Vocational Education and Training and Employment Policy (June 1999) closely reflect what the local students requested. For example that state training initiatives be culturally sensitive in relation to course content and delivery processes and that the formation of a working party occurs to establish the validity of more community learning centres in Aboriginal communities. The Western Australian principles include strategic priorities within the context of the aspirations, needs, and cultural and economic environments of Indigenous learners, that training priorities are identified by the community, and that there is an emphasis on the needs of people which include helping those with poor language, literacy and numeracy skills. Further, that the principles support self-determination with employment services to meet the identified community and local job market requirements to enhance community and economic development through enterprise initiatives. The investment in the development of local community economic initiatives, whilst
careful not to be seen as welfare programs, can generate a sense of enthusiasm. Rowse (1992) cautiously warns other studies (Ellanna 1988:259) have found that when community governments developed enterprises the effect was ‘divisive’ and not to assume coherent community support for local projects commercial or otherwise. A further aspect to consider, is the peculiar Indigenous sense of mutual reciprocal obligations signifying the matrix relationship between persons more than the relationship between things. In the final report of the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs Our Future Our Selves (August 1990) the committee recommended a call for more appropriate training. To paraphrase, that by doing so was recognising that it was setting up tensions, ambiguities and complementarities in the relationship between the norms of Aboriginal domain and those of the institutes of Australian colonial society. The committee noted the paradox, “It is ironic that Aboriginal communities are being asked to accept non-Aboriginal structures in order to have greater control over their own affairs” (1990b.25).

At this micro level as Freire (1987) claims, education is the way to enable adult illiterates to eventually reflect on their own understanding of themselves within their socio-cultural milieu. Therefore, education is not neutral but it can if fact facilitate freedom or maintain the acceptance of the status quo. According to Taylor and Hunter in their report The Job Still Ahead, economic cost of continuing Indigenous Employment Disparity, just to maintain the status quo an employment rate of 39 per cent and an unemployment rate of 26 per cent would require 25,000
extra jobs by the year 2006, whereas on current trends only 21,000 jobs are expected to be created. Further Taylor and Hunter believe if the projections based on the 1996 Census are accurate, the Indigenous population is likely to increase by two percent, twice the growth projected for the rest of the population. Factor in the increasingly aging population, the school to work, the prime working age group of Indigenous adults will be greater by 28 per cent in 2006. According to the Bureau of Statistics 1996 census, the average income for Indigenous adults was $14,200 compared to the average of $21,100 for the total population hence the incentive to work can be viewed as negligible. One of the best strategies to raise the wages for Indigenous workers is to improve their education outcomes. Hunter and Taylor advocate that education has a substantial direct impact on the employability of Indigenous Australians, unfortunately recent trends show that educational attainments actually declined relative to other Australians in the last decade (Gray, Hunter and Schwab 1998).

To link what is occurring in the national context to the local setting, there are now fewer Indigenous students studying at both of the research sites compared to the number that were enrolled in 1995-1997. As a consequence, the relevance of the current training paradigm for Indigenous adults must be critically reviewed.
Where to from here?

In finally drawing the study together, it becomes clear that this study is merely a thumb sketch of what is occurring in just one of many vocational training regions in Western Australia. Elsewhere, as this paper alludes, are many other Indigenous communities Australia-wide, all trying to make sense of their current experiences and all attempting to shape a secure future for their young people. As a result, the following generic points provide a broad overarching list of recommendations outlining what should occur if the future for Indigenous people is to change. This includes:

- In pragmatic terms, Indigenous people must be given time to learn. It's as simple as that.
- The development of culturally appropriate course content, delivery method and course design must occur in an appropriate timeframe.
- Decision making processes must occur about policy, planning, resources and delivery, carried out by Indigenous people in their own culturally appropriate way. This can possibly be achieved by employing a greater number of Indigenous people at all levels of administration and management.
- Indigenous training must occur where people live and want to live, with community based training staffed by Indigenous people.
- Indigenous training must become customised so that current ANTA strategies such as Training Packages provide culturally specific themes in a
culturally appropriate manner and relate to areas of extreme concern to
Indigenous people, for example, specific qualifications for Indigenous
Health Workers in the Health Training Package, Cultural Tour
qualifications under Tourism to name a few.

• That Indigenous people are apart of the development of these Training
Packages and courses, influencing the decisions about the provision of
training and assessment and services for local communities.

• Indigenous people are apart of the training framework establishing links
with industry and employment, for example increasing the number of New
Apprenticeships, ensuring CDEP programs provide accredited training, the
creation of more self-generated business and enterprise development
opportunities and increasing locally driven employment.

• That government agencies, factor into their programs that Indigenous
learning needs are distinctive. Indigenous people value learning in groups,
with family members or otherwise, they enjoy collaborative learning where
the focus is on the well being of the group and not necessarily on the
personal achievement of the individual. Further, that Indigenous people
support valuing, sharing and meeting the responsibilities of being
beholden, honouring ancestry obligations. That the daily/nightly activities
of the wider Indigenous community impacts greatly on the operations (or
lack of operations) within the learning environment. Having knowledge of
what is occurring is paramount to what learning eventually takes place.
• That Indigenous student want to learn from people who are authentic and sensitive to their needs and who have a sound knowledge of the underpinnings of their culture.

• Finally, that research is ongoing into the issues raised in this study and the myriad of other published reports, with Indigenous people being vigorously engaged in that research. If governments are unable to arrest and then reverse the untenable conditions experiences by Indigenous people, then assistance will have to come from the private and philanthropic sectors of the community.

Chapter Summary

In summary, this study provided a voice for the Indigenous adult CGEA students at Esperance and Kalgoorlie to tell of their experiences during the time of transition from a small enclave consisting of an inter-generational clan of several families to a flexible, outcomes based, self-paced learning centre. The student’s testimonies provided responses that could be categorised into a micro and microanalysis denoting what was considered as their preferences to learning. The overarching microanalysis focussed on such elements as the students’ preference to learn in a group setting. Many Indigenous people acknowledged that not all students needed to learn in this manner however at Esperance and Kalgoorlie the group format was the most favoured. Further that at a macro level of analysis students indicated the need for authentic sustained, teaching and personal support as self-paced resources tend to be designed as stand alone individual packets of
discrete outcomes. These discrete outcomes, based on the mechanical behaviourist
approach, of the competency based training paradigm, are in most part incongruent
to Aboriginal epistemology.

Finally, as several studies on Indigenous communities reported, community-based
education and training will enable students to study locally to improve their
conditions. This access to new skills may lead to a desire to have greater control
over their life choices, or to seek the provision of opportunities for training, skills
and jobs which best reflect their aspirations, needs, cultural and economic
environments. One way to achieve these key objectives is by setting up economic
enterprise initiatives within their own communities emphasising appropriate
education and training shifting direction towards improved community well being.
With these structures in place, perhaps the next generation of community members
will have greater capacity in all dimensions of their lives, in a manner most
appropriate, than what has occurred in the past.

As Professor Richard Johnson prophetically stated at the 1990 AAACE National
conference:

I think that within the next ten years there is very likely to be a backlash
against an almost exclusive concentration on economic values and
outcomes. Humans are spiritual beings. We do value quality of life and
personal growth and emotional and intellectual development. Economic
security is a necessity, but it is not a good in itself; it is good because it
enables other things to happen, and I expect there will be a renewed quest
for those “other things”-the things which have been the traditional concerns
of adult educators (pp. 95).
Appendix A

Figure 1 – Interview Schedule

Questions to the Students

Question 1: Do you like learning in a group within the classroom or do you like to see the lecturer by yourself and work on your own program?

Question 2: Do you prefer the lecturer to tell you about the topic or do you like to find the information for yourself, for example in the library or with a friend?

Question 3: Do you like the idea of a tutorial?

Question 4: Do you prefer for there to be structured classes every day or do you like when its flexible and you don’t have to come in everyday?

Question 5: Do you prefer to have one big assignment at the end of a unit or do you prefer to have lots of smaller assessments to do throughout the module?

Question 6: Do you think it was easier to understand what you have to do to pass with the old way structured class rather than with the flexible class?

Question 7: Do you understand where you are up to in your studies and do you have a clear idea what you need to do next to complete the course?

Question 8: Did you enjoy attending classes when attendance was compulsory?

Question 9: If you did not attend what were some of the reasons for this?

Question 10: Do you prefer to learn with just Aboriginal students or do you like having other cultural groups studying with you?

Question 11: Does it make you try harder or do you feel more competitive than before when it was an enclave?

Question 12: If you could make changes to the way you are being taught what changes would you make and why?

Question 13: Why do you study, what is it that you want to achieve?

Question 14: Are you supported by your community, partner and children in your return to learning?

Question 15: Have they noticed any change in you?
Figure 2 - Student Questionnaire

Questionnaire for Students of Flexible Delivery Mode Certificate Level Studies

Esperance Tertiary Education Centre and Kalgoorlie Campus of Curtin University of Technology

My name is Helen McCarthy, I am a lecturer at the Esperance Tertiary Education Centre on leave to complete my studies in the Master of Education program.

My research is looking at the way in which Aboriginal adult students are learning.

I am interested in finding out if students prefer to study where the timetable is fixed and classes happen every date or if students prefer flexible times and days.

I am also interested in finding out if students like to learn by individual self paced workbooks or if they like teachers presenting information to them.

Would you consider filling out this questionnaire?

Please circle the answers

Campus ....................
Age ............ Gender Female Male

1. Do you like learning in a group within the classroom or do you like to see the lecturer by yourself and work on your own program?

2. Do you prefer the lecturer to tell you about the topic or do you like to find the information for yourself, for example in the library or with a friend?

3. Do you prefer for there to be structured classes everyday or do you like when it’s flexible and you don’t have to come in everyday.
4. Do you prefer to have one big assignment at the end of a unit or do you prefer to have lots of smaller assessments to do throughout the module?

5. Do you think it was easier to understand what you have to do to pass with the structured class in 1993 rather than with flexible class in 1997?

6. Do you understand where you are up to in your studies and do you have a clear idea what you need to do next to complete the course?

7. Did you enjoy attending classes when attendance was compulsory?

8. If you did not attend what were some of the reasons for this?
9  Do your prefer to learn with just Aboriginal students or do you like having other cultural groups studying with you?

10  If you could make changes to the way you are being taught what changes would you make and why?

11  Why do you study?

12  What do you want to achieve in the future?

Thank you for your time and cooperation
Random Questionnaire Results shown in Table and Graphical form

Issues arising from Esperance/Kalgoorlie Aboriginal Adult students in CGEA Flexible Delivery Mode

**Figure 3 - Lecturer instigated tutorial/individual self paced program**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Method</th>
<th>Number of Students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lecturer</td>
<td>15/31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Both Lecturer and Self</td>
<td>5/31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self Instigated Learning</td>
<td>7/31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Response</td>
<td>4/31</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 4 - Mode of delivery**

**Mode of delivery**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Delivery Model</th>
<th>Number of Students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Flexible</td>
<td>18/31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flexible with structure - tutorial</td>
<td>6/31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Structured times and timetable</td>
<td>6/31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No response</td>
<td>1/31</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 5 - Frequency of Assessments

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Assessment</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Smaller assessments</td>
<td>23/31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One big assessment</td>
<td>7/31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No response</td>
<td>1/31</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 6 - Learning within:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Environment</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aboriginal enclave</td>
<td>6/31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>With other cultural groups</td>
<td>21/31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doesn’t matter</td>
<td>2/31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No response</td>
<td>2/31</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 7 - Random Responses to Questions 10

If you could make changes to the way you are being taught what would they be?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Text</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Response 1</td>
<td>&quot;I don't think any changes&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Response 2</td>
<td>&quot;Bring in more information to the text&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Response 3</td>
<td>&quot;Students to be punctual and more responsible for themselves&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Response 12</td>
<td>&quot;Teachers need to spend more time with students&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E5:61:2887</td>
<td>&quot;I like the old ways when just only all Aboriginals were in and I like the flex time too&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E4:59:2765</td>
<td>&quot;Its all good&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E7:65:3074</td>
<td>&quot;Nothing really. I like the way it is being put out now. More in a group than individually. You get ideas off other people. Can't really add much more. It's pretty good the way it's been set out&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E2:53:2502</td>
<td>&quot;I don't think any changes&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E1:51:2388</td>
<td>&quot;I like the system here, how it is. I wouldn't change anything how we are taught&quot; The lecturers are here with a structure in place to teach you that way...&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E8:68:3209</td>
<td>&quot;Like a trip or something I suppose I would like to see that happen.....&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E9:70:3335</td>
<td>&quot;None at the moment. I am happy with how the system is working for me&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K1:73:3467</td>
<td>&quot;Well I'm not real good - English is the main thing I am very good at... but I want to learn how to refresh my memory because it is that long ago since I did it - thirty five odd years now...&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K4:81:3950</td>
<td>&quot;Have to have a lecturer always there to help because now they are always in the room there talking and you have to ask things and they are in the middle of a conversation. You, have go back to your desk and you are waiting&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K5:85:4103</td>
<td>&quot;Definitely teachers. We have got to have teachers who have got the patience to sit with you and like a one on one basis sort of thing. Explain things in a lot simpler ways so you can understand. They can explain it their way&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K6:91:4411</td>
<td>&quot;They have got some good teachers but some are too slack where if they pushed the students a bit harder and showed more keenness on their side they will get results&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Response 14</td>
<td>&quot;More outdoor sessions especially on fine days, culturally appropriate ice breakers involving students more actively regularly and the last ten to fifteen minutes of day&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K7:93:4532</td>
<td>&quot;Nothing I would like them to do&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Response 1</td>
<td>&quot;I would have mixed races so we all might learn a lot more&quot;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Figure 8 – Random Responses to Question 11**

**Why do you study?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Text</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>“To learn new things”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>“Something to do and when you’re doing it you’re getting something out of it”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>“To improve myself by being educated and to be able to do what others do in society”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>“To learn more what we couldn’t do in high school and to help with any future jobs I might apply for”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>“To gain knowledge. Understanding”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>“Self satisfaction. To be better equipped in life’s journey. To gain knowledge. It’s an English country we need to adapt to the changes”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>“Well basically because I have to. I never got my Year 10 and that’s always played on my mind because everything did, tried to do, I couldn’t do it without it. So my main aim was to go back to get my Year 10 Leaving Certificate because I have to look for employment because xxxx can’t work. So I have to do it. I feel really angry with myself because I have taken so long to do it and problems I have had in between doing it. It has cut my education out a lot”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>“Because I missed out on a lot when I was young so I had to go back to study”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>“To try and further my education because when I was younger I only went to year 8 and I had a problem, not so much writing, but spelling and that so I thought I would go back and try and do a bit of work on that. Maybe employment further down the line.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>“Something to do. Get my brain functioning again I suppose”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>“To catch up on what I missed out in high school”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>“To get better learning”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>“I wanted to finish off some things that I didn’t learn”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>“So that I have got qualifications for a job and to improve myself. It has given me self esteem just doing things for myself but mainly because I can’t get a job and I can’t teach my children their maths or anything at home when I don’t know it myself. That’s why I study, so I can teach my kids”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>“Because I want to learn, to better myself”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>“Well it’s something to do”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>“Better opportunities. Further my education. Putting an example towards my children”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>“Get a better education”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>“Well I want to learn my English a lot more but that’s the point. I am not getting anywhere. I want to learn how to spell and how to write properly and go back to the basics of English. Like the “their, there”, what they mean and things like that you know. But, not getting anywhere”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>“For my own sake. To try and keep up with the times and I don’t want to get left behind especially with computers and that, you know”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>“To learn. Get a job”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Helen C D McCarthy
**Table 1**

**Student Data**

| Prefer learning taking place in groups (A) | 21/31 |
| Prefer learning in self-pace mode (B)     | 06/31 |
| Combination of both styles (A & B)        | 02/31 |
| Prefer face-to-face with lecturer directed learning | 15/31 |
| Prefer self-directed learning with no lecturer | 07/31 |
| Prefer all flexible modes of delivery      | 18/31* |
| Prefer compulsory attendance of students  | 18/31* |
| Prefer competency based assessments (formative and summative) | 23/31 |
| Prefer assessment on completion of the module (summative) | 07/31 |
| Prefer to learn in an integrated environment | 21/31 |
| Prefer to learn only with Indigenous students | 06/31 |
| Returned to study specifically to gain employment | 07/31 |
| Returned to study specifically to ‘catch up’ on their education | 24/31 |

*Disparity existed.*
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