Chelas, Ansars and Acolytes: Becoming a teacher in, and for, a remote and culturally diverse community

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Firstly I need to acknowledge and thank the main participants Zaiton, Mei Zhu and Emma. This study is about them, their journey and their struggles. On top of the enormous effort they put in to their own studies, working lives and family and community responsibilities, they made time for my study and me. For many years they shared with me their very personal stories and allowed me to be a part of their rich lives.

I must also acknowledge the many people who supported the participants in their goal. Teachers, academics, other school staff, members of the community, the UCIW and in particular those who became their mentors Greta, Jen and Eileen who gave so much of themselves to help make it all possible.
I declare that this thesis is my own account of my research and contains as its main content work which has not previously been submitted for a degree in any tertiary education institution.

Anne Elizabeth Price
Abstract

This study examines the way in which three Education Assistants (EAs) engaged with an Initial Teacher Education (ITE) program at an Australian Higher Education Institution (HEI). In order to assist the EAs to engage with the ITE program the school in which they worked developed a series of intervention strategies. These strategies combined to form what became known as the Christmas Island District High School (CIDHS) Trainee Teacher Program. Through this program the EAs were provided support in the various critical aspects of the ITE program.

Within an Australian context the EAs were from non-mainstream backgrounds. They were mature age women who had disrupted educational backgrounds, spoke English as a second language, and were living in a geographically remote location. Their journey from ‘Education Assistant’ to ‘Teacher’, via an ITE program and with the support of the school, is the subject of this inquiry.

A grounded qualitative research methodology is used to investigate and analyse the participation of the EAs from their points of view. The personal and grounded experiences of the participants in this study are then supplemented by a review of the international literature pertaining to non-mainstream participation in Higher Education.

Specifically, the study examines significant aspects of an ITE program including:

- Entrance via alternative access programs
- Engagement with course theory and school practicums
- Recognition for Prior Learning (RPL)
- The implications of studying via distance mode
- The role of mentors
- The impact of funding structures and fees on non-mainstream students
As well as the pragmatic aspects of the program, this study also examines the critical impact that various Discourses (Gee, 1999), and the ideologies that underpin them, had on the ability of the participants to successfully make the transition from Education Assistant to Teacher.

The dissertation ends with a series of recommendations for action for the HEI sector, schools sectors and regulatory authorities. The aims are to add to the international literature on non-mainstream participation in ITE and to aid in the development of ITE programs that better address the needs of non-mainstream students.
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Chapter 1  Introduction to the Study

1  Introduction

In 2002, Christmas Island District High School (CIDHS) won the Western Australian Department of Education Award for Equity and Diversity in the Workforce. The award was presented for the Trainee Teacher Program the school had developed to assist three Education Assistants (EAs) from non-mainstream backgrounds to retrain to become teachers\(^1\).

Equity and diversity in the workforce have been both a State and Federal Government priority (at least in rhetoric) in Australia for several decades and a series of programs and policies have been developed to aid in the implementation of this priority. Examples of these include the Western Australian Department of Education’s Aboriginal Employment and Career Action Plan 2002-2004 and its Equity and Diversity Management Plan 2002-2005 (Department of Education, 2002). Strategies to facilitate the recruitment and promotion of people from non-mainstream backgrounds into professional positions within the public service and the education sector have included:

\begin{itemize}
  \item More flexible entry pathways to Higher Education Institutions (HEIs)
  \item Greater accreditation for skills learned outside formal education institutions
  \item Quotas for equity groups in employment, education and training
  \item Increased access to education and training via external studies
  \item ‘On the job’ training programs
\end{itemize}

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\(^1\) There are many terms used internationally such as ‘people of colour’, ‘ethnic minorities’, ‘minorities’, or class based definitions – such as working class to describe people who do not have the dominant political, social or economic power in a society. These terms did not fit this context or scenario. While it is recognised that the term ‘non-mainstream’ has certain negative connotations for some because it has the tendency to signal those who wear the label as ‘not normal’, in this case, it serves to highlight that the people in this study do not belong to a dominant socio cultural, economic, political or historical power group within the context in which the study is set. Importantly, it is also a term that serves to represent those people who don’t have power but who are not minorities – in particular women.
Workplace mentoring schemes

It was both within the macro framework of Australian Government policy and within the micro context of an isolated and culturally diverse community with a history of colonialist attitudes and practices that this study is set. It is within this context that the School’s administration team, led by the researcher, embarked upon a program to actively support the retraining of three local Christmas Island EAs to become qualified teachers. The case study of this emerging Trainee Teacher Program, with its unique context at CIDHS, forms the basis of this research.

2 The Aims of the Study

The principle aim of this study is to examine the extent to which a traditional Initial Teacher Education (ITE) program, coupled with a school-initiated Teacher Trainee Programme, is able to meet the needs of people from non-mainstream educational and cultural backgrounds.

In order to do this, a variety of research methodologies and tools were used to clearly identify what field theorists (Lewin, 1952) refer to as the “Driving” and “Restraining” forces that, from the participants’ points of view, impacted on their successful engagement with the course. A further aim, in keeping with the practical and applied nature of this Doctoral research, is to use the evidence gained both through this case study and a review of the international literature on Initial Teacher Education, to develop recommendations for future ITE programs to better accommodate the cultural, personal and educational needs of non-mainstream students.

2 The term Initial Teacher Education (ITE) is used in this research as a generic term for programs aimed at preparing students for the teaching profession. Other terms commonly found in the literature include Initial Teacher Training (ITT), Pre-service Teacher Education (PTE) or Graduate Teacher Programs (GTP).
3 The Approaches Used in the Study

A case study approach, primarily informed by qualitative theories, was used to gather and analyse the data (see Chapter 2). The use of a qualitative case study approach ensured that the research design was flexible enough for the use of a variety of research tools to meet the emerging nature of the program, the intercultural context and the changing needs, skills and attitudes of the participants. A grounded research methodological approach was used initially, to gather the data (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). This method was chosen to both enable a range of diverse factors to emerge from the context and to minimise the impact of the researcher’s limited and Anglo-Celtic world-view from potentially screening any significant factors with respect to this study.

As the data were gathered, it was analysed using a Discourse methodology (Gee, 1999). This methodology, which is explained further in Chapter 2, was used to examine the extent to which dominant Discourses such as those within the HEI, the School and the neo-colonialist socio-political context of Christmas Island were impacting on the ability of the participants to successfully engage with the course. A Field Theory approach (Lewin, 1952) was used as a tool to further analyse and conceptualise the data and to clearly identify those factors that were acting as “Driving” and/or “Restraining” forces on the EAs’ engagement with the ITE program.

In keeping with grounded theory principles a literature review was conducted at the end of the case study research and is discussed in Chapter 9. One of the aims of the research is to identify the factors impacting on the EAs’ engagement with the ITE program from their point of view. The researcher did not want to unduly interfere in this process by bringing in experiences from elsewhere which may not have suited the participants or the context. This was an ethical choice, which may on the surface appear to have denied the EAs access to ways to improve their engagement with the course through
exposure to knowledge of other practices. At a deeper level, however, it aimed to avoid the researcher imposing practices that she believed, from her point of view and based on her academic research, may have worked better.

The purpose of using a grounded theory and socio-cultural Discourse approach in this case study was, therefore, to enable the voices of the participants to be heard. It is only through their voices, personal experiences, life spaces and ways of seeing things that a more trustworthy understanding of the factors that impacted on their engagement with an ITE course can be gained.

4 How the Study Emerged

This research focuses on an emerging Trainee Teacher Program at Christmas Island DHS between 2000 and 2004. It formed part of a Doctorate in Education Degree being undertaken by a classroom teacher at the school. Prior to this study, the teacher had completed a Master’s degree focusing on the development of a more culturally inclusive pedagogical paradigm for CIDHS.

This study follows on from some of the findings of the earlier Master’s research, which recommended, among other things, that the school provide a range of professional development options for the EAs including, for some, the possibility of retraining to become teachers (Price, 1998, p.162). These recommendations were informed by a review of the international research regarding multicultural education and the education of non-mainstream students. This research strongly suggests that students benefit in a number of significant ways from having teachers with similar linguistic and cultural backgrounds (Price, 1998, p.13).

During the course of the previous study, the teacher/researcher gained a merit selection promotion to become the Deputy Principal. This promotion, to Deputy Principal and a
member of the school’s administration team, was critical in enabling her to play a more
direct role in the development of the program.

5 The Participants

Key participants in this study include the three EAs, their mentors, co-operating
老师们, the school administration, HEI staff and the researcher. In this study, the
voices of the EAs are, as much as possible, kept as direct quotations and are signalled to
the reader by the use of single-spaced, indented and italicised paragraphs. Maintaining
their voices in this way is in keeping with one of the major principles informing this
research, that different world-views and the way people construct themselves is
reflected in the way they speak, think and act.

Many of the participants in the study use non-standard varieties of English such as
Singapore English, Malaysian English or what may be described as a regional variety of
these, Christmas Island English. There has been no attempt to alter any of the surface or
grammatical features of the language to make it more like Standard Australian English.
The variety of English used by the participants has been purposefully left to highlight to
the reader how their voices are representative of their views of themselves and the
world. To maintain their anonymity, all participants have been given a pseudonym.

As Deputy Principal, mentor, program coordinator, advocate, lobbyist, friend and
academic researcher, the researcher’s role has been crucial to the development of the
program and forms an integral part of the study. Her actions, in various roles, are
recorded as part of the study. She is ‘heard’ in a number of ways within the study. For
the most part she is “the researcher” and as such positions herself as objectively as she
is able given the nature and the context of this research. In sections of the dissertation,
however, her voice is signalled by the use of single-spaced, indented italics with the
nomenclature ‘Researcher’ attached. Also, in Chapter 7, in keeping with socio-cultural
and Discourse principles which highlight the importance of enabling participants to speak for themselves, using their own Discourses and ways of viewing the world, the researcher speaks using first person. This is done to convey to the reader the researcher’s personal experiences of, and roles within the study.

Where documents or academic texts (other important ‘voices’) have been quoted, these are indented and single-spaced using a plain text font.

6 The Layout of the Study

The study is set out in keeping with theoretical and philosophical principles that underpin it. Firstly, the methodology and theoretical foundations of the study are clearly articulated to the reader in Chapter 2. Then in Chapter 3, the physical, historical, and socio-political context is described and analysed. Chapter 4 introduces the reader to the main characters in the story – the EAs. In Chapter 5, 6 and 7 the various roles and discourses of the HEI, the mentors and the researcher are analysed.

From the emerging data and analysis, a field theory approach is used in Chapter 8 to identify the various “Driving” and “Restraining” forces that have impacted on the EAs’ goal of achieving a Bachelor of Education (B Ed) and becoming qualified teachers. Chapter 9 examines some of the international literature on ITE programs for non-mainstream students. The Field Force Analysis and the Literature Review then inform the final chapter, Chapter 10, which articulates the researcher’s recommendations for further action and future programs. Appendices include examples of the data collection phase of this research, together with other significant documents used throughout the study.
7 Conclusion

The aim of this research is to inform current theory and practice in the development of ITE programs for people from non-mainstream backgrounds. Not only will this serve to help redress the current inequitable imbalance in the number of students from non-mainstream backgrounds taking up their rightful places in HEIs, it may also help to overcome the cultural hegemony of mainstream teachers that currently exists in the majority of schools.

If this is the case, it is possible that in the future non-mainstream students may, like their mainstream counterparts, find a familiar face, with a familiar language and culture facilitating their learning in the classroom. In the long run this may help to break down the prevalence of narrowly focused dominant discourses that prevail in schools and provide better and more equitable educational opportunities for the rapidly growing number of students, who come from less dominant and non-mainstream educational and socio-cultural backgrounds.
Chapter 2    Research Methodology

1 Introduction

Broadly speaking, this research used a qualitative, case study approach to develop an in-depth understanding of the way in which non-mainstream students engaged with an ITE program at a mainland Australian HEI. Grounded Theory (Glaser and Strauss, 1967) informed the initial data collection methods and techniques. Later conceptualisation and analysis techniques drew upon Kurt Lewin’s Field Theory (Lewin, 1952) and James Gee’s Discourse Theory (Gee, 1999). Principles of phenomenology were used to develop understandings about the course from the points of view of the major participants in the study. Complementing this, heuristic principles were used to explain and justify the inclusion of the researcher’s insights as a significant participant-observer in this study.

The major philosophical framework underpinning this research was drawn from Interpretive and Socio-cultural traditions. Within this framework it is assumed that the way the world is organised is a social construction and that socio-cultural and political contexts play a significant role in informing the way people both understand the world and interact within it. It is assumed that through language and interaction with others, people develop shared, although often unconscious, understandings and beliefs about the way the world is or might be. Many of these beliefs and understandings are passed on through history in families and communities. Gee (1999) refers to these as the big “C” Conversations that take place in societies. Importantly, these Conversations can play a significant role in the way power and resources are distributed in a community and therefore impact on equity and social justice. With the use of the appropriate techniques, social research can help to uncover the beliefs and understandings implicit
in these Conversations and the impact they have on the distribution of power, status and resources.

One of the central aims of this study, as outlined in Chapter 1, was to examine the factors that have impacted on the EAs’ engagement with an ITE program, from their point of view. The study also examines the points of view of ‘significant others’ including the mentors, the School’s administration team, cooperating teachers involved in school practicum, various HEI staff and the researcher. It was assumed that examining the ITE program from the point of view of those actively involved in it would provide more in depth and trustworthy data about the program as it occurred in this context.

Qualitative methods best suit this type of evaluation of the course. As Patton puts it:

If program implementation is characterized by adaptation to local conditions, needs and interests, then the methods used to study implementation must be open ended, discovery oriented, and capable of describing developmental processes and program changes. Qualitative methods are ideally suited to describing such program implementation.


Furthermore, qualitative methods were useful for examining the difference between what Argyris (Patton 1990, p.107) describes as ‘espoused theories’ and ‘theories – in – use’. This is the difference between what policies are meant to do and what actually happens. The qualitative research methods used in this study, including ‘rich quotes’ gained from open-ended interviews and field notes from direct observation, enabled the researcher to reveal ‘theory-in-use’ or what actually is happening rather than ‘espoused theory’.

Another significant aim of the study was to establish a set of recommendations that can inform the development of ITE programs to best meet the needs of students from non-mainstream backgrounds. Thus, the research had a practical application. It was motivated, not only by the desire to discover new knowledge, but to apply this
knowledge to actively change a social situation for the long-term benefit of the local and hopefully wider community.

The purpose of this type of inquiry, according to Neuman (2003, p.81), is to help people to change conditions and build a better world. In order to accomplish this, researchers conduct research to critique and transform social relations. This is done by revealing, through research, the underlying sources of social relations and empowering people with this knowledge. This research is therefore “action oriented”, reflexive and is necessarily political (Bourdieu in Neuman, 2003, p. 81). Problems, injustices and falsehoods are intentionally raised and critiqued for the specific objective of transforming existing social relations that are considered to be inequitable. Kincheloe and McLaren (in Neuman, 2003, p. 82) described such critical research in the following way:

Critical research can best be understood in the context of empowerment of individuals. Inquiry that aspires to the name of critical must be connected to an attempt to confront the injustice of a particular society or sphere within society. Research thus becomes a transformative endeavour unembarrassed by the label ‘political’ and unafraid to consummate a relationship with an emancipatory consciousness.

The aim of this case study was to provide a blue print for modification or redesign of ITE programs so as to improve the entrance and retention rates of non-mainstream students and thus increase the numbers of non-mainstream teachers in schools. This was not simply a matter of highlighting issues of institutionalised and other more subtle forms of discrimination within ITE programs but also to improve educational outcomes for non-mainstream students (Cummins 1989, Becket, 1998, Lock, 1993) and to address broader issues related to the distribution of power and knowledge in society.

The methods and techniques used to conduct this research were informed by several theoretical and philosophical orientations, which, in keeping with their own inherent principles, are made explicit in the following sections.
2 Theoretical Orientations

This research has used inductive enquiry methods, rather than those associated with a logico-deductive tradition. In the deductive tradition, a theory is developed by the researcher prior to the research being undertaken and is then tested in the field whereas in inductive inquiry, as in this research, theory is generated from the data and in context, as it emerges during the course of the study.

An inductive methodology was the most appropriate choice because of the socio-cultural assumptions that guide this study and because of its colonialist and neocolonialist context. It is assumed, for example, that people in this study have differing worldviews, values and beliefs and these views are developed in response to, and as a result of, their socio-economic, political and cultural life experiences. Only through the use of an inductive methodology could the views of the non-mainstream participants be heard and more importantly valued and respected as legitimate. These voices are likely to be different from that of the researcher and others informed by dominant Discourses because of their different “social positioning” (Bourdieu, 1990). As Blumer, in Patton (1990, p. 67) suggests:

The task of scientific study is to lift the veils that cover the area of group life that one proposes to study. The veils, are not lifted by substituting, in whatever degree, pre-formed images for first-hand knowledge. The veils are lifted by getting closer to the area and by digging deep into it through careful study. Schemes of methodology that do not encourage or allow this betray the cardinal principles of respecting the nature of one’s empirical world.

Within the general framework of ‘inductive research’ there are many variations (Patton, 1990, pp. 64-91). The style that a researcher chooses to adopt depends largely on the sorts of issues or problems that are being investigated. This research borrows ideas and techniques from a number of these traditions including Ethnography, which is an inductive approach that focuses mainly on the culture of the people involved in a study. It also draws on Phenomenology, which looks at how different people perceive and
experience a given phenomenon and Heuristic inquiry, which asks how the researcher experiences the phenomenon.

A phenomenological approach is being used in this study to gather data on the way the participants experience the program in this particular context. To quote Patton (1990, p. 37):

This form of inquiry uses qualitative and naturalistic approaches to inductively and holistically understand human experiences in context-specific settings.

Methods broadly associated with a Socio-cultural / Discourse theoretical framework (Gee, 1999) are used to place such experiences within their broader socio-cultural and political context. Within this framework it is assumed that through careful analysis of language and its supporting features the underlying political forces that impact on the distribution of wealth and power in a society can be revealed. Within this tradition, researchers use techniques to enable them to better understand the real power relationships that lie behind surface level structures. Once these underlying structures are understood and acknowledged people can begin to change the conditions on which their society is organised.

Socio-cultural theorists are action oriented and optimistic in the sense that they believe that it is possible for people to change their social realities but that often they are constrained by material conditions, cultural contexts or social myths that prevent them seeing alternative ways of being. As Gee (1999, p.8) contends in relation to studies of language use within this tradition:

A D/discourse analysis must have a point. We are not interested in simply describing the data so that we can admire the intricacy of language, though this is, indeed, admirable. Rather we are interested, beyond description in two things: illuminating and gaining evidence for our theory of the domain, a theory that helps to explain how and why language works the way it does when it is put into action; and contributing in terms of understanding and intervention, to important issues and problems in some “applied” area (e.g. education) that interests and motivates the researcher.
According to Neuman (2003, p. 84):

A full critical science explanation demystifies illusion, describes the underlying structure of conditions, explains how change can be achieved, and provides a vision of a possible future. Critical theory does more than describe the unseen mechanisms that account for observable reality; it also critiques conditions and implies a plan of change.

Neuman (2003, p.85) also states that:

Critical theory seeks to provide people with a resource that will help them understand and change their world.

A heuristic approach is used in this study to make explicit the researcher’s own perspectives and her integral role in the development of the Trainee Teacher Program. Acknowledgement of the researcher’s voice (as teacher, administrator, post graduate student) as legitimate knowledge, fits within new and expanded notions of what constitutes valid knowledge in public discourses (Gitlin, Peck, Aposhian, Hadley and Porter, 2002, para. 2). It is also crucial in gaining an understanding of how the EAs engaged with the ITE program through the Trainee Teacher Program at Christmas Island District High School. Socio-cultural / Discourse analysis techniques are then used to go beyond this interpretive research to place the human interactions, meanings and institutions found in this study within their broader social, historical and political context.

As well as explaining and analysing the factors that impact on the EAs’ engagement with the ITE course, this research seeks to draw data from the international literature on non-mainstream education and ITE courses elsewhere. This will help to inform the development of a set of recommendations for ITE courses to best suit the needs of non-mainstream students. This approach is in keeping with the grounded methodology used and aspects of critical theory that, according to Neuman (2003, p. 85), aims to build theory as it “grows and interacts with the world it tries to explain”.
A range of qualitative methods are therefore used in this study in order to elicit from the participants’ points of view what they consider to be the most significant factors impacting on their engagement with the ITE course. Discourse theory is used to understand and contextualise these personal accounts within the broader colonialist and neo-colonialist socio-political environment in which this study is set. These theories and techniques are outlined below.

3 Qualitative Research Methods

3.1 Grounded Theory
The research began by using the Grounded Theory approach to gather data that was first developed and widely articulated by Glaser and Strauss in the 1960s (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). As the name suggests ‘Grounded’ methodology is inductive rather than deductive as theory is meant to emerge from the data as it is gathered in the field. The choice of this approach was very much in keeping with the central aim of the research, which was to find out from the participants’ point of view what factors were most significant to them.

According to Glaser and Strauss, the grounded researcher should enter the field only with a hunch. He or she goes into the field alert to the sort of factors that may be significant but open to those that may not have been anticipated (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). A variety of research strategies are then used to gather data that closely reflect what is going on in the field. These generally, but not exclusively, include qualitative methods such as open-ended interviews and participant observation.

As themes or factors begin to emerge from interviews and observations, the researcher then works with the participants to define and categorise the data and to develop an understanding of possible relationships between the factors. From this process the researcher is then able to produce hypotheses about the phenomenon under study.
Gradually the hypotheses can be related and ranked into a simplified model. Thus, a theory develops from the data gathered. Emphasis is placed on ensuring that the theory fits the data and reflects what is going on, from the point of view of the participants in the study (Kellehear, 1993, p. 38). To this end, a Grounded Theory approach was used in this research in order to remain as much as possible faithful to the evidence. Another reason for using a Grounded approach was to minimise the impact of the researcher’s cultural frame of reference. To enter the field with a preconceived and therefore limited set of factors to be tested creates the potential for the researcher to miss what may be the most crucial or significant factors impacting on the phenomenon. These factors may be completely outside the visionary landscape of the researcher. As Kellehear (1993, p. 22) puts it:

Grounded Theory seeks to develop explanation from ideas and experiences suggested by the social system itself rather than simply from the academic’s discourse.

In keeping with the Grounded approach a literature review of other experiences and models was not conducted until the end of the study. Once again this was in order to allow factors to emerge naturally in the field rather than being imposed based on the researcher’s academically derived “knowledge”. Within the broad framework of Grounded Theory, a Case Study approach was used in this research. This approach is also in keeping with the fundamental aims and philosophical principles of this research.

3.2 A Case Study Approach
Burns (2000, p. 459) refers to the term Case Study as a “catch all category” or a “portmanteau” for a range of research methods. One common factor is that they all have a focus on a particular situation or “case”, or what Burns (2000, p. 460) calls a “bounded system”.

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While case studies focus on one particular bounded group or individual, almost any form of research can be conducted within this single entity or case study framework. Burns (2000, p. 460), for example, maintains that case study research can be either qualitative or quantitative or a combination of both. Most, however, use qualitative methods. Burns (2000, pp. 459 – 460) goes on to say that case studies can be “simple and specific” or “complex and abstract”, and that they can be either “very representative or extremely atypical”. Merriam (1988, p 37) also points out that whilst some case study advocates (eg Burns and Yin, 1994, pp. 63-64)) have attempted to establish a “Case Study Protocol”, that in fact, “There are no set procedures or protocols that one follows step by step”. This according to Merriam (1988, p37):

Allows the researcher to adapt to unforeseen events (or information) and change direction in the pursuit of meaning.

Despite their apparent lack of design protocols, some researchers have the view that case studies are particularly appropriate for certain types of research. Merriam (1988, p. 21), for example, describes a case study as, “an intensive, holistic description and analysis of a single…phenomenon…”. Their general characteristics according to Merriam (1988, p. 21) are that they are, “particularistic, descriptive, heuristic and inductive”.

Burns also points to the contextualised, real and holistic nature of case studies saying that:

The case study is the preferred strategy when…the focus is on a contemporary phenomenon within a real life context. In brief it allows an investigation to retain the holistic and meaningful characteristics of real events (Burns, 2000 p. 460).

Again, within the apparent portmanteau of approaches, researchers like Merriam (1988, pp. 27-28) have attempted to categorise certain types of case study as descriptive, interpretive and evaluative. Evaluative case studies seek to ‘weigh’ the data collected from the case to produce a judgement that can be used to inform decision-making.
Stenhouse views case study research from a similar perspective but identifies four styles of case study: 'ethnographic', 'evaluative', 'educational' and 'action research'. (Stenhouse, 1985 in Bassey, 1999, p. 27). In ‘evaluative’ case studies, according to Stenhouse, one or more cases is studied in depth with the purpose of providing educational actors or decision makers (administrators, teachers, parents, pupils, etc.) with information that will help them to judge the merit and worth of policies, programmes or institutions.

Stake adds to a definition of case studies by saying that they provide a particular type of knowledge not necessarily found in other types of research:

> The best use for a case study is 'adding to existing experience and humanistic understanding' their epistemological advantage is on the basis of their 'naturalistic generalization' (Stake, 1978, p. 7).

Walton (in Neuman, 2003, p. 33) attests to the strength of case studies to inform theory, policy and practice by arguing that, “case studies are likely to produce the best theory”.

Thus, to summarise the literature on case studies, it can be said that they are, at the very least, the study of a specific situation or ‘bounded system’ in a real, contextualized, inductive and holistic way. Whilst methods and purposes might vary significantly, the knowledge derived from such rich information is useful because, as Stake suggests, case studies provide:

> Valid portrayals, a better base for personal understanding of what is going on, and solid grounds for considering action (1981, p. 32).

A case study is an ideal framework to gather and analyse data for this research, given its ‘grounded theory’ and inductive assumptions, which emphasise the need to develop a holistic view and be flexible enough to accommodate whatever factors may emerge and to use whatever methods are most appropriate within the context. The features of case studies that make them particularly appropriate for this type of research, therefore, include their flexibility and their emphasis on gathering data in an inductive and holistic
way. Case studies are also able to inform policy based on an in depth understanding of what actually is going on in the field from the participants’ perspective. This is of particular importance when the program is located within an intercultural context.

The data gathered in this research using a Grounded, Case Study approach has been analysed using principles and tools drawn from a combination of Kurt Lewin’s Field Theory approach and James Gees’ interpretation of a Discourse approach. These approaches and the reasons for their use are outlined below.

3.3 Field Theory

Field Theory is probably best characterised as a method: namely a method of analysing causal relations and of building scientific concepts (Lewin, 1952, p. 45). Psychologist, Kurt Lewin first developed his Field Theory approach to data collection and analysis in the 1940s. Within this approach, he describes all forms of human behaviour such as “learning” and “achieving” as “a change of state” in a given time. For example, the act of “learning”, in this case “learning to be a teacher”, can be seen as a shift from one psychological, emotional, moral and even material state to another. Lewin was interested in discovering what forces impacted on the changed state (either positively or negatively) and used mathematical symbols to understand, describe and explain these forces.

The use of mathematical symbols to describe these forces was in keeping with one of the main principles guiding Lewin’s work, which was the need for social scientists to develop more scientific methods to conceptualise data using what he termed the “elements of construction” of any given concept (Cartwright in Lewin, 1952, p. ix). Lewin was especially keen to develop a valid way to break down such “common use” concepts as “learning”, “motivation”, “frustration” or “hope” into their “elements of construction” so as to allow their properties to be better scrutinised and understood.
Lewin also believed that, as well as breaking concepts down into their “elements of construction”, it was equally as important for social scientists to work holistically, acknowledging the interrelatedness of factors that impact on any “changed state”. It was important from Lewin’s perspective, that social scientists included all the factors that impacted on a “changed state”. These include those that may be difficult to conceptualise and those that the individual or group may not even be conscious of. Lewin used the term “fields” or “life space” to represent all the factors that have existence for the individual or group (whether consciously or not) and which have demonstrable effect on any “change of state”.

A major advantage of using Lewin’s approach is that he emphasised the need for researchers to more carefully conceptualise complex aspects of human behaviour. Within the historical context in which he worked these were often left outside of analysis because they were deemed, within the dominant research paradigms of the time, to be unscientific or just too difficult to pin down. Lewin (1952 p. 302) argued that general properties impacting on human behaviour such as “frustration”, “an atmosphere of friendliness”, “goals”, “levels of aspiration”, “will” and “emotion” must be taken into consideration.

Using methods drawn from the physical sciences, field theorists take an aspect of human behaviour and try to investigate its “elements of construction”, or what it is made up of. “Frustration”, for example, is a complex human emotion that may lead to “a state of anger”, or to “the development of a friendship”. Alternatively, it may lead to “an increase in productivity” or to “a lack of productivity”. In order to fully understand both the causes of a complex human emotion and its effects on human behaviour, Lewin argues that it is necessary to examine in detail, the type of emotion and the setting in which it takes place (Lewin 1952, p. 35). In this way, Field Theory places high demands on conceptualisation because it demands to know what terms mean in the
context in which they exist. In this way Lewin’s theory is a precursor to later socio-cultural and Discourse theories that also called into question the deeper and contextualised meanings that lay beneath such concepts.

Using mathematical symbols, Lewin tried to represent the individual “elements of construction” that make up a particular aspect of human behaviour. These elements can be classified as either “Driving” forces or “Restraining” forces. “Driving” forces may move the person towards their goal and “Restraining” forces move them away from it. If both are equal then the movement toward the goal may remain in equilibrium. If the aim of the research is to illuminate ways to move the individual or group towards a particular goal, then breaking the factors down to their “elements of construction” and determining their relative “Driving” or “Restraining” effects can aid in this process.

As well as attempting to better conceptualise complex aspects of human behaviour by breaking them down into their “elements of construction”, Lewin also believed that “agents of change” were multiple and interdependent. Using a holistic approach he argued that many events and processes must be included as “agents of change” when examining causes for human behaviour. These included the physical environment, the economic, legal and political spheres as well as the individual’s needs, goals and cognitive structure. All these aspects were part of what Lewin called the “field” or the “life space” of the individual that must be considered as determinants in the person’s changed state.

Lewin also adopted a Gestalt approach, arguing that the field which influences a person can only properly be described in the way in which it exists for that person at that time, that is, from their point of view. In response to critics of this approach, who argued it was fraught with subjectivity, Lewin claimed that his approach was more objective than others being promoted at the time. In fact he believed that:
To describe a situation ‘objectively’ in psychology actually means to describe it as a totality of those facts and only those facts that make up the field of the individual – to substitute that world of the individual for the world of the teacher, of the physicist, or anyone else – this is to be not objective but wrong. (Lewin, 1952, p. 62).

Field Theory is consistent with the theoretical assumptions that guide this work. These include, firstly, that a researcher’s beliefs impact on the selection of data, on analysis, and therefore on the findings of any research. Analytical rigour is a way to formalise this process of conceptualisation to ensure that the researcher’s way of interpreting and understanding events that occur in the field are not imposed upon the concepts being investigated. Secondly, in Field Theory, factors impacting on a phenomenon are considered to be interrelated and therefore cannot be seen in isolation from each other. Kurt Lewin’s Field Theory approach (Lewin, 1944) is used in this research as it provides a rigorous methodology to examine how forces that create change can be discovered, researched, analysed and described. Lewin’s Field Theory is relevant to this research because it is an approach that aids in the conceptualisation of data by breaking “common use” terms down into their “elements of construction”. This is in keeping with a socio-cultural approach that recognises that so-called “common use” understandings may be fraught with socio-culturally determined meanings. This level of conceptualisation is important, especially within a context that is outside the researcher’s usual frame of reference, in order to more accurately represent the meanings of such terms for the participants.

The approach also provides analytical tools to aid in the interpretation and understanding of factors that cause a “change of state” in human behaviour - in this case from that of Education Assistant to Teacher. By using Lewin’s approach, those factors which emerge from the data which have a positive or “Driving” impact on the goal (becoming a teacher) can be distinguished from those that have a negative or
“Restraining” impact. The relative strength of each “Driving” or “Restraining” force can then be visualised and better understood using Lewin’s conceptualising techniques. Importantly, too, it provides yet another way of minimising the impact of the researcher’s worldview and academic discourse on the data collection and analysis process.

### 3.4 Discourse Theory With a Capital ‘D’

Discourse theory is used in this study as a way to conceptualise, articulate and better understand the socio-cultural forces and power structures that impacted on the EAs’ engagement with the ITE course. In order to do so it borrows from the ideas of Strauss (1977), Bourdieu and Passeron (1977) and in particular James Gee (1999).

Using this theoretical framework and analytical approach the ITE program under examination is viewed as a kind of “social text”. In this case “social texts” refer to written and spoken texts as well as those that are “symbolically articulated” (Ka Tat Tsang, 2001, section 2, para. 5) in and through a range of policies and practices that constitute the ITE program. As Ka Tat Tsang (2001, section 2, para. 5) succinctly puts it, a discourse analysis will help in:

> …elucidating how texts are produced, their relations to their socio-political contexts, the social reality they construct, the claims they make or the agendas they advance, the assumptions they contain, the social positions of the authors of these texts and the social relations they assume or perpetuate.

A discourse analysis is used to develop a deeper understanding of the social texts being used by the EAs and, in particular, the way that these texts relate to both their individual experiences and personalities and to the neo-colonialist socio-cultural context in which they all reside.

This interlocking of personal and the socio-cultural is central to discourse theory which posits that an individual’s identity or sense of self is not simply reliant on their own
nature or inner consciousness but is inexorably connected to the external social and physical world. Strauss, for example, claims that:

> Identities imply not merely personal histories but also social histories…. individuals hold membership in groups that are themselves products of the past. If you wish to understand persons, their development and their relations with significant others, you must be prepared to view them as embedded in social context. (Strauss, 1977. In Bufton, 2003, p. 207, section 1, para 13).

Importantly, Bourdieu (1977) and others have described this interplay of the personal and the social world as a dialectical process in which social situations are at once imposed upon individuals but at the same time, able to be created by individuals through the choices they make. This implies that, whilst individuals are constrained by the physical world or the social circumstances in which they find themselves (such as their social class, ethnicity, gender or relative economic or political status in society), it is possible to change these circumstances through reflexivity and action.

Bourdieu described this dialectical interplay between the personal and the social or the natural and the cultural/political, which he calls “habitus”, as “a structured and structuring structure” (Bourdieu, 1984. In Bufton, 2003, p. 207, section 2 para. 2). In other words, as Bufton explains it, Bourdieu’s “habitus” is a “bridge between the ‘objective’ realm of social contexts and the ‘subjective’ realm of individual experience and action”.

Importantly, Bourdieu also argues that while habitus (or the interplay between the individual and the social) differs between individuals depending on their personality and life experiences, shared experiences of the social world that people may have because of their social positioning (class, gender, ethnicity, age) tend to produce a collective habitus. This means that people who share external socio-cultural experiences are likely to have similar personal experiences, dispositions and ways of acting, behaving and thinking in and about the world. According to Bourdieu, it is these shared experiences
and understandings that underpin cultural differences between social classes and other

The habitus could be considered as a subjective but not individual system of
internalised structures, schemes of perception, conception and action common to
all members of the same group or class and constituting the precondition for all
objectification and apperception ...
(Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977 p. 86. In Bufton, 2003, section 2, para. 2.)

Both an individual and a collective habitus reveals itself, according to Bourdieu, in a
number of external features including such obvious traits as the way people speak, walk,
Through an analysis of these attributes, which are primarily acquired in childhood from
primary caregivers, Bourdieu maintains that a “host of social meanings and values” can
be gained:

Strictly biological differences are underlined and symbolically accentuated by
differences in bearing, differences in gesture, posture and behaviour which
express a whole relationship to the social world.

Further to this, Bourdieu argues that language is a significant indicator of the social
groups to which a person belongs. He claims that language:

betrays, in the very utterance, a relation to language which is common to a whole
category of speakers because it is the product of the social conditions of the
acquisition and use of language.

As a precursor to this Fanon (1967, p. 17) claims that:

to speak means to be in a position to use a certain syntax, to grasp the morphology
of this or that language, but it means above all to assume a culture, to support the
weight of a civilization.

Like Bourdieu and Fanon before him, James Gee uses Discourse (but with a capital D)
theory and analysis techniques to investigate and explain how language works both to
scaffold human activities and affiliations and to maintain social identities within social
groups (1999, p. 1). Also, like Fanon and Bourdieu, Gee recognises that there is more
to language than oral and written words. For Gee language is made up of what he refers
to as “other stuff” which includes body language, gestures, actions, symbols, tools,
technologies, values, attitudes, beliefs and emotions (Gee, 1999, p. 7).

These ways of communicating and of acting are often, according to Gee, supported by a
range of props, which can include such material and non-material identifiers as accents,
writing styles, dress standards, building designs or an assortment of possessions that can
be used to signal the values and beliefs of an individual or group. All these props go
towards creating an image that signals membership of a particular group and which can
be recognised both by members of the groups and those outside it. Gee uses a capital D
for Discourse to signal that he is referring to both words and all this “other stuff” that
language involves.

Gee’s version of Discourse theory also makes the assumption, like Bourdieu, that
people who are from or belong to different socio-cultural or socio-economic groups
have certain shared values and ways of seeing, acting, thinking and behaving in the
world (Gee, 1999, p. 17). These Gee refers to as Discourses (with a capital D) as they
include language and all the “other stuff” that is referred to earlier. A Discourse may
belong to a particular cultural or ethnic group, a socio-economic group, a social or
professional group or an institution. Each has its own particular ways of talking,
writing, acting, and thinking about the world. Importantly Gee argues that through
Discourse analysis the beliefs and values and Conversations that underpin these surface
ways of interacting can be revealed.

Whilst Gee acknowledges that people belong to, and move in and out of, multiple
Discourse groups such as their professional group when they are at work and their
social group on the week-end, there are certain Discourses which play a more
significant role in the way people think and act. These are often the ones that are
learned as children, from their immediate care-givers (Gee, 1990). In this, often rather
closed-environment, children learn what the family considers to be appropriate forms of communication, ways to dress, manners and importantly values and beliefs. Gradually, as they move out of their family or home environment they encounter other Discourses that are practiced in the wider community of school, work and social life. These new Discourses and the Conversations they carry may be similar to or in conflict with those learned within the home and they also may hold a different amount of power and status within a community. Central to the type of Discourse theory posited by Strauss, Bourdieu and Gee is the notion that Discourses are not neutral or equal and that certain Discourses have the potential to yield wealth, status and power to their members at the expense of others and are therefore inherently political. It is also the case, according to Gee, that entry into certain Discourses is more difficult for some individuals than others. This is particularly the case where the patterns of talking, acting, thinking and valuing differ markedly or, in some cases, are in conflict with those learned in the home or within the Discourses a person has been exposed to.

As an example, in order to be accepted into a Western school-based Discourse, an individual needs to take on and demonstrate certain ways of speaking, writing, thinking and behaving that fit that particular institution. This may include such things as sitting at a desk, listening without interrupting, raising a hand to ask a question or, as in constructivist and inquiry based pedagogies, working collaboratively, problem solving, questioning or taking risks. For some individuals or social groups such behaviours are very much in tune with patterns of behaviour learned in the home where everything, including the physical appearance of the classroom and the teacher, has a sense of familiarity to them. For other individuals and social groups the language and “other stuff” that surrounds school-based Discourse may be unfamiliar, alien or, as is often the case, in direct conflict with those previously experienced. This is the case both for
young children entering school for the first time and for some adults entering Higher Education Institutions.

Scollon and Scollen (1981 in Gee, 1999, p. 16) have shown, for example, how Athabaskans in Canada suffered what may constitute a crisis of identity when faced with writing essays at school. The Western essayist tradition requires that the writers perform a major show of self-display, which goes against Athabaskan social mores. In order to be successful within the prevailing Western school-based Discourse, children from dissimilar backgrounds must both learn and be willing, or motivated, to accept a very different set of ‘rules of engagement’ than those they have grown up with. The dissonance between the Discourses of some groups and those espoused and used in schools has also been highlighted in the work of Nieto, (1992), Spindler (in Johnson, 1995), Beth, (1992), and Heath (in Nieto, 1992).

Discourse theory and analysis techniques are used to highlight the details of language and “other stuff” that make up particular Discourses in society and to show how they differ from other possible ways of speaking, thinking and behaving. More importantly, they are used to expose what lies beneath these Discourses by asking what sorts of values and beliefs about the world these details of language both represent and reinforce and how this impacts on the distribution of wealth and power in a society.

This notion that Discourses can be, and generally are, used to serve political interests (i.e. the distribution of wealth, power, status and knowledge) is the essence of Gee’s Discourse theory, (Gee, 1999, p. 4). According to this theory, not all Discourses have equal status and power and not all people have equal access to all Discourses, particularly the most powerful ones. People who belong to, or are accepted into, a Dominant Discourse have access to greater socio-economic and cultural resources including wealth, status and education.
Not only can Discourses be characterised as being dominant or marginalised according to the extent to which they are able to own and control the distribution of wealth in society, they are also capable of being harbingers of what Gee refers to as the “Big ‘C’ Conversations” in society (Gee, 1999 p. 13). Big ‘C’ Conversations are for Gee the sorts of long running and important themes or topics, which are considered appropriately discussable, sayable or meaning-able for a given group at a particular time (Gee, 1999 p. 13). This might be, for example, what it is considered appropriate to say, do and even think about women’s place in society, child-rearing practices, what and how teachers should teach and even what a teacher should look and sound like. As carriers of Conversations, Discourses have the power to influence attitudes and values that permeate a society. Examples of Conversations that are relevant in this research, and which are explored using Discourse theory and analysis, are those of colonialism, neo-colonialism, Confucianism, Malay Islam as well as those associated with gender and age and their interface with the Discourse of Western education and in particular those represented in the ITE program associated with this study. In other words it is assumed that each of these Discourses will have something to say (Conversations) about education and in particular who should become teachers and how they should teach.

Like Gee’s work, this research assumes that there are dominant and marginal Discourses in any society. It assumes, for example, that the EAs in this study, who are Chinese or Malay, come from a marginal Discourse within the Australian educational landscape and are seeking access to a more dominant Discourse, that of being a teacher. To get there, they have to learn and be accepted into the Discourse of Academe, which is embedded in the HEI’s ITE program, and the Discourse of Teacher that is embedded in the school in which they work. They have to at first gain access and then, perhaps more importantly, learn to use the communication patterns and the identity and value systems of a student teacher, established by the HEI. At the same time, they have to
learn the Discourse patterns that are expected of a classroom teacher within the unique context of Christmas Island DHS.

Gee (1999) likens this process of taking on the multiple aspects of an identity like ‘being a teacher’, with its coordinated pattern of words, deeds, values, beliefs, symbols, tools, objects, times and places, as learning to dance the dance. These issues of identity formation, particularly when framed within a neo-colonial context, are taken up in the following chapters. Discourse Theory and some perspectives derived from Post-Colonial Theory (Fannon, 1967) are used to develop an understanding of the role that this apparent need for an identity shift has on the EAs’ ability to engage successfully with the ITE program and to become teachers. Fanon (1967, p. 18), in particular, writes very dramatically about the way in which colonised people are expected to take on the identity of the coloniser if they are to be accepted into the dominant culture:

Every colonized people – in other words, every people in whose soul an inferiority complex has been created by the death and burial of their local cultural originality – finds himself face to face with the language of the civilising nation; that is with the culture of the mother country. The colonized is elevated above his jungle status in proportion to the adoption of the mother country’s cultural standards.

The specific way in which the EAs in this case study were expected to take on the identity of student and teacher within the neo-colonialist context of the study are explored in the following chapters.

The extent to which a Discourse is flexible and accessible enough to allow people from different Discourses into it, is a measure of its actual (rather than rhetorical) inclusivity. The accessibility of Discourses is to a large extent related to the values and beliefs inherent in the Conversations that inform it. As an example, a Discourse such as colonialism, which is informed by racist attitudes, will exclude members on the basis of their ethnicity. One of the purposes for using Discourse theory and analysis in this research is to gain a better understanding of the types of Conversations that are
informing the Discourses of Academe and of the teaching profession and how these are impacting on the engagement of people from non-mainstream Discourses.

Discourse analysis, therefore, provides a tool for analysing the communicative patterns of a Discourse in order to reveal its hidden rules and its underlying values and assumptions. This will provide crucial information that needs to be included in any program aimed at enabling Education Assistants to shift from a marginalised Discourse to a more dominant one. Given that one of the aims of this research is to provide recommendations for the modification of ITE programs in order to make them more socially just and accessible to people from non-mainstream backgrounds, Gee’s model of analysis is appropriate and useful in this study. The specific tools of enquiry used in this research that are drawn from Gee’s Discourse approach are included in section 4.3 of this study.

3.5 Heuristic Inquiry
This research, draws on Heuristic forms of inquiry, which bring to the fore the personal experiences and insights of the researcher. As Patton puts it, heuristic inquiry asks:

What is my experience of this phenomenon and the essential experience of others who also experience this phenomenon intensely.

In line with this, Craig defines heuriskin as ‘I find’, which reflects a unique feature of heuristic inquiry – the legitimisation of the experiences, personal insights and reflections of the researcher (in Patton, 1990, p.71). Even more than other forms of qualitative study, heuristics places great emphasis on the importance of the researcher’s personal knowledge and what Polanyi describes as “indwelling and tacit knowing” (in Patton, 1990, p.72). Through the course of an investigation, a researcher using this form of inquiry aims to combine his or her personal experiences and knowledge with those of the participants in the study. Douglas and Moustakas (1984, p. 47) capture the unique and potentially turbulent nature of this form of inquiry as:
…a kind of being wide open in surrender to the thing itself, a recognition that one must relinquish control and be tumbled about with the newness and drama of a searching focus that is taking over life.

With their shared experiences of the phenomenon, the researcher and participants take part in a “creative synthesis” of the researcher’s tacit understandings and the participants’ personal experiences (Patton, 1990, p.73).

Specific methodological strategies have been used in this research to minimize the impact of the researcher’s cultural perspectives on the data analysis. In order to achieve the aim of understanding the phenomenon primarily from the viewpoint of the participants, the impact of the researcher, through her various roles, needs to be made explicit. This is partly because the research techniques used in this study depend upon the skill of the researcher to know, understand and get inside the setting. The researcher’s personal knowledge, sensitivity and understandings, gained through extensive work in the field, are recognised as being a significant and valuable part of the data collection and analysis process.

The multiple and significant roles played by the researcher in this study, include that of academic researcher, school administrator, school practicum program coordinator, university liaison, advocate, lobbyist, advisor, mentor and friend. The actions, thoughts and feelings of the researcher as she played out these various roles need to be acknowledged and analysed as they form a critical component of the outcomes of the program. According to Douglas and Moustakas (in Patton, 1990, p. 73):

The power of heuristic inquiry lies in its potential for disclosing truth. Through exhaustive self-search, dialogues with others, and creative depictions of experience, a comprehensive knowledge is generated, beginning as a series of subjective understandings and developing into a systematic and definitive exposition.

Thus, the rigour of heuristic inquiry comes from systematic observation of the dialogue and actions of both the researcher and the participants. The researcher’s various and
significant roles in the development of the program under study are described and analysed in Chapter 7.

4 Data Collection and Analysis Methods

The following sections describe the specific data collection and analysis techniques used in this study. The intention is to both describe the varied techniques used to gather and analyse the rich data and to explain why these techniques are appropriate in this context.

4.1 Data Collection Strategies

Data for this research were collected in the field over a period of four years. During this time a number of different data collection strategies were used. These included formal and informal open-ended interviews, participant narrative journal writing, regular field notes from participant observations, and the collection of relevant written documents. Open-ended interviews provided an opportunity for the participants to speak about issues in their own way, whilst written journals enabled them to use the more private and solitary written form of language, to present their ideas and opinions. Participant observations enabled the researcher to document significant physical or material data such as the design of buildings and the layout of rooms as well as the events and actions that took place. It also enabled her to include data on expressive movements and other forms of non-verbal language behavior (Gee’s “other stuff”) that underlie, and can help in gaining a better understanding of the meaning of the verbal behaviour.

The choice of techniques was determined by what was considered by the researcher to be most appropriate and useful at the time and in the context. Ethical considerations regarding the extent to which the research added an extra burden to the participants was also a major determinant of the methods used. It was also necessary to use culturally

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3 Samples of these are included in the appendices.
appropriate and sensitive ways to gather data, especially when dealing with particularly personal issues.

4.1.1 Selection of Subjects
The three primary participants in this case study were selected because they were working in a remote and culturally diverse school and had recently enrolled in an Initial Teacher Education program at a mainland Australian HEI. Given their non-mainstream backgrounds in terms of their ethnicity, age and previous educational experiences, they provided a good example of the type of student for whom current systemic (government and HEI) cultural diversity policies were being trialed and implemented.

Other participants (such as mentors, cooperating teachers and school administrators) were not selected or ‘pre-determined’ but were naturally included if and when they became significant in the study. As a result, there was what Glaser and Strauss would describe as, “an on going inclusion of individuals and groups” (Glaser and Strauss, 1967, p. 50).

4.1.2 Field Procedures
Following the Grounded Theory approach advocated by Glaser and Strauss (1967, p. 45) the research began with the researcher’s ‘hunches’ about what might be significant factors impacting on the study, rather than preconceived views and hypotheses to be tested or verified. Initial questions, posed through both open ended interviews and reflective journal writing tasks, focused on the background events leading up to the Education Assistants' decision to enrol in an ITE program at an Australian HEI. This was in keeping with one of the principles guiding the research - that people’s life experiences significantly impact on the way they think and act.

People, who were identified either by the participants or through direct observations, as having played a role in the EAs’ decision to retrain were also interviewed. Regular
field notes were made as events unfolded in relation to their course, their home life, their workloads and their struggles for study leave and other forms of support.

Very early on in the research initial hunches were re-organised and re-prioritised. As expected, issues soon emerged that had not been considered significant by the researcher. In this way a theory began to develop that was intimately linked to the data and the participants’ worldviews and the researcher’s personal insights. From field notes, interview transcripts and written journals, conceptual categories were generated to answer the initial research question - What factors have impacted and continue to impact on the ability of the Education Assistants to engage with a mainstream Initial Teacher Education program? Conceptual categories, or theoretical abstractions about what was going on, such as 'mentor support', 'self esteem', 'family attitudes', 'colonial attitudes', 'health', 'ESL learning', soon began to emerge from the data. As more data were collected these were used either as further evidence to validate an already existing conceptual category, or to form the basis of a new conceptual category.

Once a category had been established, its properties were then developed. The properties of a category were simply a further abstraction of a category. For example, the category 'mentors' may have properties such as formal support, informal support, forms of payment and so on. It is important to note that according to Glaser and Strauss (1967, p. 37), categories and properties are not in themselves data but are simply concepts indicated to the researcher by the data. They are dependent on the researcher’s insight and perceptions and are only validated by the evidence that emerges to support them and by the extent to which they are rendered meaningful and legitimate by the participants. With increasing levels of abstraction, categories may become related and this interrelatedness becomes the core of the emerging model and theory.

An important principle in emergent theory is the need to be constantly alert to emerging categories that might develop theory. In keeping with the underlying principles of this
method, theory should not be established too quickly and data should not be gathered to justify it. Through the process of data collection and analysis to develop categories, often multiple hypotheses emerge and are pursued simultaneously. At other times, suddenly and for an extended period of time, a range of new issues may emerge to take precedence over others. In this way, in a naturally occurring context, theory development is a continuous process.

According to Glaser and Strauss (1967, p. 37), the process of developing categories from the data has a number of important benefits. The most important of these is that it avoids data selection being made to fit preconceived and perhaps culturally biased and inadequate or irrelevant categories. This means that emergent categories are more likely to fit the data especially in cross-cultural settings. Categories can more easily be justified as they come directly from the data and they are more meaningful and more useful to policy makers. The use of emergent categories helps a researcher to break out of traditional academic conceptualisations or those developed in academic literature in other contexts. It also acknowledges that there are different ways to define and specify factors that impact on a setting, thus bringing research closer to the social world being investigated.

4.2 Data Collection Tools

4.2.1 Open Ended Interviews

During the course of the study, recorded interviews were conducted with the three Education Assistants, teacher mentors, classroom teachers, Education Department bureaucrats, and ‘significant others’ in the community. Open-ended interviews and direct quotations are used to capture the language and point of view of the participants. Direct quotations, as Patton (1990 p. 24) writes, “let them tell it how it is”. This gives the researcher and the reader an opportunity to listen to, and analyse the words of the
participants. In this way, their meanings are less likely to suffer the effects of a filter created by the researcher’s interpretation of the meanings.

In the first years, interviews with the Education Assistants took place approximately once a fortnight for about one hour, either at the EAs’ home or at school. In these interviews, guided questions rather than standardised questions were used as a framework (see Appendix 1). Guided, rather than standardised, questions and a deliberately informal interview atmosphere were used in order to enable the participants to speak more freely about the issues that were of concern to them. Restricting the questions to those developed prior to the interview would have limited the potential for the interview to draw out issues of significance to the participants. Follow up interviews were designed to explore themes that emerged over time and throughout the study, the participants were regularly asked to comment and reflect on themes identified by researcher. This enabled the researcher to adjust themes and identify significant categories based on the participants' points of view.

It is significant to note that the type of strategies used to collect data changed through the course of the research as some proved more effective and less intrusive than others. As an example, in the third year, as their own work and study loads increased, the participants found it easier and more convenient to be given interview questions in a written form so that they could record their answers by themselves on tape, in their own time (Appendix 2). They explained that they found the interview situation, with tape recorder running, quite ‘nerve wracking’. They asked if it would be possible for them to take the questions and a tape recorder home and answer them on their own and in their own time. This enabled them to think carefully about their answers, formulate their English responses and edit the tape if they wanted to.

The EAs’ preference for recording their responses independently may be viewed as an indication of the way in which they viewed their own abilities as English language
speakers in relation to a ‘formal’ interview situation and in particular where the interviewer was a first language speaker, a Doctoral student and their boss. All these identities gave the researcher status and power in the interview situation (despite a close personal relationship), which was a potentially threatening, or at the very least uncomfortable, situation.

The ‘solo taped’ interviews proved very forthcoming and although they did not provide the researcher with the opportunity to ask for immediate elaboration, they had the advantage of preventing the researcher from interrupting, dominating and steering the conversation where she wanted it to go. Whilst there were advantages and disadvantages in using the ‘solo tape’ method it was ethically responsible to minimise the pressure the research imposed on the participants.

4.2.2 Narrative Journal Writing

Narrative journal writing was used as a data collection tool to enable the researcher to gain an understanding of the participants' views and thoughts through the alternative medium of narrative writing. Narratives, in this case, were made up of several components including simple facts about the participants’ “life spaces”, beliefs and ideas about themselves and others, and more abstract questions that attempted to summarise and consolidate their experiences.

Once a fortnight, during the first year of the research, the Education Assistants were asked to respond to a range of questions in a reflective journal (Appendix 3). Responses were gained using qualitative strategies including focus questions, metaphors and open-ended questions “designed to encourage unforced narrative” (Shipman, 1973, p. 86). The use of narrative as a tool for capturing the multidimensional complexities of teacher stories has a very strong tradition (Jalango, M. and Isenberg, J., 1995; Gitlin, A., 1992). In Gitlin (1992), for example, the rationale for the use of narrative is that it provides a way of connecting the personal with the professional and thinking with
feeling. It is also heralded as a way to develop reflexivity by acting as both a mirror and a window in which the writer is able to look at themselves and the reader to view others. The narrative writing in this case was used as a data collection tool and a guide to further written and oral questions that sought to expand and clarify themes that emerged. Narrative writing proved a useful tool in the study as it elicited a great deal of data in the initial twelve months.

After the first year, however, the researcher reduced the number of written entries she requested quite significantly as she found that this form of data collection was the most arduous and unpopular for the participants. As students learning and writing in English as a Second Language (ESL), they said it was much easier and less time consuming to talk than to write because writing involved lots more attention to spelling and grammar. This was despite being reassured by the researcher that Standard Australian English spelling and grammar was not important for her in this context. Even so, the participants felt uncomfortable submitting written texts which they considered to be substandard English\(^4\). It was considered unethical to put extra pressure on the participants, who were already under considerable pressure from working full time and studying, so the journal writing was replaced with more interviews later in the study.

**4.2.3 Direct Participant Observation**

As a participant in the development of the program under study the researcher was privy to events as they unfolded on a regular basis. These events were recorded in regular field notes on daily activities and ‘critical incidents’ (Tripp, 1993 p. 8) as they occurred throughout the research period. Kellehear (1993) refers to Rathje (1979) and Babtie (1989) to argue that such observation methods have the advantage of assessing “actual behaviour as opposed to self reported behaviour”. The researcher’s various roles as

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\(^4\) This was yet another example of their belief that they needed to comply with what they believed to be the grammatical rules of the dominant Discourse in their interactions with the researcher despite her assurances to the contrary.
coordinator of the Trainee Teacher Program, Deputy Principal and Doctoral student enabled her to gain access a range of rich data not normally available. The use of direct observation also adds to the triangulation of data by providing information from the researcher’s point of view. The field notes were recorded on a regular basis in the form of a reflective journal in which the researcher described critical events and experiences as they unfolded from her point of view. The journal described the time and place, people involved, outside influences, how she felt about the situation and what impact it had on the participants and the emerging program. Examples of field notes related to critical incidents are included as Appendix 5.

4.3 Data Analysis Strategies
Data were analysed in order to extract, in an interconnected and holistic way, the significant factors that have (from the point of view of the participants, ‘significant others’ and the researcher) impacted on the Education Assistants’ engagement with the ITE program. A case record for each individual and a thematically organised case study has been developed from these data. A case analysis for each individual provides rich and detailed information about the factors that have impacted on each Education Assistant, as an individual, given that each has a different set of life experiences or what Lewin would call a different “life space” (1952, xi). A cross-case analysis at the end of Chapter 4 broadens the generalizability of the findings, within this particular context, by focusing on those factors that have impacted on all of the Education Assistants. Following the Glaser and Strauss approach, data analysis has been on going throughout the data collection phase. As ideas and analytical insights emerged from the data, reflective notes and memos were made into field notes. Using this thematic approach to data analysis, the analysis began with some ideas or issues conceived initially by the researcher. Other themes were added as they emerged in the data. After interviews and observations the participants were consulted to see if they agreed with the researcher’s
interpretations. In this way meanings attached to themes more closely reflected the beliefs and understandings of the participants. The trustworthiness of the data and analysis in this paradigm is therefore tied to how well the researcher can reflect the insider’s point of view.

Analysis began during the collection phase and as analytical insights formed they were regularly recorded in field notes. These notes formed the initial category headings such as 'health', 'teacher attitudes', and 'industrial relations issues'. Throughout the course of the data collection process, these categories were discussed with the EAs, mentors and others involved in the program to see to what extent they felt them to be significant. As new pieces of data were collected they were either added to existing categories or assigned a new category. A category was assigned significance once it was saturated. This occurred when enough data had been collected to demonstrate that it was a recurring and important factor (Glaser and Strauss, 1967).

4.3.1 Field Theory Analysis
Lewin’s Field Theory methods were used to further refine the broad categories. “Approach to learning”, for example, could be broken down into its “elements of construction” (eg achievement oriented, collaborative, rote) to see under what particular circumstances each individuals “approach to learning” has a positive or negative impact on their ability to study successfully. Each particular category, once broken down into its “elements of construction”, was then related to other categories and assigned a relative ‘weight’ in terms of its significance in moving the participants towards or away from their goal of “becoming a teacher”.

In keeping with its philosophical principles, the research used both researcher and participant generated categories. Categories were initially generated by the researcher and therefore more closely reflect the researcher’s worldview than that of the Education Assistants. Although limited in this respect, there is validity in the researcher's
typologies given the researcher’s knowledge and sensitivity gained from time spent in
the field. The researcher was also able to identify categories that the Education
Assistants may not have recognized for themselves.
To make the categories more inclusive and more representative of the Education
Assistants' way of organising the world, they were asked to review the trustworthiness
of the categories. Lofland (1971, p. 34 in Patton, 1990, p. 398) says that a good test of
observer/researcher constructions is to see if the participants recognise them. This was
done at the end of the first year of the research proper, and then more regularly (once a
term) as the data collection phase moved to a close and the data analysis phase became
more significant.

4.3.2 Discourse Analysis
Gee’s Discourse approach to data analysis was a key element in this research.
Discourse analysis was used as a tool of enquiry to help reveal and understand the
underlying values and worldviews of the various Discourses involved in this study.
According to Gee, underlying values and attitudes are manifested in the various ways
language and “other stuff” (such as dress, attitudes to time, material possessions, body
language, learning styles etc) are used by members of particular Discourse groups in
any given situation or context (1999, p. 12). Thus, through analysis of these
manifestations, an understanding of deeper values and beliefs can be gained.
Gee (1999, p. 119) has used this technique to demonstrate how, through a Discourse
analysis of interviews with teenagers from working class and middle class backgrounds,
their “deep ways of thinking about themselves and the world” can be better understood.
Gee uses three tools in his analysis:

• The use of the word ‘I’ in relation to what the teenager believes about
  themselves and what they can or cannot do
• The use of ‘motifs’ or ‘common themes’ throughout the interviews
• The types of narratives they tell

Gee also examines the “situated meanings” of words used in the data he gathers from interviews. Situated meanings are the images or patterns we assemble in our heads about a word or phrase as we communicate. These meanings are based on our knowledge, past experiences and the context we are in at the time. In other words, depending on where we are, who we are, who we are with and on what we already know and understand from past experience, a different image may be triggered in our heads by a particular word or action. As an example the phrase ‘getting dressed up’ for one person may mean putting on stilettos and a ‘little black dress’ where as for a 13 year old this may mean jeans, joggers and a baseball cap. This also may vary according to where the person is going, with whom and ultimately for what purpose. In this study the word ‘teacher’ or ‘HEI student’ may have different situated meanings for different individuals or groups.

Whilst these triggered images are largely a function of individuals’ peculiar life experiences, they may also be attributed to particular ‘cultural models’, story lines or Conversations shared by people belonging to particular social or cultural groups. If the 13 year old belongs to a ‘surfie’ culture, for example, she might wear her best board shorts and thongs, as this is deemed appropriate in this culture and context. If she is playing a piano recital at her grandmother’s birthday party she may need to wear a long black skirt and top. If her Grandmother is Moslem she may need to cover her arms and legs and wear a scarf or veil. These dress styles are not just a matter of individual choice but are informed by what is considered appropriate by the social / cultural groups to which this person belongs. Ways of talking, thinking and acting are also interchangeable according to the context and the social or cultural groups with which a person belongs.
Gee refers to the various ways people talk in different situations as their ‘social languages’. People attune their social languages, including the words they use and how they frame them in a phrase, sentence, paragraph or narrative as well as other non-verbal cues such as the way they dress, sit, stand or position themselves in a room according to the context. In turn the context and their understanding of it informs the way that they speak or act in a given situation. According to Gee, language and context are like two mirrors constantly and endlessly reflecting their own image (1999, p. 82).

The extent to which an individual can speak and act appropriately in a given context, or the extent to which they can ‘pull off’ speaking and acting as ‘real’ or as a legitimate actor in the context, is determined by their knowledge and understanding of the situation and the degree of inclusivity of the particular context. If, for example, to be accepted as a ‘real teacher’ in a contemporary Australian context, an individual should be able to speak and write Standard Australian English, should wear a suit, should have a certain level of content knowledge, should have an understanding and acceptance of diverse learning styles and reflective teaching strategies informed by cognitivist or constructionist approaches to pedagogy and should have a positive self image about their own knowledge, then to be accepted as a ‘real teacher’ an individual must display these characteristics. These characteristics are determined by the socio-cultural, political and historical factors that have shaped, and continue to shape, what it means to be a ‘real teacher’ in an Australian context.

A similar approach to Discourse analysis used by Gee is used in this research, as a way of revealing the underlying values inherent in the different Discourses at play. Primarily this approach aims to uncover the values, attitudes, narratives and Conversations (Gee, 1999) that are carried within the various Discourses being examined. It is argued that each of these Discourses has the potential to impact critically on the ability of the Education Assistants to change their roles and become teachers. Such an examination
aims to draw out factors that enable them to “pull off” being recognised and accepted as a “real teacher” as well as those which inhibit this. This will help to inform the reshaping of ITE programs so that they are more truly inclusive of other Discourses.

5 Data Reliability and Trustworthiness

Credibility in this study comes from the use of a variety of data such as the use of direct quotes, narrative writing, participant observation and critical reflection. It also comes from being explicit about what types of data were used to develop a particular interpretation and ensuring the categories and properties are clear and meaningful. According to Gee (1999, p. 88), the validity of an analysis is not a matter of how detailed a recording or transcript is but how the transcript works together with all the other elements of the analysis to create a “trustworthy” analysis. Not everything can be included – it is up to the analyst to argue the case that what was included or missed out was relevant or irrelevant to the point being made. Glaser and Strauss also see the validity of data analysis as tied to how well the researcher’s understanding of the culture parallels that culture’s view of itself. A Grounded Approach, where themes are drawn from the data and verified as to their relative significance by the participants, has been used in this research to maximise the trustworthiness of the analysis.

6 Conclusion

One of major premises upon which this methodology is based is that all human actions can be conceived of as a “change of state” and that these changes of state – from Education Assistant to Teacher, for example, are determined by a complex set of interrelated factors. These factors include social, political, historical, cultural, personal and environmental factors. This assumption, drawn from the work of Kurt Lewin (1952), implies that a phenomenon must be studied holistically, taking into
consideration a diverse and interrelated set of factors that make up the “life spaces” of the participants. Data collection and analysis tools therefore must be comprehensive and varied so as to take into account these many different factors that have the potential to impact upon the phenomenon. In particular the socio-cultural context within which the study is located is of major significance and must be examined and analysed for its impact upon the phenomenon.

Another central assumption, that draws on the work of socio-cultural and Discourse theorists such as Bourdieu and Passeron (1977) and Gee (1999) in this research, is that education is an important player in the distribution of wealth and power in a society. Therefore those who are able to make decisions about the who, what, where, when and why of education have a great deal of social control over the distribution of wealth and power. It is also assumed that teachers are an integral part of the education process and through their actions can influence, to a great extent, who receives education, to what level and what type of education they receive. The training or education of teachers is therefore a critical aspect of social management in a society.

A further principle upon which this research rests is that whilst it is recognised that each individual’s “life space” is informed by a unique set of experiences, there are also common themes and motifs that can be identified as belonging to certain socio-cultural groups. These common themes or “Conversations” as Gee puts it, play a significant role in determining acceptable or dominant ways of speaking, acting, thinking and, perhaps most importantly, valuing within a community. Through methods drawn for semiotic analysis and Gee’s Discourse analysis, such “Big C Conversations”, particularly those inherent in Discourses of colonialism, neo-colonialism and Western education systems and the values they represent, can be identified. Exposing these often hidden assumptions or values and making them explicit is a fundamental aspect of
this research dealing as it does with issues directly related to specific and sometimes covert power structures within society.

Another significant assumption made in this research is that both the researcher and the act of postgraduate Doctoral research have had a significant impact on the phenomenon under investigation. Being enrolled as a Doctoral student, gave the researcher access to people and information that she may not normally have had. Making this study a part of a Doctorate, therefore, had a significant impact on the outcome of the study and is therefore in itself a feature of the Discourse of Academe and evidence of the power of the “Big C Conversations” that underpin it. This impact must therefore be clearly articulated as it forms a crucial part of the case study. Specific qualitative methodological tools were deliberately used to collect and analysis data given that the researcher was at once observer and active participant.

A further important, but related assumption, given the intercultural context of this study and the assumption that there are different worldviews and ways of making meaning in the world, is that the viewpoints of the participants are likely to be different from that of the researcher, who belongs to a dominant Western Discourse. For this research to be trustworthy and useful, it was absolutely necessary to use methodological tools that were able to elicit the viewpoints of the non-mainstream participants who were the focus of the study. It was also necessary to be flexible in the use of these tools as the researcher developed, throughout the study, a better understanding of the best ways to gather and analyse data in an initially unfamiliar context.

The primary purpose of the study was to find out what factors acted as “Driving” or “Restraining” forces on the participants achieving their goal of becoming teachers. The use of a Grounded methodological approach based on the work of Glaser and Strauss provided the researcher with the opportunity to go into the field with a set of hunches, but no clear thesis, as to what these factors would be. A range of varied and variable
qualitative tools of inquiry were then used to collect and analyse the data as it emerged within the context and through the duration of the study. This approach was in keeping with the theoretical principles of the study and its practical application. Gaining the viewpoints of the participants enabled the researcher to see the range of “Driving” and “Restraining” forces that were impacting upon their successful engagement with the ITE program from their point of view. This data could then be used to formulate a set of recommendations able to be used by HEIs, educational jurisdictions, schools and school systems so that they are better able to meet the needs of non-mainstream students. Adoption of such recommendations would thus move equity rhetoric closer to reality.
Chapter 3 The Christmas Island Context

1 Introduction

This research is informed by Socio-cultural and Discourse theory, which highlights the significance of historical, political, social and economic context. In keeping with this theoretical framework, this chapter firstly describes the geographical and socio-cultural context of Christmas Island for the reader, and secondly analyses and critiques the underlying political, economic and social forces that have significance for this study.

2 Geographical Context

Christmas Island (CI) lies in the Indian Ocean approximately 360 km to the south of the Java coast. The island is believed by some, to be the tip of an undersea volcano, which emerged from the Indian Ocean over 60 million years ago. As the island has never been connected to a landmass, it has evolved in isolation and has become home to many rare species of plants and animals (Woodmore, 1996, p.12).

Historically, the island’s main exploitable natural economic resource has been its rich phosphate deposits. The discovery and subsequent mining of this natural resource by the British and then Australian governments under a colonialist administrative system with its Discourses of exploitation and social division has had a significant impact on the economic, political and social development of the island.
Christmas Island has an area of just over 135 square km. It has a maximum length of 23.7 km, an average width of 7 km and a maximum altitude of 361 metres. Two thirds of the island is covered by dense tropical rain forest, most of which now lies within a national park, administered and protected by the Australian Federal Government through Parks Australia North.

![Map showing aerial view of settled areas and National Park](image)

Figure 2   Map showing aerial view of settled areas and National Park

The island is famous for its multitude of Red Crabs (over 120 million), which migrate annually from the jungle through the settled areas to the ocean. Once they reach the shoreline, they mate and then the females release their eggs into the ocean, in one of the most amazing natural phenomena on earth. Because of its location, approximately 10 degrees south of the equator, Christmas Island has a sub-equatorial climate. The rainy season usually begins in December and continues until April. Temperatures remain fairly stable with a year round average temperature of 27 degrees Celsius. Mean annual rainfall is about two metres and the humidity remains around 80% - 90% all year.
Culturally, linguistically and historically Christmas Island’s population of around 1500 is more closely representative of Malaysian/Singaporean society than that of mainland Australia. The majority of Christmas Islanders have a Malaysian or Singaporean cultural heritage. Approximately 70% of the island’s population consider themselves to be Chinese Malays, 15% Moslem Malays and 15% of the population are of European/Australian descent or represent other smaller ethnic groups including several Indian/Malay families. Within this broad category of Malaysian/Singaporean ‘culture’, lie several very strong and complex social, political and religious Discourses including Islam, Buddhism, Taoism, Confucianism and Colonialism as well as various derivations of these as they have been adapted and changed through the process of neo-colonialism, globalisation and ‘modernisation’. All these Discourses continue to inform the ‘way of life’ of Christmas Islanders including their beliefs and attitudes towards such things as family, education and government. They also inform the way people view themselves within the social and economic structure of the island.

As well as the religious and cultural complexity, there is also linguistic complexity on Christmas Island. This includes at least seven Chinese languages, Bahasa Malay, Tamil, Malaysian English, Singlish, Chinglish, Christmas Island English and several other ‘non standard’ varieties of English. People actively maintain and support the development of their first languages on the island through their continued first language use and their support of a Saturday language school. Cultural ties are maintained through cultural events and the media, with most Malay/Chinese Christmas Islanders preferring to tune into Malaysian satellite TV and purchase Malaysian newspapers, magazines and CD ROMS than accessing these things from Australia.

Currently there are two flights to and from mainland Australia each week. These flights take between 6 and 8 hours depending on whether they go via the neighbouring
Cocos (Keeling) Islands. The cost of these flights is expensive by mainland standards – ranging from $1100 for a student or Apex fare to $1700 for an adult fare. Alternative routes off the island are to the north via Indonesia. Currently these flights are weekly and are also expensive. The northern route is the most common exit point for most Christmas Islanders as the majority of families originate from, and maintain close family ties with Malaysia. As families spend any extended time off the island in Malaysia or Singapore, they are generally not exposed to Standard Australian English (SAE) or mainland Australian cultural contexts either on island or during holidays.

The school on Christmas Island currently caters for the educational needs of around 400 students from Kindergarten to Year 12. Through a Service Delivery Arrangement (SDA) between the Federal Government and the Western Australian State Government, the Western Australian Department of Education and Training (DET) delivers educational services to the Christmas Island community in line with those delivered in schools in Western Australia. The Federal Government pays for these services including the provision of teaching and administrative staff and a Western Australian curriculum at no cost to the state.

Figure 3  Year 3 students working on a Malay language project at CIDHS
Culturally and linguistically, the student population of around 400 reflects that of the island. The majority of the students identify themselves as Chinese Malay. Around 15% of students are Moslem Malays and the rest of the student body is made up of either expatriate European/Australians or a range of smaller ethnic groups.

4 Historical Context

In this study it is assumed that there are a range of very powerful external forces that have shaped and continue to shape the lives and fortunes of the people of Christmas Island and as a result have had an impact on the ability of the Education Assistants to engage with the ITE program. It is argued in this chapter that one of the most pervasive of these forces has been, and continues to be, the impact of colonialist and subsequently neo-colonialist attitudes and practices that have developed on Christmas Island since its ‘discovery’ and colonisation by the British in the late 1890s. Other major Discourses are also seen as significant in shaping the “life spaces” of the Education Assistants and others in this study including the Discourses inherent in Malaysian post-colonial politics, those of Malay Islam, Buddhism and Confucianism.

Most definitions of colonialism make reference to both its adverse economic and social/psychological impact on colonised people. According to Wikipedia (a free online encyclopaedia), for example:

Colonialism is a system in which a state claims sovereignty over territory and people outside its own boundaries, often to facilitate economic determination over their resources, labour and often markets. The term also refers to a set of beliefs used to legitimise or promote this system, especially the belief that the mores of the coloniser are superior to the colonised.

Cecil Rhodes, the former ‘founder’ of Rhodesia, powerfully captures the economic motives for colonisation:

We must find new lands from which we can easily obtain raw materials and at the same time exploit the cheap slave labour that is available. The colonies would also provide a dumping ground for the surplus goods produced in our factories. (In The Land Is Ours, para. 2)
Others such as Allsop and Cowie (1970, p. 341) further suggested such colonialist practices not only exploited colonised workers economically but also emotionally and psychologically:

…..under a system which so nakedly subordinated colonial interests to the wealth and the welfare of the mother country, it was impossible to avoid the development in the representatives of the mother country of an attitude of superiority and aloofness. Implicit in the colonial relationship, particularly under the mercantilist system, was a denial of equality that humiliated and antagonised colonial opinion.

Earl Grey’s comments in 1899 also serve as a chilling reminder of the types of attitudes inherent in the colonialist mentality:

Probably everyone would agree that an Englishman would be right in considering his way of looking at the world and at life better than that of the Maori or Hottentot, and no-one will object in the abstract to England doing her best to impose her better and higher view on these savages….


These points are reiterated by Leong Yew (2002) who, whilst recognising that the term ‘colonialism’ is a contested one that needs teasing out (for example, the differences between French and British colonial practices), acknowledges that there are certain commonalities. Most European colonialism, for example, first took the form of settlement colonies, which had in common a number of things (some, although not all, of which apply to Christmas Island). These include:

The displacement of native populations and the inculcation of a European world view on them; the exile of white settlers such as through the transportation of convicts; and the transplantation of other non-native peoples through slavery and indentured labour. These forms of diaspora hinged around cascading levels of marginality and perceptions of the relations between the centre and the periphery. For instance, while white settlers felt rejected and inferior to their kin in the motherland, they retained alternative hierarchical structures in their colonies based on racial, gender, and class divisions.

As the following sections of this chapter will clearly outline there is little doubt that, historically at least, the political, legal, social and educational context of Christmas Island can be characterised as a system of institutionalised paternalism, colonialism and
racism, which began in the late 19th century and continued well on into the latter half of the 20th century.

4.1 Early Colonisation
Christmas Island was uninhabited until the late nineteenth century when, following the discovery of rich phosphate deposits, it was claimed and colonised by the British government. Phosphate was a much sort after fertilizer in the rapidly developing farms of late 19th century Europe, Australia and New Zealand. Surplus farm produce was needed for the growing populations of the industrialised world. In order to exploit this newly found resource, Scottish scientist and entrepreneur, John Murray, established the Christmas Island Phosphate Company (CIP Co) in 1887 on behalf of the British government. Christmas Island later became part of a group of colonies known as the British Straights Settlements, which included the Malay peninsular islands of Penang and Singapore.

In order to mine the phosphate in the most economically viable way, ‘cheap’, indentured Asian labour was brought or rather enticed to Christmas Island from war torn southern China, Malaya, Indonesia and the neighbouring Cocos Islands. As with colonialist ventures elsewhere in the region, it was only through the use of such ‘cheap’ labour that the mining and export of phosphate could yield desirable profit margins for British, Australian and New Zealand farms. Thus, from its very beginnings, Christmas Island and its newly arrived Asian inhabitants were economically subordinated to the wealth and interests of the colonising countries.
Throughout the 19th century and for a large part of the 20th century, Asian workers continued to be shipped to the island as indentured labourers on short-term contracts. These workers were known as ‘Coolies’ and for purposes of easy identification had their work number tattooed on their wrists. They were paid token wages, provided with squalid accommodation and survived on minimal rations. Workers were subjected to
brutal and humiliating punishments, often subjugated with opium and threatened with permanent deportation if they dared to complain. Conditions were so appalling for the workers on Christmas Island that phosphate production nearly had to stop at one time because so many workers were dying from malnutrition and disease. In one particular year, 1901, 1 in 4 Chinese workers died of Berri Berri (Adams and Neale, 1993, p.18).

Meanwhile as the ‘Coolies’ laboured eleven hours a day and eight on Sundays in mosquito infested tropical jungle mines, the island offered significant profits to astute and adventurous European businessmen (Adams and Neale, 1993, p.32). Whilst individual members of the British colonial office made some official complaints to the British Phosphate Company about the poor treatment of the workers on Christmas Island, in reality there was little that the young ‘Oxbridge’ educated Englishmen sent to administer the colony could do, or did do, to oppose the actions of the ‘wily Scottish company men’ (Adams and Neale, 1993, p. 32).

Christmas Island remained under the colonial rule of the British until 1958. During this time, both the mine and the island were managed by the Christmas Island Phosphate Company (CIP) then the British Phosphate Company (BPC) Commissioners in what has been described by one long term resident as “a British Raj” style (in Price, 1998, p. 57).

Throughout this time the island continued to be managed in true colonialist fashion by the ‘long white sock brigade’.
4.2 Post War Colonialism – Out of sight and Out of Mind
At the end of the Second World War the British government sold its mining rights jointly to Australia and New Zealand, who set about re establishing phosphate mining in a bid to provide sufficient cheap phosphate for their rapidly expanding post war primary export industries. As the population of Christmas Island had shrunk to below 1000, new workers were recruited from the neighbouring Cocos (Keeling) Islands and the former British Straits Settlements in Singapore and the Malaya. Despite a change in ownership, the mine continued to be managed in these early post war years by the British Phosphate Commissioners who had extraordinary industrial legislative powers on the island. They were able to dismiss workers without appeal and have them deported within 24 hours, many having “never to return” stamped on their passport. No
one was allowed on or off the island without written permission from the commissioners.

Although housing and employment conditions improved gradually during the latter half of the century, social and economic inequality continued. The best housing and jobs continued to go to Australian supervisors who were flown into the tropical island tax haven on lucrative short-term contracts. At the same time, Asians continued to be threatened with deportation if they criticised the system, having the infamous NTR (Never to Return) stamped on their passports. Asian workers continued to be paid significantly less than their counterparts on the mainland and they were, for the most part, denied access to white clubs and organisations. Social distance was maintained through a policy of segregated housing, transport and schooling.

Examples and stories of the discriminatory practices that continued on Christmas Island well into the latter half of the 20th century abound on Christmas Island. One resident describes these practices in the following terms:

Parents long ago were forced to work with little pay. Only Western people can use the swimming pool. White men got all the benefits. The company supplied them with cars, they got special transport to school. When I was small all the Chinese and Malay in one school and European went to a different school. All the European people lived in A grade houses and Chinese and Malay lived in C type houses.

There used to be two different methods of transporting students to go to school. One was fancy bus for the European students and for the Asian students it was just a two-seated truck with a long tray at the back for them to sit on.


Europeans on the island came mostly from the Australian mainland. Ironically, they were often attracted to the far-flung out post by lucrative salaries, no taxes and spacious ‘colonial’ style houses with sweeping ocean views.
If they did not bring colonialist attitudes and prejudices with them they were soon exposed to them, especially within the segregated and elitist atmosphere that pervaded the island’s social and sporting clubs. The atmosphere on Christmas Island up to the late 1970s was described by one long term European resident as:

Pretty much the last outpost of the British Raj. You had the island going through a period of change in 1978 and ’79 but you still had the entrenched BPC people. In 1978 the parity wasn’t in with wages. That all happened in 1979. So the BPC men were all there with their white shorts and long socks and they all played golf on Friday afternoons and the understanding was that women didn’t go to the CI Club on Friday night because the men would go there after golf. The CI Club was pretty much a hive of activity and there were lots of movies and dramas and special nights. The European people would put on shows but by virtue of the fees it was a European stronghold.


Even when most other former colonies in South East Asia had, through a process of decolonisation or post war liberation struggles, cast off at least the institutionalised shackles of colonialism, many of these vestiges remained on Christmas Island. As a small and isolated community, out of sight and out of mind, it remained a forgotten colonialist outpost through the 1950s and 1960s and on into the 1970s and 1980s. Throughout this period, Asian residents were discriminated against socially, legally,
politically and economically through institutional structures that were supported and perpetuated by colonialist and racist attitudes. The most obvious example of this was the fact that even in the late 1970s, Asian workers on Christmas Island were still being paid less than one third of their mainland counterparts in similar jobs and significantly less than any European workers on the island. According to Waters:

In 1978, 59% of the workforce [on Christmas Island] were paid $50 or less a week. Another 30% received less that $75 a week…. This needs to be set beside the minimum capital city Australian wage of $120 a week. Of course most mainland Australians were earning more than that – the average weekly earnings for males on ordinary time was $201 in Australia in 1978. (Waters, 1992, p. 103).

As well as a massive wage disparity, many other conditions on the island clearly demonstrated the two tiered, quasi apartheid colonialist structures that existed on the island even into the 1970s and 1980s. The anachronism of the situation was captured in a 1975 Australian government report into conditions on the island, which stated that:


During the late 1970s, following the very dubious dismissal of a government employed Chinese translator, the workers formed their first union, the Union of Christmas Island Workers (UCIW). This union waged a long and intense struggle to gain mainland Australian wages and conditions for the Asian workers on Christmas Island. As a result of this struggle, conditions on the island have improved since the early 1980s, wage parity and citizenship rights have been won and the Asian and European schools amalgamated.

4.3 Educational Context
Christmas Island’s educational context is, as with all education systems, necessarily influenced by (and influences) the political, social, economic and legal context in which it lies. To a great extent, the history of education on Christmas Island mirrors (and to a
degree shapes) the underlying forces and attitudes impacting the island’s history and its political, economic and social structures.

4.3.1 Segregated Schooling from the 1928 to 1976
For most of the island’s settled history schooling has been segregated. The first informal school was not established until 1928 and provided educational services for only the Malay and Chinese children. Expatriate officials and mine managers chose not to bring their children to the island but rather leave them in schools in Europe or Australia. According to a report written by a former principal of Christmas Island DHS, Mr Paul Kovalevs (circ.1991, p.1):

> Until the 1920s labourers’ families were not permitted on the island. Later, as families arrived, an itinerant Chinese scholar taught Chinese to individual people. In 1928 a Malay class of four children was formed under the tuition of a Malay boatman.

As the numbers of children grew, the first formal school was established by the Christmas Island Phosphate Company in 1931. It was known as the Christmas Island ‘English’ School (as its main purpose was to teach English) and it attempted to cater for the needs of around 30 to 35 Malay and Chinese children living on the island. An untrained teacher was provided for the school by the Singapore Education Department. The school is described by Neale (1998, p.73) as:

> A dilapidated one room wooden structure…towards the south end of Flying Fish Cove. About 35 Malay and Chinese students were given a rudimentary education under the strict tutelage of a Chinese teacher brought in from Singapore.

As an island structured around colonialist principles, with the sole purpose for its existence being the extraction of phosphate at the cheapest possible cost for the benefit of the colonising country, there was little motivation for any great emphasis to be placed on education. Whilst the mining company provided education for the growing numbers of Asian children on the island, it was only ever very rudimentary. By 1942 the school population had grown to 70 Chinese and Malay children in four grades. Given the size
of the student population, the school was moved to a larger building but still only one teacher was employed. As Kovalevs (circa 1991, p.1) says:

The one teacher, who instructed 70 children in four grades, could aim only at turning out pupils who would be able to read, write and understand spoken English.

During the Second World War Christmas Island was occupied by the Japanese. As the war drew to a close, the Japanese transported half the island’s population to Indonesian labour camps from which many never returned. Interestingly though, while there was a break in ‘English’ education during the war from 1942 to 1945 schooling didn’t stop. Again according to Kovalevs’ (circ.1991, p.1) report:

Schooling was continued by the same teacher, who changed to teaching Japanese. The ‘Japanese’ school was moved to Isabel Beach, on the site of the present Christmas Island Recreation Club [now the Tourist Bureau].

By 1946, the English School for the Asian students on the Island was back in its old premises in Flying Fish Cove with 50 pupils in 5 grades under a headmaster and an untrained, temporary teacher. The first trained teacher on Christmas Island arrived in the same year, 1946.

After the Second World War, in 1949, the newly appointed British Phosphate Company established the first school for European children on the island. The school catered for the 7 primary school-aged European children with a trained teacher recruited from Melbourne. As evidence of the obvious disparity in educational provision between European children and Asian children, at the same time there were 150 Chinese and Malay children at the ‘English School’ with one headmaster and one teacher.
These 150 Asian children from the Drumsite and Settlement areas of the island who were able to attend school, were more fortunate than others from the outlying areas.

The children who lived on the other side of the island, in what were referred to as the Camps 4 and 5 and South Point mine sites, were denied access to any education because of the lack of transport. Only in 1951 were they given special permission by the Company to catch the phosphate trains to school. Even then their right to an education was subordinated to the needs of the mine as one former student from South Point recalls:

We went to the newly built Asian school near the railhead at Drumsite…. We went to school by train in a boxcar which was attached to the ore trucks. So we have to get up very early in the morning and be ready at the station pick up point by six. The train trip would take less than an hour if we went straight through Drumsite but often one and a half hours. The ore train always had precedence. If the ore train which we used to call the ‘big train’ was on the track our train had to get out of the way – phosphate was our livelihood so the priority goes to the ore train.

(Choo Wai Chee in Neale, 1988 p. 148)

The child’s comments reveal not only the conditions under which he went to school but also his understanding of the economic importance of the mine for his family.
With the takeover of the English dominated CIP Co. by the slightly more progressive, Australian and New Zealand managed, British Phosphate Company in the late 1950s, there were some improvements to conditions on the island, including the building of a new secondary school. Also, a new technical centre was established which offered, for the first time, adult education classes in an attempt to overcome the lags in education created by the high staff and student ratios and the lack of qualified teachers at the Asian school. Even so, while secondary student numbers had grown to 150 with many children being transported in from mine sites across the island, the company still only employed 1 headmaster, 2 teachers and a teacher assistant.

By 1961 numbers in the Asian school had grown to such an extent that a new primary school was established in its current location at the top of the hill in Drumsite. The Christmas Island English School for the Asian students was modelled on the Singapore educational system with its inherent British colonial and, to some extent, Confucianist overtones. Teachers were recruited from Singapore and programs were developed from the Singapore curriculum. As in Singapore, English was the medium of instruction and students who completed four years of secondary education could sit for their ‘O’ level subject exams through the General Certificate of Education conducted by the University of London. At the same time European students at the Settlement school followed the Western Australian curriculum.

Descriptions of education under the Singapore system focus on strictness, lack of individualised support and penalties for speaking languages other than English:

You had to sit still. You were afraid to ask questions and they were not encouraged. There was caning and if you failed you were punished. It was the Singapore curriculum. The content was mostly Singapore history and the development of third world countries like India and China. Now you get a lot more help if you are struggling. Before it was this is what you got to do today. If you don’t get it bad luck. No follow up. For year one you had two exams per year.
It was different then. We weren’t allowed to speak Malay. Even at recess and lunch we had to speak English. If you got caught out you had to do some hard work after school or write out 100 lines “I must not speak Malay”. Every time the teachers went by you had to speak English. (Malay parent. In Price, 1998, p. 96).

During the period from 1928 to 1975 children on the island were exposed to two very different sets of educational experiences that served to separate them and instil in them different knowledges, values and understandings. Students attending the Settlement school were immersed in the Discourses of mainland Australia and those attending the school for Asian children were schooled in the Discourses of newly independent Singapore with its vestiges of British imperialism and Confucianist style pedagogical attitudes and practices. These different schooling experiences had a significant impact on the way young people growing up on the island viewed themselves and each other. Their educational and social experiences of segregation shaped and in many cases continue to shape their economic fortunes, attitudes and beliefs today.

4.3.2 The Amalgamation of the Schools in 1976
As the proceeding sections describe, from 1928 until 1975, schooling was segregated on Christmas Island in an apartheid style system that clearly advantaged European students in terms of access, class sizes, building standards and teacher qualifications. This is a clear example of how those with economic and political power in a society are able to perpetuate a privileged position for members of their own Discourse group through the inequitable distribution of resources such as education. As well as this it is an example of how children can begin to learn the Discourses of colonialism and racism, which privilege one race over another, through their exposure to a school system that articulates this social hierarchy in its differentiated resources.

As early as 1958 and possibly well before this, the inadequacy of educational provision for Asian students had been raised with the Company and the administration. Commenting on the standard of education for the Asian students on Christmas Island in
his annual report for 1958, the Headmaster of the Asian school, Mr George Fam concluded that only 30% of the pupils were up to the standards set in Singapore. He therefore recommended that:

The standard of education must be stepped up to equip them (the pupils) to face the severe competition they have to meet in the outside world. (Kovalevs, circa 1991, p.1).

His report was timely in that this was the year that Christmas Island was officially handed over to the Australian Federal Government and became a non-self governing external territory of Australia. Perhaps in response to such submissions, an early directive issued by the Department of Territories, now with administrative responsibilities for Christmas Island, suggested that a married male teacher be appointed to oversee education on Christmas Island: “In all its forms, and to include the Asian school under the headmastership of Mr Fam.” (Kovalevs, circa 1991, p.1).

Despite this initial, although meagre, step to address the educational situation on Christmas Island, the schools on Christmas Island remained segregated for another 17 years. It was not until a Federal Government inquiry into education on the island was commissioned by the newly elected Labour Government that the issues of segregated schooling were formerly investigated. The Dunkley Report, as it was known, concluded that such a segregated education system was inappropriate in Australia in the late 1970s and recommended that the schools be amalgamated (Commonwealth Department of Education, 1985).

In response to the report a new amalgamated school was established on Christmas Island and became known as the Christmas Island Area School. Teaching staff were recruited from mainland Australia through the Canberra Teaching Service (CTS). The curriculum was modelled on that used in the Western Australian state school system and was clearly aimed at the integration of Christmas Island students into mainland
Australian cultural mores. As the Department of Home Affairs 1979 to 1980 Annual Report stated:

> It has an Australian oriented curriculum based largely on the Western Australian education model and is designed to provide an educational background for students who in the future may move to the Australian mainland [Italics added].

The days between 1976 and 1990 are known colloquially as the ‘Canberra Days’ and heralded a major change in the educational experiences of the all the students on the island, particularly the Asian students, many of whom speak of the very different atmosphere, curriculum and teaching style they found in the new school. One student described his reaction to the sudden change from the Singapore system with which he had been familiar and the Canberra system. His comments reflect the disconcerting effects that cultural distance and different Discourse patterns can have in a school environment:

> The Canberra system – wo – that was different!! It was too open. People into study felt a bit distracted. Discipline was not tight any more. Kids started to be more open. I feel it happened too quick. A cultural change to Western style – sit around anywhere in class – open discussion – it was more like a social club.


As part of the process of educational reform, several Education Assistants were employed by the Federal Government to assist the teachers from the mainland to cope with the amalgamated school and in particular the influx of migrant children from Malaysia who arrived in the early 1980s. The Education Assistants were recruited mainly on the basis of their bilingual skills and, in particular, their ability to speak communicative English. As well as translating for the teachers, they also played an important role in bridging the gap between the school and the parents, many of whom spoke little or no English.

The Education Assistants and other non-teaching staff recruited on island were and still are referred to in the school and the wider community as ‘locally engaged staff’ (LES). Hidden within this term there is a strong sense of ‘us’ and ‘them’ or those who are
considered to be Christmas Islanders and those who are only on the island for two or three year employment contracts. The term also signals, to some extent, membership of the Union of Christmas Island Workers (UCIW), the union that fought for and won considerable improvements in living conditions for Christmas Islanders in the 1970s and which continues to fight for social justice on the island.

The three participants in this study were ‘locally engaged staff’ who began working at the school as Education Assistants in the early 1980s. From this time on there were two distinct groups of staff employed at the Christmas Island school, the locally engaged non-teaching staff who included EAs, office staff and cleaners and gardeners, and the teaching/administration staff. The former were entirely Malay and Chinese and the latter expatriates from mainland Australia brought to the island on fairly lucrative short-term contracts. The teaching staff and administration staff, in a situation reminiscent of other workplaces on the island, attracted much better wages and conditions, including better housing, than the locally engaged non-teaching staff. By virtue of their positions within key organisations such as the Federal Government bureaucracy, the hospital, school and the police, expatriates from mainland Australia were able to play a greater role in the development of policies, which impacted on the future political, social and economic directions of the island.

By 1990 the Federal Government had negotiated a Service Delivery Arrangement with the Western Australian Ministry of Education who then took over responsibility for the school. This step was in tune with other developments on the island, which led to various government inquiries into the way in which the island was governed. From this time on teaching staff were recruited from Western Australia and the curriculum and organisational structure of the school fell much more in line with that of mainland Western Australian schools.
4.4 The New Millennium - Neo-colonialism Continues

Despite these significant improvements, evidence of the lingering impact of colonialism and the continuation of neo-colonialist practices and attitudes abound on Christmas Island. The long term impact of colonialisit practices, despite structural and institutional changes, is in keeping with experiences in other former colonies across the world. As Yew (2002, para 4.) puts it:

….the effects of colonisation have had profound legacies that do not go away even when the colony has moved on to a different form. On the one hand colonialism cannot ‘officially’ end because there can be no reversion to pre-colonial societies. In effect what passes, in a rudimentary way, as the end of colonialism, has often been recognised as sovereignty or the gaining of independence….On the other hand colonialism has also become more Manichean, reappearing in one form as neo-colonialism, while also appearing in the discourse used in these societies. For example, critics who stress on the latter point see imagination, language, culture and even the mind as still colonised by the West.

The following sections describe and analyse the extent to which such lingering post-colonial and neo-colonialist attitudes and practices continue to exist within the institutional frameworks and social and psychological Discourses on Christmas Island.

Neo-colonialism is taken here to mean the economic situation of former colonies where political de-colonisation did little to alter economic, political, social, educational, linguistic and importantly psychological imbalance that existed between the colonisers and the colonised (Smith, 2005, p. 6). Smith goes on to argue that under conditions of neo-colonialism powerful economic and cultural forces in these ‘former’ colonies continue to subordinate the interests of the colonised people in the interests of the coloniser and, more broadly within contemporary global systems, that of international capital.

Several writers within what is often described as post-colonial theory draw attention to the various ways in which colonialist discourses have continued to impact on economic and political institutions of former colonies as well as on attitudes, beliefs and values of
both the colonised and colonisers (Fanon, 1952; Said, 1985; Spivak, 1990). Fanon in particular has drawn a particularly graphic picture of the way in which this cultural colonialism can impact on the consciousness of the colonised mind leading to a sense of alienation and dislocation with their own cultures and values:

In an attempt to escape the association of blackness with evil [perpetuated in European colonial discourses] the black man dons a white mask, or thinks of himself as a universal subject equally participating in a society that advocates an equality supposedly abstracted from personal appearance. Cultural values are internalised, or ‘epidermalised’ into consciousness, creating a fundamental disjuncture between the black man’s consciousness and his body. Under these conditions, the black man is necessarily alienated from himself. (Fanon, 1952. In Smith, 2005, p7).

The extent of neo-colonialism on Christmas Island is particularly evident in the style of government, legal system, housing, employment stratification, power structures and attitudes on the island. As an example, to this day, the majority of Malay people on the island live in 2-3 bedroom ‘Singapore style’ flats in an area known as Kampong. Most Malay men are employed by the CI stevedoring company to load and unload the phosphate ships. Most Chinese Malay people live half way up the hill in flats in the Poon Saan area (Poon Saan is Cantonese for ‘half way’). The majority of Chinese men are employed in the phosphate mine. In contrast, European Australians mostly live in large, spacious three or four bedroom ‘colonial style’ houses, or in the new modern subdivision of Silver City in two story houses with panoramic ocean views, and many occupy managerial positions on the island.

European Australians continue to be brought from Australia on short term contracts to work for, or often manage, government organisations like the Administration, Federal Police, the Indian Ocean Territories Health Service, Parks Australia and Christmas Island District High School (as it is now known). Aside from the Teacher Trainee Program at the school, which is the subject of this study, there has been little in the way of specific affirmative action or professional development policies (other than those
suggested in mainland policy documents) to overcome this inequity and enable local people to take on positions of power within such government organisations.

Christmas Island’s unique political status as a non-self governing external territory has also done little to empower local Christmas Islanders by giving them an effective voice within Australia’s democratic structures. Administratively, the island falls under the auspices of the Commonwealth Department of Territories and Regional Services (DOTARS). Day to day administration of the island is directed by an Administrator appointed, not elected, from the mainland, by the Federal Government. Unlike mainland Australia there is no middle ‘state’ tier of government. What would normally be considered state government responsibilities under the Australian federal system, such as education and health, are delivered under Service Delivery Arrangements made between the federal and state governments (usually the Western Australian State Government).

Other services are divided between the elected Shire of Christmas Island and the Federal Government. Despite having most of their essential services delivered by the Western Australian state government, people on Christmas Island can only vote in a Federal election, via an electorate in the Northern Territory, which has no cultural or historical ties with the island or its people. Christmas Islanders have no direct voting rights in the Western Australian state electoral system even though most of their important services are delivered by this government. As an example, if the state government of Western Australia was to introduce a new policy to limit the teaching of foreign languages in Western Australian schools or to reintroduce corporal punishment, then Christmas Island residents would have almost no say in this decision. Under normal mainland Australian electoral circumstances, a parent could at least lobby their local member of parliament if they disagreed with this policy. On Christmas Island the most people can do if they wish to have a voice in the delivery of services is lobby a
Federal minister, who can then make recommendations to the state minister who may or may not change the policy to suit the needs and desires of Christmas Islanders. Given that Christmas Islanders have no direct electoral power this is highly unlikely. This convoluted system has often called into question the democratic nature of governance on Christmas Island and is currently the subject of a Christmas Island Shire Council (SOCI) campaign to have the constitutional status of Christmas Island reviewed by the United Nations.

The island’s legal structure is similarly outmoded and out of step with that in existence on mainland Australia. When the Australian government took ‘ownership’ of the island from the British in 1958 it enacted the Christmas Island Act 1958 as the legal framework for the island. Under this act laws in place immediately prior to transfer to Australia were kept in place. As Christmas Island had previously formed part of the British Straits Settlements, which included Singapore, most of the laws were those in existence in Singapore at that time. The Federal Government could, at its leisure, make any changes to these laws by making special Ordinances or Regulations pertaining to Christmas Island. These changes were very much done on an ad hoc basis as a reaction to specific issues as they arose.

One particular example that highlights the enormous disparities between conditions on Christmas Island and those on the mainland occurred in 1998 when a resident of Christmas Island was accused of murder. Under the Singapore laws that still existed at the time on Christmas Island, he was not entitled to trial by jury, a right considered absolutely fundamental to mainland Australians in the 1990s. This incident led to a government enquiry into Australia’s governance of Christmas Island as part of a general review of the legal regimes of Australia’s three external territories (Cocos-Keeling Islands, Norfolk Island and Christmas Island). Their report The Island’s in the Sun,
published in 1991, proposed a number of reforms to ensure that residents of the external territories:

Receive the same benefits, rights and protection under the law as other citizens of Australia; a situation, which the committee has found, does not currently pertain.  
(Report of House of Representatives Standing Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs, 1991)

Importantly, the report recommended that in respect of Christmas Island:

The Commonwealth ensure in its administration of [the island], that the territory not assume the characteristics of a non-self governing territory within the terms of Chapter XI of the United Nations Treaty.  
(Report of House of Representatives Standing Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs, 1991)

This raised an important constitutional issue regarding the historical and current conditions on Christmas Island. The characteristics by which the UN defines a non-self governing Territory are:

- Geographical separateness
- Ethnic or cultural distinctiveness [and importantly]
- People are in a position of subordination due to historical, administrative, political and/or economic elements

The committee did not make a clear statement as to whether Christmas Island had all the characteristics of a non-self governing Territory but according to a draft submission by the Christmas Island Shire to the UN (Robinson, 2004), it did acknowledge that the case was arguable and that: “Hastening the process of legal, administrative and political reform…would help to dispel any doubts.”  (Report of House of Representatives Standing Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs, 1991).

If it could be argued that the people of Christmas Island are in a position of subordination then it could put added international pressure on the Australian government to change many of its legal and administrative practices. To this end, the inquiry’s report The Islands in the Sun, recommended in 1991 that a process of
'normalisation’ of conditions on the island begin and that Western Australian state laws should be applied. Despite this recommendation having been made over 10 years ago, there is still a great deal of debate in the community as to the extent to which the Federal Government has adhered to the recommendations of the parliamentary committee to achieve legal, administrative and political reform. According to the Christmas Island Shire the Federal Government has in fact failed to provide the level of self-determination to Christmas Islanders envisaged in the report and has not undertaken a process of decolonisation necessary to bring this about.

These inequalities, particularly with regard to constitutional rights, have convinced the Shire of Christmas Island to launch a case in the United Nations to have the rights to greater self-determination of Christmas Islanders reviewed. They have also led members of the school staff and administration to put in place a series of measures to change such attitudes and practices within the curriculum and staffing structures. Despite these moves, the social, political and economic landscape of Christmas Island, despite its small size and relative geographical isolation, continues to this day to be affected by the exigencies of international markets and the national interests of mainland Australia. As an example, in the last 10 years the Christmas Island economy has been affected by:

- the rise and fall of phosphate prices which are linked to the fluctuations in the Malaysian dollar
- the closing of the Christmas Island Casino following the collapse of the Asian market in the mid 1990’s and the fall of the Soeharto government in Indonesia
- the establishment of a ‘temporary’ Immigration Reception and Processing Centre in the wake of the internationally famous Tampa incident and the arrival of large numbers of Asylum Seekers
Each of these external forces has economic, social and political effects on the population of Christmas Island. They bring with them new infrastructures, itinerant workers from mainland Australia (particularly during building phases), new technologies and changing economic prospects. While all communities are subject to such outside influences, it is argued by many in the Christmas Island community that their relative lack of self determination, economic and educational disadvantage and social dislocation brought about by their history of colonialism and current neo-colonialist constitutional arrangements means they have even less say than most.

As well as having an impact on economic, political and legal structures on Christmas Island, its history of colonialism has also pervaded and continues to pervade attitudes and social practices on the island. One of the most pernicious aspects of this is played out through Discourses of superiority and inferiority and access and exclusion. As an example Asian people in their mid 30s today still clearly recall being denied access to many places on the island because of their ethnicity. The following recount from one resident encapsulates both the very recent history of discriminatory practices and how such attitudes can continue to have an adverse impact on the mind set of many local residents:

My husband went to the school that was for the non-white kids and there is still that attitude that prevails - they weren’t allowed to the CI Club or Buck House [the then Administrator’s residence] or on the buses or the pool. He is only 33 and that is his childhood – being chased off the Administrator’s house for picking mangoes and so that is a bit of a touchy one – and this is recent for people my age and that has got to affect the way you think and react to things, your attitudes toward people.


Many of these examples also relate to experiences within the school system and provide evidence of the extensive role that schooling plays in the perpetuating the “Big C Conversations” about who knows best that are inherent in a colonalist system:
Parents may think they are not going to be respected at school which would have been the case in the past – we are here, we know what we are doing you just send your kids along because we know what is best. (MC, 1996. In Price, 1998, p. 58).

Even after the schools amalgamated there were very strong perceptions of difference between the European students and the Asian students:

There weren’t many white kids in our class even then. Most went to Perth. The only ones who stayed here were as slow as us and got apprenticeships. (Malay mine worker. In Price, 1998, p. 100).

Knowledge of such attitudes and practices is important in gaining an understanding of how the participants in this study position themselves in relation to the teachers and administrators at the school and their own ability to become teachers.

Other Discourses also serve to frame their identity and thinking including those of Islam, Confucianism and of Malay / Chinese dualism. In this latter Discourse, Moslem Malays are depicted as largely ‘backward, slow, easy-going and uncompetitive’ and Chinese as ‘hard working and competitive’ (Khoo, 1996; pp. 24-34). The Discourse is drawn from the strong ethnic economic divide that was created by British colonisers who brought Chinese workers to Malaya to work in the tin mines, Indians to work in the plantations and left Malays in the farms and fishing industries. Former Malaysian president Dr Mahathir has used this Discourse in his bid to overcome Chinese economic hegemony and to ‘modernise’ the country by encouraging Malays to take on the supposedly hard working attributes and ethics of the Chinese (Mahathir, 1986; Price, 1998, p.63). Despite these attempts to change former attitudes in Malaysia it is still a strongly held view on the island and within the school that Moslem Malays will not achieve academically as well as Chinese or European students:

One of my students said, “What do I need to learn English for?” This says it all for him. “What do I need to do this for, I’m going to get a job with my dad on the wharf, I’m not going to have to speak English, I’m only going to need my native language.”

Discourses and “Big C Conversations” associated with colonialism serve to perpetuate an economically and socially stratified society, most often based on race, ethnicity or language differences. The EAs in this case study were attempting to cross these boundaries and shift their social and economic positioning. The difficulties they faced are encapsulated in later chapters which highlight how these attitudes served as significant barriers to their engagement with the course.

4.5 Towards Inclusivity – Pedagogical Changes at CIDHS

Within the theoretical framework of this study it is contended that whilst education can be a powerful force in mirroring and perpetuating dominant Discourses it can, under certain circumstances, also be a dynamic force for change. This has certainly been the case at CIDHS where there has been a profound pedagogical shift from what was previously a mono-cultural and subtractive approach to the diversity of language and culture in the school, towards one in which the languages and cultures of the local people of Christmas Island are valued and respected.

Despite its diverse student population, the school had, until the late 1990s, what can best be described as a monolingual, mono-cultural approach to education. As an example, within the living memory of the parents of most of the children at the school, first languages were actively discouraged by the school’s policies and practices.

In interviews and conversations, parents speak of being disciplined when they were at school if they were heard speaking in Malay or one of the many Chinese languages, and more recently being told by teachers only to speak to their children in English. This was clearly something that many could not do as their own English language skills were limited. For some parents, this has created a huge divide between themselves and their children. Following a parent meeting held by the school in 2003 to encourage first language use in the home as a strategy for developing second language skills, for example, one parent cried as she explained how she could not communicate with her
teenage son because he could not speak her language and she could not speak English (Personal Communication, August, 2003).

Mandarin, as a Language Other Than English (LOTE) subject, was only introduced into the curriculum at CIDHS in the early 1990s, after it became compulsory for all Western Australian schools to include a LOTE in their curriculum. Prior to this, no languages other than English were taught at the school. Malay (spoken as a first language by 15% of the students and as a second or third by many others) was only introduced in 1999 after a significant change in school ethos and practice.

During the late 1990s a wave of change swept the school. This was partly the result of qualitative research studies, conducted by this researcher, which showed that Malay students, as a linguistic minority group, were underachieving according to mainstream educational standards (Price, 1998). Acknowledgement that this inequity required a shift in the pedagogical paradigm at CIDHS, led to a significant change in the school’s practices, culture and ethos. This shift was from one in which English as a Second Language (ESL) students were being viewed as deficit, to one in which the language and cultures of the students and the community were encouraged and respected by the school.

Changes recommended by the research, included the development of a more inclusive curriculum, a cultural awareness teacher induction program, the introduction of an integrated dual LOTE Malay and Mandarin program and a changed role and status for EAs. As a part of these changes, three Education Assistants, one Chinese and two Moslem Malays, were encouraged to enrol in an ITE program as part time, external students at an Australian HEI. Their enrolment and subsequent engagement with the ITE program, as Education Assistants from culturally diverse backgrounds, is the subject of this qualitative case study, conducted as part of a Doctorate in Education.
5 Conclusion

It is the contention of this chapter that powerful socio-cultural, historical, political and economic forces have played a role in shaping the “life spaces” of the participants in this study. The most pervasive and pernicious of these Discourses have been the Discourses and “Big C Conversations” associated with colonialism and their lingering legacies in the form of neo-colonialist institutional systems, practices and attitudes. These Discourses have shaped and continue to shape the way people identify and position themselves in relation to others on Christmas Island. They have a particularly strong impact on the educational and employment aspirations of many people who continue to believe that skilled and managerial positions can and should be held by Europeans. As a result of the island’s history of colonialism and the Discourses that this has perpetuated, the interests and basic rights of Asian residents have been subordinated economically (most obviously through a two-tiered wage structure), socially, legally, educationally and politically to the interests of the colonisers. Despite improvements over time, vestiges of these Discourses continue to inform attitudes and practices that perpetuate these conditions of inequality and beliefs about the social positioning of people according to their ethnicity.

Two important factors dominate the Christmas Island context. The first is that Christmas Island’s history of colonialism has left a legacy of structural economic inequality that has yet to be fully redressed. Little has been actively done to promote a decolonisation process through policies such as affirmative action. Secondly, as the research on the impact of colonialism suggests, colonialism also leaves a long legacy of attitudes that take a long time to overcome.

This dissertation examines in depth, the journey that three EAs have taken to retrain to become qualified teachers in the context of Christmas Island. Within this context various Discourses, including those of colonialism, neo-colonialism, Islam,
Confucianism and those associated with age and gender, impacted on their educational opportunities, their economic, political and legal ability to be self-determining, their social positioning within a colonialist and patriarchal framework and their construction of self as less worthy or capable of taking on higher level positions within an organisation.

As teacher shortages emerge as a significant issue across the globe, and as classrooms become increasingly more diverse, this study seeks to develop a set of recommendations for more appropriate ways to retrain people from non-mainstream backgrounds, in particular Education Assistants, who may have had similar experiences to these women, to become teachers. As the extensive literature on minority education suggests, these teachers will be better placed to support the social, emotional and educational needs of minority students and will be able to contribute positively to the development of a more inclusive school environment (Price, 1998, p.21). In order for this to happen, the impact and pervasiveness of colonialism and neo-colonialism, particularly in identity formation, needs to be highlighted in any analysis of how they may successfully engage with Western educational Discourses.
Chapter 4    Chelas, Ansars and Acolytes

1    Introduction

This chapter describes the “life spaces” (Lewin, 1952, xi) of the three women who were the centre of this case study. It includes their early childhood experiences growing up in Malaysia, their schooling, early working lives, and their family, religious and community commitments. The stories are drawn from narratives and interviews and are told through their own Discourses using their own words and ways of writing and speaking.

Through this chapter, which is grounded in rich qualitative data, it is hoped that the reader will gain a deeper personal understanding of the participants and importantly the historical, socio-economic and cultural forces that have shaped these women’s lives. Through their experiences and their voices the reader can gain an insight into the cultural models and “Big ‘C’ Conversations” that inform their thinking and ways of being in the world. In particular they will help the reader to understand how these Discourses, which are likely to be different from those of the HEI, have impacted on their engagement with an ITE program.

Firstly, there is need for an explanation of the title of this chapter which is also the title of this dissertation. ‘Chela’ is a Buddhist term for a novice, a pupil or a disciple qualifying for initiation into esoteric Buddhism. ‘Ansar’ is an Islamic term referring to the first converts to Islam from Medina – it also means helpers. ‘Acolytes’ are, in the Greek tradition, assistants or beginners (The Concise Oxford Dictionary, 1976). These three terms are used to highlight the intercultural and neo-colonial dimensions of this story as the three Malaysian women, two of whom are Moslem and one of Chinese ethnic descent interface with a Western educational system. The terms denote the shift
that they must make within what is essentially a hierarchical structure from novice to professional or from Education Assistant to Teacher.

To maintain anonymity the names used in this dissertation are not the real names of the women involved. Each of the women chose their own pseudonym, selecting the names of other women that they admired and respected and who have played a significant role in their lives.

2 Zaiton

Zaiton describes herself as a “Singaporean girl”. She is intelligent, passionate, strong-willed and capable, with a sense of confidence born of her belief that anyone can succeed if they are given the right opportunities and they are willing and want to try hard. This belief in herself, together with her strong commitment to her family, her community and her faith, has enabled her to overcome the many significant hurdles in her life. These are outlined in the sections that follow.

2.1 Early Childhood

Prior to becoming a part of the Trainee Teacher Program at CIDHS, Zaiton had been an Education Assistant at Christmas Island District High School for over 15 years. Born in Singapore in 1958, Zaiton is a committed Moslem and the mother of four daughters aged between 19 and 13. Zaiton, speaking in Singaporean English, begins the story of her life like this:

My mother passed away when I was as young as 2 years old. She died of chronic myocardia infraction. Since then, I was looked after by my grandmother. Mum was a Singaporean and after her death dad had to return to Malaysia. I was told by my grandma that dad was determined to take me with him but Grandma was even stronger. Eventually my dad gave in and since then I lived with my Grandma. (Journal, February 2000)
Zaiton grew up, in her words, as “a Singapore girl” in the 1960s:

So whole of my young life was as a Singapore girl. There’s where I was born – and I lived with my grandma. I addressed grandma as ‘emak’, which means mum.

(Journal, February 2000)

She lived together with her grandmother in the same house as her uncle, his wife and their two children. According to Zaiton, life for her as a child was difficult and is certainly different from that experienced by most teachers who grew up in Australia in the 1960s:

We were very poor. The house we lived in didn’t even have electricity. At night time we had to light up our only little kerosene lamp that Grandma had. But I never regretted a thing. I remember the times when Grandma and I had to put out all the pots and pans we had under the broken roof to collect rain. I also remember walking around from one place to another yelling out “Goreng Pisang! Epok-epok!” carrying a little basket with fried bananas and curry puffs that my Grandma cooked to sell.

(Reflective Journal February 2000)

As a pre-schooler, Zaiton worked cleaning dishes at a food stall that belonged to one of her neighbours. During her high school years, she and her grandmother went to live with her Aunty who had 8 children, “4 girls and 4 boys”. Despite her family’s material hardships, Zaiton says that she does not regret anything about her life as a child. She is grateful for the fact that her Grandmother gave up a lot to care for her and she believes that although it was hard for her at times, it was God’s will and this has made her stronger:

So that was my life story it was like an incomplete puzzle when one piece was found and fitted in nicely, another piece went missing. However that is God’s will, it was meant to be and I believe in faith and God.

(Reflective Journal February 2000)

Finally, she acknowledges that in this world there are a lot of children much worse off than she was. Her thinking is very much informed by her belief that her life is determined by God’s will and that she must always be grateful for what she has:
There are a lot more children and people out there who are even worse and less fortunate than me. And today I think I am the luckiest person and I don’t want to compare my life to the people who are better, richer etc. Otherwise I will never feel grateful and that’s dangerous!!
(Reflective Journal February 2000)

She is also conscious of where she comes from and that her cultural and language background is important. This is a theme that runs through her thinking as she moves further towards becoming a teacher. She says to herself:

Remember where I come from, remember my roots!

Zaiton now has what she describes as a loving husband, 4 daughters, a stepmother, (her grandmother and father have passed away), stepbrothers and sisters and they all love her:

What more do I need? Nothing!

2.2 School Years
Zaiton began school in Singapore at the age of six. The school was a long way from her home and as there was no bus, she and her friends had to walk about forty-five minutes there and back each day. She attended the afternoon sessions as in those days, like today, the Singapore schools were divided into morning and afternoon classes to cater for the large student numbers.

She describes the school as an old two-story building located in front of an old fashioned bakery. After Zaiton had completed Year 1, the school was demolished and the students all went to different schools. Zaiton went to a school just ten minutes from home where she completed her primary school years. In Year 5, Zaiton was chosen to take part in Malay dance, which she enjoyed and continued until secondary school. In secondary school she expanded her interest by developing new movements in the area
of dance. Today on Christmas Island, Zaiton continues to teach Malay dance to students and adults.

Zaiton’s secondary school was a mixed ethnic school, which ran three different language streams including English, Malay and Chinese. As a ‘Malay stream’ student, the medium of instruction was in the Malay language except for one period a week of English language. The school operated 5 days a week with extra curricular activities on Saturdays. These included uniform groups (Girl Guides, St Johns Ambulance etc.), drama, dancing, debating and sporting activities. Every child was encouraged to take part in at least one activity.

The school was a four-story building. There was a separate Industrial Arts and Art building, a school hall, a covered eating area and two canteens - one halal and one non-halal. Each class consisted of about 35 – 40 students. The class structure was like primary school where students stayed in their own room and the teachers who taught different subjects would come into the classroom. Subjects like Home Economics and Industrial Arts were part of the curriculum and although still compulsory they were done outside of school hours.

At the beginning of each session, Zaiton vividly remembers the students had to gather together at the tennis courts to sing the Singaporean National Anthem. The school was very strict on school uniform including the length of the skirts and socks, the neatness of hair and the use of the school badge. Early attendance was essential because the school gate was closed once the bell rang and opened again after the National Anthem. People who came in late were given detention by the prefects.

Besides the prefects there were also class monitors. As a monitor for two years, it was Zaiton’s job to provide rostered jobs in the classroom such as sweeping the floor, cleaning the blackboard and keeping the class quiet when the teacher was out of the room! Zaiton enjoyed her secondary school years, which she said built her confidence.
She participated in radio drama and represented the school in many school debates. Her greatest achievement, she says, was representing her school in a debate on national television, where she was voted best speaker.

When asked to comment on what sort of teacher she would like to be when she graduated she was adamant that there was one particular teacher that she would never copy. She begins, as she does throughout her studies, with a disclaimer ‘if’.

In her words:

*If I become a teacher I will never be like one teacher I had in school. We were shouted at as ‘monkeys’ for the single slightest mistake. This teacher also had one favourite student, the cleverest, brightest child in the class. She was praised on every single day and was given full attention all day when she had a tiny cut on her hand. And for weeks this girl was suffocated with ‘Are you ok today, oh you poor thing, are you alright’ on and on and on. (Journal, March 2000)*

Commenting on how her school life has influenced her thoughts about becoming a teacher, Zaiton says:

*I know that teachers are human beings, they make mistakes too, but if I were to be a teacher I will try to be a teacher who is well organised, fully responsible and most importantly, no favouritism!* (Journal, March 2000).

It is important to note here how Zaiton always uses the word “if” rather than “when” to describe her aspirations to become a teacher. Throughout the course of this study Zaiton would never make the assumption that she would pass despite achieving good grades and gaining consistently positive feedback. She continued to use the word “if” and would never describe herself as a teacher but always a trainee teacher.

### 2.3 Life After School
Zaiton finished school at the end of what would be equivalent in Australia to Year 10 and went into a two-year training course to be an enrolled nurse. She came to Christmas Island after she married her husband, who was born on the island.
On Christmas Island, Zaiton worked in the hospital as an unregistered nurse until 1985. At the same time she was working at the community radio station, translating and broadcasting community news and the British Phosphate Company (BPC) news in Malay. Zaiton comments that:

At this time the BPC still had a dominant influence over the island. (Zaiton, Reflective Journal, Feb 2000).

When she fell pregnant with her second child, Zaiton wanted to get out of nursing because of the shift work, so she took on a casual job at the local kindergarten for three months. Following this she got a job at the Intensive Language Centre at the Christmas Island Area School (later known as CIDHS). Since then, Zaiton has worked as an Education Assistant in Kindergarten to Year 7 classes. As well as this, Zaiton has continued to work as a radio announcer and as a translator for the school and many other organisations on the island. Zaiton has also been teaching Malay at the Community Language School every Saturday morning for over ten years.

2.4 Family and Community Roles and Responsibilities.
Besides working full time as an Education Assistant and studying part time for a HEI degree, Zaiton has many other family, religious and community commitments. One of these is the care and upbringing of her four daughters, the oldest of whom was 19, with the others being 17, 15 and 13 (when Zaiton began the ITE program). Zaiton’s oldest daughter was then studying a double Commerce and Engineering degree at an HEI in Australia. When this young woman was in Year 8 she won a scholarship to study aeronautics at a specialist school on the mainland. Her ambitions at the time were to join the Australian Air Force, perhaps an incongruous ambition for a Moslem girl in Australia in the so-called era of global terrorism. Zaiton’s other daughters were all still at school.
The following extracts describe in more detail her extensive community commitments. These, combined with her family commitments, tertiary studies which were completed in a second language, as well as a full time job, can only be described as an enormous workload.

2.4.1 Translating

Mostly I translate for basically who ever sends me for translation. I accept it unless if I am really tied up with other things. So far I have done a lot of translations for the Union of Christmas Island Workers, the mine, the school, admin, shire. Now with someone else able to translate at the shire, there is not so much.

I also translate for the hospital and also for Canberra (the Commonwealth Government). Sometimes, they have called and asked and they fax it through and I also have done checking of translations already done by other people in Canberra and I send it back. Also I have done translations for court hearings and for the police for the refugees and also I just finished last week an Act, translation of an Act and also for the Government Forum they had last year about Indian Ocean Territories – I am doing that translation at the moment.

Why do I do translations? I suppose, well one of the reasons maybe because I can do it, I am a recognised, qualified translator and I think because I am able to do it. And there are times, to be honest here, that I need the money and when I have the time and I know I can cope and when I see translations done by other people and I look at it and I think why should I take a step back when I know I can do it.

(Interview, August 2001)

2.4.2 Teaching Malay Dance

Zaiton loves teaching Malay dance – she learned it as a child and believes it is an important part of keeping her culture alive. She has been asked to teach it to Malays and non-Malays on a regular basis through the local Indian Ocean Group Training Association but finds that she does not have time. There are also some Moslem parents who do not allow their daughters to participate in Malay dance for religious reasons. In order to prevent any ill feeling in the community Zaiton chooses only to teach those children whose parents allow it and only when there is a special function coming up.
2.4.3 Religious duties
Zaiton is a committed Muslim. She participates in some, although not all, of the religious and community activities organized by the Islamic Council:

Well I am the assistant of the Secretary of the Islamic Council. I am the Secretary of the Women’s Islamic Council and that is about it. I take part in religious classes on the weekend – even though I don’t go every day to the Mosque for classes that the Imam have. I do sometimes go but not every night.
(Interview, August 2001)

2.4.4 Others Activities
As well as work, study, family and religious commitments, Zaiton makes an active contribution to community life on Christmas Island:

Well I teach Saturday classes. I am a researcher for the Cultural Handbook. I normally help with the Marathon each year, and this year I talked to Brendan and they are looking to have one Moslem boy from Indonesia and they are looking for accommodation and I offered to have this boy, he will be here for a week and his mother and father.
(Interview, August 2001)

Despite all Zaiton’s commitments she still finds time to relax and enjoy herself:

I like watching video and TV if it is good. I like watching movies I have enjoyed again and again it doesn’t matter what type but I never like watching anything that has discrimination between black and white because that is the way it happened and I know it happened and never want to watch it even if it is on news. I don’t have very good general knowledge because I don’t like to watch it – you know war and suffering I never like to watch this kind of stuff.

I like listening to music and reading it doesn’t matter what type of books but once I start I like to finish them you know once I start a novel I like to finish – even by skimming them because I like to know the end – I never go to the back but I skim through often if I don’t have the time. I like to sit on the veranda and just sit and relax and look out at the sea.
(Interview, August 2001)

2.4.5 A Day in Zaiton’s Life.
In the morning, get up, I pray then I cook and put the washing out that I put in before I went to sleep, water the plants on my balcony and feed my cats, have a shower get ready to work, feed the chooks on the way to the car and water the plants in the garden and go to work. And when I go home from work it depends, normally I go home pretty late about threeish, catch up to pray, then tidy the house, or relax, if I need to do more cooking then I do that, do some gardening or if my husband is doing something on his boat then I spend time with him, prepare dinner, praying time, dinner, well the kids clean up and do the dishes then I watch TV. Monday, Tuesday, I like watching ‘Friends’, ‘Who Wants To
be a Millionaire’. Wednesday I help at the restaurant and then Thursday normally I go to the Mosque. Friday night if my husband goes fishing I do translation or if he doesn’t go we might get a movie. And usually while watching TV I do my translation or I do my study if my books are here!

(Interview, March 2002)

There is little doubt that Zaiton has an extremely busy life comprised of working fulltime as well as her study, family, religious and community commitments. She describes being so tired one Saturday night after spending a week on the mainland doing an intensive language course, then returning to the island to help organize a Malay cultural event for Seniors’ Week, as well as looking after her family, that she just sat in her room shivering.

2.5 The Impact of Study on Zaiton’s Life

Kelly (1987) in her book entitled The Prize and the Price examines a number of issues that impact on adult women returning to study. Some of these issues include university fees, community attitudes and relationships with friends, children and husbands. For Zaiton, these issues were of significance too. As an example, Zaiton did have to carefully consider the issue of paying fees before she decided to enrol in the course. Once she had made up her mind to study, however, she says that the decision to pay fees “just followed”. Unlike some husbands in Kelly’s study, Zaiton’s husband did not have any problems with her paying the money. Zaiton did, however, feel guilty about spending this money on herself. This was especially as two of her daughters were also studying and needed to pay fees. Her daughters, however, insisted that they pay their own fees through HECS (the deferred tax scheme).

As far as the attitudes of others in her community to her returning to study went, Zaiton found the reactions to be mixed:

No one said anything negative up front. Some were supportive, some were negative. Many just didn’t understand they said why bother, you are old, why bother?

(Interview, March 2003)
Throughout the course of their studies each of the EAs, including Zaiton, raised their concerns about returning to study at their age. Zaiton, in particular, felt that she would be the oldest student in her class and that people would laugh at her. Later she explained this:

*In Malaysia it is not common for people to study at my age. Most people go to university from school and are very young. I see now after my uni access course that there are more mature age students at university in Australia. But still I think Malaysians would find this very strange.*

(Zaiton, Interview, October 2004)

Zaiton said that her studying has had a positive impact on her relationship with her children. She says that it has helped her to understand what tertiary studies are like so she can help them to plan and get organised. One of the things that Zaiton has learned about tertiary studies, which she has passed on to her daughters through her own experiences, is the need to put forward your opinions. She says her daughters listen to her now because she has done it and knows what she is talking about. Zaiton also plays a role in helping to explain what university life is like to her husband.

*At first he didn’t understand how important it is to get together with friends over lunch to discuss your studies. I can help them explain this to him.*

(Interview, March 2003)

Zaiton considers herself very lucky to have the full support of her husband, especially in stressful times when assignments are due or just before exams. Although he doesn’t give her any academic help, he is always encouraging her and gives her plenty of emotional and moral support.

Zaiton’s brother in Malaysia has just entered university so he understands her workload. When she first told him she was returning to study he couldn’t believe it, as it is not that common in Malaysia for older women to return to study. Her younger sister is also at university now so she is understanding and supportive. Both her brother and her sister admire Zaiton’s husband for the way he supports and encourages Zaiton. The rest of
her family have very little understanding of university life so Zaiton doesn’t talk about her study with them very much.

Zaiton says she doesn’t have much time to spend with friends any more – this is something she is looking forward to when she finishes studying. For Zaiton the most difficult aspect of studying has been finding the time in between working full time and all her other responsibilities. However, as the years have gone by, her children have grown older and take less of her time. She still feels guilty though when she is not there to cook for her children and her husband – even though she says they really don’t mind.

2.6 Future Goals and Aspirations
Zaiton says that she enrolled to study initially because she was encouraged to do so by so many teachers in the past. As is discussed in Chapter 6, Zaiton had proven herself to the teachers she worked with to be an exceptionally talented Education Assistant who consistently demonstrated her teaching skills through her professionalism, dedication and knowledge of the community. As well as being inspired by these teachers, she also wanted to become a teacher in order to prove to herself, to her children and her community that she could do it. She wanted to:

   Open the eyes of my children and my community and show that adult women can study – even mothers.
   (April, 2004)

At the time of this interview, though, Zaiton said she would just be happy to finish her studies and win a merit selection position as the Malay LOTE teacher at CIDHS. After that she is not sure, getting through the next year is as far ahead as she can think at this stage.
3 Ching Mei Zhu

Mei Zhu is an active member of the Buddhist Association on Christmas Island. She devotes a great deal of her spare time to performing her various religious duties at the Buddhist temple. These duties include translating, maintaining the temple worship, assisting to organise visits by Malaysian monks, chanting and meditation. Furthermore, Mei Zhu has a deep commitment to education and the maintenance and development of Chinese languages and culture on Christmas Island. Brought up in a traditional Chinese family in the rubber plantations of Malaysia, her sense of self is infused with aspects of Confucianist values about respect, humility, deference and the importance of striving to achieve perfection. As can be seen in the following section about her life, she is forever grateful and thankful for the assistance and opportunities she has been given. At the same time she is reserved and humble about her own abilities and often questions whether she is indeed ‘worthy’ of the faith and support being offered her.

3.1 Early Childhood Years

Like Zaiton, Mei Zhu had a tragic start to life with the loss of her mother at a very early age:

I was born in a small Chinese (Hainese) village in Trenganu on the east coast of the Peninsular of Malaya. My parents worked as rubber-tappers like almost everyone in the village. When I was three years old my mother was hit by a big branch from a tree while she was working in the vege farm on a windy day. She died. So my father had to look after myself, my older brother (by five years) and my sister (one year old).

It was extremely hard work for him. Luckily my grandfather was staying with our family at that time so he helped to take care of us. However, they both had to tap rubber trees to earn money for the family. My father often had to get up at 2 am to get ready for work, whereas grandfather will stay with us until morning when we were looked after by an old lady (neighbour) until our grandfather and father returned from work.

(Journal, February 2000)

When Mei Zhu was about six years old her father married a young woman from the village. Within a few years this woman began having children of her own, eventually
having five. Mei Zhu remembers having to do a lot of housework like sweeping floors, washing clothes and cooking porridge every day before she went to school. Also:

Due to poor income in the family, we were not given any money to buy food at the school canteen, instead we ‘run’ home to heat up already cooked fish and eat with porridge as lunch, then quickly walked back to Chinese school in the village.
(Journal, February 2000)

As the eldest girl in the family, Mei Zhu had to do more work than her sister (from the same mother). As the oldest son, her brother had to get up at about 5 am and go to the rubber plantation and help to remove the coagulated latex from the cups on the rubber trees and clean up before the new latex was collected. He was sent home at about 7 am to get ready for school.

Mei Zhu goes on to describe life for her once her school day had finished:

After school, I had to wait for the bus that brought fresh fish to arrive from the fishing village 5 miles away and fight for fish with a crowd of adults. We bought fish by rushing for the best fish that we possibly could. At about nine years old I had to ‘learn’ how to clean fish. As I got older I learned more skills to help at the home eg cook rice, fry fish etc. The more I know the busier I got. I even had to look after stepbrothers and sisters so that stepmother could play ‘mah-jong’ in peace.
(Journal, February 2000)

Shortly after her stepmother moved in, her grandfather went to live on another rubber plantation. During the holidays Mei Zhu and her brother and sister went to stay with him. Mei Zhu says:

There were only three trips of buses where he lived – they hardly have any fresh veggies, meat or fish. The only neighbour he had was a couple who ran a sundry shop. Sometimes when we see the couple come to ‘town’ (our village), we asked them to help take fresh veggies, fish or meat to our grandfather.

Our grandfather was a very kind man. He liked to play mah-jong but he wasn’t addicted to it like others in the village. We all wanted to help him with working on the rubber plantation but he didn’t let us do that except my brother helped him to clean the cups and collect latex. So my sister and I stayed home and helped with the cleaning and cooking. Although we didn’t enjoy being bitten by mosquitoes, we still happy to keep our grandfather company so he didn’t feel lonely.

We always look forward to the day when we could help sell the latex because we were given some money by grandfather. The only pocket money we got was from
selling old latex. Sometimes we also picked rubber seeds and sell them to people who wanted to replant rubber trees. They were worth only 10 – 20 c per hundred seeds but we still felt very happy.

We had no pocket money but sometimes we could make a little money from selling the old latex from the rubber cups or selling rubber seeds to people who wanted to replant rubber trees.

(Journal, February 2000)

Mei Zhu notes that this was one of the practical ways that the children in the village learned to count so well. When Mei Zhu was still quite young she developed an allergy on her hands and feet that prevented her from working in the rubber plantations any more:

*My father had taken me to see many doctors and tried different Chinese traditional methods but didn’t help. At last someone recommended him to take me to a Malay man and I was treated by this old man who used a traditional method, which was passed down from his parents. My father told us that he appreciated him so much for that.*

(Journal, February 2000)

Mei Zhu was cured of her allergy but she could no longer work in the rubber plantations.

### 3.2 School Years

Mei Zhu started school at the age of seven. She attended a Chinese school (the other school in the village was a Malay school). The school’s population was about 130 students. The medium of instruction was Chinese, with one subject of Bahasa Malayu (Malay) and one of English. According to Mei Zhu, the classroom set up was typical of the time. It was a half brick and half wooden school with six classrooms, one library, a hall, a canteen, a staff room and accommodation for staff from outstations. There was a blackboard and teacher’s desk at the front and students’ desks in rows. The subjects taught were Chinese, Maths, Science, Civics, History, Geography, Art, Music, Malay and English. Commenting on her early school days, Mei Zhu said:

*I enjoyed primary schooling very much, I think due to the small numbers of students, it was less competitive so I always obtained very good results and won*
prizes in competitions such as painting, Chinese calligraphy and large brush writing. Almost every year I was elected monitor or assistant monitor.

This is the first of many examples where Mei Zhu attributes her achievements to the circumstances she was in or to the support and assistance of others rather than to her own abilities.

*I did not like to sit right in front of the teacher’s desk. Teachers didn’t walk around to help students much they stayed at their desk and I felt pressured when the teacher watching me work. We were often asked to answer questions and those at the front tend to be called to answer questions more than others in the room.*

*My favourite teacher was Mr Lim who was my class teacher in Year five, who was strict but always explained lessons clearly. And the English teacher who was less strict, particularly when we were asked to practise reading one by one. We laughed at each other’s pronunciation. He laughed to.*

(Journal, February 2000)

In primary school, Mei Zhu says that she always obtained good grades and she often won in Chinese calligraphy and painting competitions. A few teachers made strong impressions on her, particularly her Year 2 teacher who, like all the other teachers, was very strict:

*I think the common ‘rewards’ for us as students at that time was not to get any punishment such as caning behind students’ legs and palms, pulling ears, stand at the desk, then on a chair, then on the desk (quite rarely) if you didn’t show improvement of what was expected of you. Other punishments like cleaning toilets, sweep dry leaves in the school compound, use a ruler to hit students nickel bones were also used. During my six years in primary school I was caned on the palms once for not remembering my historical information (dates) well enough. That was in year five and I felt very embarrassed.*

(Journal, February 2000)

Through such punishments and lack of external rewards for doing what was expected of her the school instilled in Mei Zhu a particular cultural understanding of what learning and achieving meant in her community. As important as the physical pain of the punishment probably was it was exacerbated by her feelings of embarrassment for herself and her family for not achieving what was expected. In many ways her family’s expectations reinforced those of the school but were also driven by economic necessity:
My father was only interested in our report cards to see how many hundred percents we got and see if there are any red marks (fails). What position you got in class also meant very much to them. Children who were in the first few positions always spread very fast in the village, particularly when the first three positioned students received their scholarship from the ‘Hainanese’ Association each year.

(Journal, February 2000)

Things started to change quite dramatically for Mei Zhu from the year that she completed her primary education. Her educational fortunes were linked, like others in post-independence Malaysia, to world commodity prices within the global capitalist system, evidence that global capitalism was as far-reaching then as it is now. The price of rubber in Malaysia that year was quite high and stable, so her father decided to send her and her brother to study in the secondary school in Kuantan (the capital of Palang).

One of the reasons he wanted them to go to high school, according to Mei Zhu, was because he had been born in China during the Japanese occupation and had to move to Malaysia. As a result, he had not had the opportunity to gain ‘high’ education. Now he wanted the opportunity of education for his children.

Another reason for Mei Zhu being able to obtain secondary education in Kuantan was because of the death of her grandfather. Her words portray the extent to which her life was very much governed by the beliefs of her grandfather and the needs of the family:

The real reason for me to be able to obtain secondary education in Kuantan was my grandfather passed away (he was suffered from a stroke after a fall in his rubber plantation one day and never able to walk again). Even though he was a kind old man, his thinking was still very traditional – he did not think that girl should receive higher education as one day they will get married and becomes part of other people’s family – it was seen as a waste of money to let a girl gain higher education.

Also if he was still alive then someone would need to stay and look after our grandfather. I had overheard my father and stepmother’s conversation about whether to let me stop schooling and be in that role. I understand that it must be a hard decision for them to make. Unexpectedly, our grandfather died at the end of the year, so I was released!

(Reflective Journal, March 2000)
From an early age Mei Zhu’s life was bound up with the economic fortunes of the family and their beliefs about girls and education. Having been released from caring for her grandfather Mei Zhu was, however, able to enrol in secondary school in a neighbouring town. Kuantan was a much bigger town than Kemanan and there were many schools there. Her brother was enrolled in a boy’s school and Mei Zhu went to a mixed school. They stayed with their uncle and travelled to and from school by bus each day. She was only 13 when she began living away from home and she felt homesick and cried the first few nights but her brother settled her down. They went home three times a year. Their budget was very tight and they only had money for study purposes. Being able to go to a movie was a real luxury for Mei Zhu.

When her brother attended his first university he obtained a scholarship from the state government and the whole family was very proud of what he did. During his ten years in universities he tried hard to earn some income to support his own study because he understood that his parents had five other children to support. Mei Zhu’s brother now has a PhD basing his research on rural poverty in Chinese villages in Malaysia.

During the time when Mei Zhu went to secondary school, the family moved into a new house on a piece of land provided by the government that was serviced with electricity for twenty four hours a day. Compared with where they lived before, Mei Zhu says, as she often does: “We felt very fortunate indeed”.

Ultimately, Mei Zhu’s fortunes were tied to the fluctuating price of rubber in colonialist Malaya and she had to leave school after Form 3 (Year 10) because the price of rubber dropped dramatically during the year. Mei Zhu overheard her father and step mother saying that even if she passed the exams at the end of the year they may not be able to afford to support her further study. This really disappointed her and from then on she says that she didn’t put a lot of effort into her study thinking that, regardless of how well she did, she wouldn’t be able to continue. Mei Zhu was surprised that, despite not
having studied hard, she passed everything except Modern Maths: “failing by one point”.

Mei Zhu says she didn’t feel sad at the moment she saw her exam results but afterwards she felt regret that she had listened to what her parents had said and should just have tried hard anyway. At the same time she was very proud of her brother who did really well in his Form 5 exams.

3.3 Life After School
After Mei Zhu had completed ten years of education, she stayed at home for one year and then went to Kuala Lumpur with a friend from the same village. One of their friends recommended Mei Zhu for a job as a waitress at the Royal Salangor Golf Club. She worked there for three years. During that time, besides personal expenses, she spent the rest of her income on supporting her brother’s university study, on fees for attending tailoring classes for herself, and also, supporting her family. She had hardly any money for herself. Mei Zhu met her husband in Kuala Lumpur and married in 1978. Soon after this she came to Christmas Island.

3.4 Family and Community Responsibilities
Today Mei Zhu is a participant of the CIDHS Trainee Teacher Program. This means she works full time, as well as studying part time for her Bachelor of Education degree. She also teaches and is Principal of the Saturday Language School. In addition, she is an active member of the Buddhist Association and a community radio announcer. She has three sons - one is an electrical engineer, one is studying engineering on the mainland and the other is still at school.

Mei Zhu’s husband, who is now retired, was a miner on Christmas Island. Shortly after she began her studies he relocated to mainland Australia to live with their second eldest son who was studying at university.
3.5 Impact of Study on Mei Zhu’s Life

As with Zaiton, Mei Zhu says that no one has said anything about her returning to study directly to her face but she does believe that some people in the community find it strange as it is very uncommon in Malaysia and Singapore for older people to return to study. Some also believe that women should be at home looking after the family. To avoid any difficulties Mei Zhu has kept her study ‘low key’ and generally does not talk about it much with friends. She believes that if people are not openly negative then generally they are supportive – they just don’t say anything.

Mei Zhu has found that her studying has had a positive impact on her relationship with her children. Her three boys are very proud of her although they worry about the amount of stress it causes her and how this impacts on her health. She has found since studying that she has wider discussions with them (with much more to talk to them about) especially as one son is now teaching English as a Second Language in China. Mei Zhu has been able to share some of the ideas she has gained through her course with him.

Mei Zhu has found that studying hasn’t changed her relationship with many of her friends, as she does not talk about it much with them. She has, however, developed a much closer friendship with one woman who was an Education Assistant but has now moved to Perth and is also studying. This has become a very close and valuable friendship for Mei Zhu. Mei Zhu’s oldest brother in Malaysia, who has a university degree, is very supportive of her studies but the rest of her family doesn’t know anything about it.

Initially, Mei Zhu says that her husband was “not supportive” of her returning to study. Although he did not stop her from enrolling in the course, he did not offer her very much encouragement or support:

*He just said nothing.*

(Mei Zhu, Interview, 2000)
Despite her husband’s lack of obvious support, what was important to Mei Zhu was that he did not stop her either which he could potentially have done. His silence was taken as permission to study, if somewhat begrudgingly given. Since her husband left the island Mei Zhu has lived alone. Her youngest son returns for holidays and when she can Mei Zhu visits her family on the mainland. While she misses her sons Mei Zhu, like many other families on the island, is prepared to send them away to gain an education. It is a sacrifice she is prepared to make for their future careers and prospects.

3.6 Future Goals and Aspirations
Mei Zhu would like to pass her units and win a position at CIDHS as the Mandarin LOTE teacher. She would like to continue to improve her ability as a LOTE teacher, promote Chinese language and culture in the school, and develop her Mandarin language skills. Despite having only two or three units to complete she is still reserved about whether or not she has the ability to ‘make it through’. She will not be optimistic about this until she completes all her units and then successfully applies for, and wins, a position through merit selection at the school.

4 Emma
Emma is a Moslem Malay woman in her mid sixties and is a well-known and respected leader in the Christmas Island community. As well as working full time as an Education Assistant, she leads a hectic community life as a shire councillor, Justice of the Peace, vice president of the Christmas Island Islamic Council, member of the National Islamic Women’s Council, and executive member of the Union of Christmas Island Workers. Emma is a committed activist who takes on an extraordinary amount of community work. Emma has a deep commitment to all the aspects of the community work that she does and a real sense that if she doesn’t do it, it won’t get done. This means that she often pushes herself beyond her limits, taking on more meetings and
community commitments than she is able to fit in, especially given that she continues to work full time and has to fulfil family responsibilities towards her husband, children and grandchildren.

Many people in the community rely on her to represent their interests on the vast array of committees and lobby groups that exist on Christmas Island. For a variety of reasons, including her many other commitments and her ailing health, Emma did not keep many scheduled interview appointments and only completed a few journal entries. As a result, data collected about her life comes only from irregular interviews at school or at her home and there is much less detailed information about her ‘life space’ than for the other two participants.

4.1 Early Childhood
Emma was born and grew up in a long house in Sarawak, North Borneo. Her family history reflects that typical of colonial South East Asia during the 20th Century. Emma’s great grandmother was a European woman who married a local Iban man. One of their sons, Emma’s grandfather, became a priest and married Emma’s grandmother. After he died her grandmother remarried, converted to Islam and gave birth to seven sons. Emma’s mother, born of the first marriage, was raised a Catholic but became an Anglican when she married an Anglican policeman whom Emma describes as part Iban, and part European. Emma, herself, married a Chinese man originally from Canton who converted to Islam when he married her.

4.2 Life After School
Emma left school during the 1960s when she was sixteen. In order for her to go on to upper secondary school she would have had to move to Kuala Lumpur but her mother would not allow her, as she believed it was too dangerous for a young girl to go alone to the big city. Emma’s mother felt it would be better if she stayed in Kuching and got married and then she would have a husband to protect her. Unlike Emma her younger
brothers were all encouraged to go to Kuala Lumpur in order to continue their education.

Shortly after she left school Emma married and started to have children at the age of seventeen and a half. Her first job was as a volunteer worker at a home for the blind in Kuching, Sarawak. Emma came to Christmas Island in 1977. Her oldest son was twelve and her other children were nine, seven and two.

When she first came to the island, Emma opened a restaurant in the Malay Kampong. She sold the shop in 1979 and then had another child – a daughter. With all her children she says the shop was too much to handle. Yet, at the same time she used to teach English to Malay women in her home.

In 1982, Emma started working at the Christmas Island Area School as a Teacher Assistant with hearing impaired students. In 1984, when her youngest child was about four years old and had started school, Emma started working full time. For three years Emma worked in the Kindergarten in the mornings, then doing home visits in the afternoons with the school counsellor. According to Emma, they made home visits mostly to ‘problem’ children who didn’t attend school, or to older people who were too old for school because at that time there were no special facilities for older people to work or to study.

In the classroom Emma worked with small groups of students and as Emma puts it she was:

*Trying to get the message through to the children about what they were learning. At that time there were a lot of students from Malaysia who had no background with English. They couldn’t understand the teachers so we had to translate everything.*

(Emma, Interview, August 2000)

As well as working as an EA at the school, Emma taught Malay at the Saturday morning language school and was an elected member of the School Board.
4.3 Emma's Goals and Aspirations
During one of the early interviews with Emma, (when we were discussing her childhood in the Longhouses in Sarawak), Emma began talking about her real dream which was to write a book of children stories in her home language Iban – stories from the long houses which had a message and a moral that she could translate into English. She related one about the beginning of rice cultivation and about a husband and wife who argued all the time. We discussed the fact that she could enrol in a children’s story writing course, as I knew one teacher at school was doing. She said this would be great and what she really wanted. Another of her goals was to become the Principal of the CI Islamic School. From her perspective having a teaching degree would legitimise her role and that of the Islamic School.

5 Conclusion
This chapter has sought to describe the “life spaces” of the major participants in this study. Their “life spaces” include not only their actual experiences but also the Discourses and Big Conversations that shape their ways of thinking and acting in the world. An understanding of these Discourses has been gained through the use of their own voices to describe their lives.

As individuals, Zaiton, Mei Zhu and Emma are all very different from each other. Zaiton is a committed Moslem and has a strong belief that God’s will determines her fate. At the same time she is motivated by a desire to show that Malay Moslem women are capable of achieving success and wants to be a role model for her daughters and her community. She has a gentle, easy-going demeanour. She is ‘modern’ and progressive in her thinking, quick to grasp new concepts and more than willing to take on new challenges. Her classroom is lively and innovative and her teaching style informal but well managed.
Mei Zhu has a much more methodical and particular approach to her study and her work. This may be as a result of her growing up in a strict Chinese family informed by Confucianist traditional mores. These included the need to show respect for elders, to value learning, to resolutely correct errors, be prudent and to avoid arrogance and conceit. Mei Zhu is a stickler for detail and ensuring she and others get things exactly right. She was also very conscious of not overstating her status as an EA. This was evident on several occasions throughout the course. As an example, when the researcher began the process of applying for Recognition of Prior Learning on Mei Zhu’s behalf, she wrote that Mei Zhu had been “team teaching” in the Mandarin LOTE class. The researcher received a phone call late one Saturday night from Mei Zhu saying that she was concerned about the wording in the application:

I am sorry Anne but I have discussed with Mei (LOTE teacher) and she says my role is taking a small group and assisting with marking. To me I think this is not really teaching more assisting so can we change this in the letter.
(Reflective Journal, Feb 2000)

Mei Zhu was also always very insistent that we did not tell other people that they were studying. She said:

Don’t tell people because they will think we are trying to be teachers when we are not.
(Reflective Journal, Feb 2000)

Mei Zhu continued during the course of her studies to be very wary that she was not seen by the school community to be stepping above her status as an Education Assistant and claiming to be a teacher. On many occasions she insisted that the researcher change the wording of documents if they seemed to suggest she was taking on a role above her current position.

Throughout her studies Mei Zhu was constantly striving to achieve the highest possible grade she could. While Zaiton once jokingly said that anything above 50% was one too many marks, for Mei Zhu anything less than 100% or a high distinction was considered
a poor effort on her part. Mei Zhu measured herself by how near of far away from perfection her grades were whereas Zaiton judged herself by what she felt she was learning in order to become a better teacher.

Throughout the course Mei Zhu admitted to staying up late in the night to complete her assignments. Her concerns over her English and the impact this would have on her achievement continued to plague her. As an example she said:

*My English is not good. I know the tutors say they will not take marks off but I can’t do my best if they do not understand me. I must get someone else to check my English before I send it.*

(Reflective Journal, Nov 1999).

Mei Zhu was always humble about her skills and abilities and ever fearful that she may not have the capability to complete the ITE program. Added to this is her constant feeling that she was unworthy of the support she was being given by the school, her mentors and tutors.

Despite Emma’s outward appearance as a shy and reserved Moslem elder, she has a strong and tenacious character. Her years of community work and political activism have given her the confidence and skills to access support and resources from a wide variety of sources. As part of the group, Emma was the leader in actively lobbying the school, union or university for support for their studies.

Despite their differences, the three participants in the study shared certain critical experiences. They all grew up and lived in colonialisit Malaya and then Christmas Island where they have all experienced the kind of economic and social inequality and racism that colonialism and its subsequent neo-colonialist form, by necessity, creates and maintains. Partly as a result of this and of other gendered and traditional religious Discourses at work, they all experienced disrupted educational backgrounds and were prevented from continuing their schooling.
With such different “life spaces”, reflected in their differing Discourses and ways of speaking about and living in the world, the EAs were likely to have very different experiences of the ITE program than the majority of HEI students. Importantly their complex and unique personal experiences and life trajectories, and their collective cultural experiences as marginalised subjects interfacing with the dominant Discourses of the HEI and the school, can help to inform policies and practices within HEI and schools that better accommodate and support the learning needs of other non-mainstream students.
Chapter 5  Academe

1  Introduction

For the participants in this study, the process of becoming ‘a teacher’ was akin to taking on a new and more powerful “socially-situated identity” (Gee, 1999, p.13). In order to take on this social identity and become fully qualified teachers, the EAs had to first gain entry to, and then successfully complete, an ITE program at a mainland Australian HEI5. This chapter describes the ITE program the EAs undertook between 1999 and 2004 and seeks to identify those policies and practices that acted as “Driving” and “Restraining” forces on the EAs engagement with the course.

In keeping with the theoretical framework that underpins this study it is assumed that the policies and practices of the HEI are not neutral or given but are part of a powerful Discourse and a set of “Big C Conversations” (Gee, 1999, p. 34). In this chapter this Discourse is referred to as the Discourse of Academe. Like other Discourses, the Discourse of Academe involves situated identities like ‘student’ or even more specifically ‘ITE student’, ‘law student’, ‘engineering student’. Each of these socially situated identities has certain recognisable ways of being identified through symbols like dress and importantly ways of acting, interacting, thinking, speaking and in this context reading and writing as well (Gee, 1999, p38). The main purpose of the chapter is to examine the extent to which the Discourse of Academe with its characteristic socially situated identities was able to accommodate the non-mainstream Discourses and identities that the EAs brought with them into the ITE program. These Discourses included aspects of Malay/Islam, Confucianism, colonialism and neo-colonialism, as well as those associated with the formation of identity and social positioning based on

5 The Australian tertiary sector is divided into two sections: Higher Education Institutions (HEI) and Vocational Education and Training (VET). Initial Teacher Education is currently delivered through the HEI sector.
age and gender. This examination of the Discourse of Academe has significant implications for social justice as Gee (1999, p.13) states:

The fact that people have differentiated access to different identities and activities [like becoming a teacher], connected to different sorts of status and social goods, is a root source of inequality in society. Intervening in such matters can be a contribution to social justice.

This question of accommodating difference and enabling access can be looked at from both a practical or technical point of view and a much broader philosophical one. In keeping with the socio-cultural approach that informs this research it is necessary to examine both. From a practical perspective, any “Restraining” forces that are identified in this research may be able to be addressed by the development of infrastructure, policies and practices that enhance the learning opportunities for non-mainstream students. These might include extra resources for alternative access pathways and student support services, more facilities for on-line learning or alternative fee structures. At a deeper level there may be the need for more changes to curriculum content and structure, staff professional development in intercultural pedagogy as well as a range of other inclusive practices that would accommodate the differing Discourses or ways of speaking, acting, valuing, thinking, learning and being that non-mainstream students bring to the learning environment.

2 Financial Restraints and Regulatory Controls

The extent to which an HEI has the ability to make changes to accommodate difference and suit the needs of non-mainstream students is to a large degree, although not entirely, determined by its financial capacity and the degree of autonomy it has in making organisational and curriculum decisions within a state or national regulatory framework. In cases where HEI funding is linked to a regulatory authority’s objectives, a HEI has less autonomy in making such changes. In some cases such funding may in fact be linked to access or equity initiatives but in other cases it may pursue other national or
state agendas such as the perceived need for more Science or Maths teachers. Funding arrangements and regulatory guidelines are therefore significant factors in determining the extent to which a HEI can implement broad curriculum initiatives to support non-mainstream students.

Within the Australian context, HEIs fall within the legislative framework of the Federal Government. They currently gain funding through three main avenues: Federal Government grants made through the Department of Education Science and Training (DEST) portfolio; student fees and charges (including overseas and domestic students) and through the Higher Education Contribution Scheme (HECS) (Australian Bureau of Statistics, p.1). Under the HECS scheme, introduced in 1989, eligible students contribute towards their education costs through a deferred payment arrangement with the Federal Government. The Federal Government returns HECS revenue to the higher education system via a HECS Special Account. The Federal Government collects these payments from the students, through the taxation system, once they reach a threshold income level. Through these avenues, the Federal Government contributes more than half (58% in 2002) of the revenue received by HEIs in Australia.

Recently, however, there has been a significant shift in the composition of HEI revenue sources. A revenue trend analysis tabled in the most recent DEST Report on Higher Education for the 2004 to 2006 Triennium, for example, revealed a reduction in the revenue gained from Federal grants and HECS from 67% to 59% and a growth in revenue from fees and charges within the 1998 to 2002 period. During this time a particular funding growth area for most HEIs has come from overseas student fees. These trends have the potential to negatively impact on equity and access groups largely because these user-pay funding sources are not necessarily tied to any equity goals.

Currently HEIs who receive funding from the Federal Government in the form of grants and HECS payments are responsible, under the Higher Education Funding Act (HEFA)
1988, for ensuring equity of access. As well as this DEST provides additional support for equity purposes, such as Indigenous Support funding and Higher Education Equity Program (DEST, p.67). The achievement of equity objectives is monitored through an annual Educational Profile process, an Indigenous Education Strategy and an Equity Update. Data collected for funding includes the participation of equity groups, significant approaches adopted by the HEI to meet equity objectives and equitable achievement. Extra funding is provided through the Higher Education Equity Program (HEEP) which aims to promote equality of opportunity in Higher Education. Within this system there is base funding as well as a surplus payment according to equity group numbers and success and retention rates. The Federal Government also supports equity goals by making “enabling” courses, intended to assist students from disadvantaged groups who do not have academic preparation to enrol directly in award courses, HECS exempt (DEST, p. 71).

In the Australian context, therefore, HEIs do receive specific funding linked to equity outcomes but this type of funding is decreasing as a proportion of HEI budgets. Increasingly HEIs are gaining funding from student fees and in particular overseas student fees. As HEIs access funding from fee-paying students their commitment to equity becomes less tied to government funding and public policy guidelines. Whilst this allows greater autonomy in curriculum decision making it can also have the effect of reducing the equity initiatives HEIs may wish to pursue because equity students do not provide them with the amount of income they can generate from full fee paying students. Within this more economically driven system equity choices may become more a function of the HEIs philosophical commitment than being a legislative requirement.
3 Questions of Educational Philosophy

Within these shifting financial and legislative parameters it is the case that the degree to which a HEI is prepared to enhance access opportunities is dependent upon financial and legislative restraints as well as the HEI’s commitment to equity principles. A crucial question then becomes whether there is a philosophical, rather than just a practical, gap between the HEI’s ‘equal opportunity and diversity’ rhetoric and the reality of accessing tertiary education for students from non-mainstream backgrounds. To better understand this it is useful to look at two broad philosophical approaches to education which are prevalent today and which can be viewed as the Big C Conversations that are part of the Discourse of Academe in this study. One approach is informed by Human Capital theory and the other Human Rights and Human Development ideology (Lo Bianco, 1999, p.3).

3.1 Conversations Informed by Human Capital Theory

This theory very clearly links education to economic imperatives of a (usually) market driven economy and views knowledge primarily as a resource that can be used to further economic development. Human capital is defined within this framework and according to the United Nations’ Organisation for Educational and Cultural Development (OECD) as:

The knowledge that individuals acquire during their life and use to produce goods and services or ideas in market and non-market circumstances. (OECD 1997, p. 17. In Lo Bianco, 1999, p.19).

Proponents of the Human Capital approach to education argue that, just like investment in physical capital, investment in education (and in particular certain specific types of education), will lead to increased production. Human Capital research carried out from the 1960s to the 1980s has attempted to support this argument by demonstrating links between investment in skills acquisition, greater returns and increased international
competitiveness. Governments and private businesses across the world have, as a result, sought ways to target investment in education and training as a means to achieve their economic goals.

3.2 Conversations Informed by Human Rights Theory

An alternative to the ‘economic role of knowledge’ central to the Human Capital theoretical framework is Human Rights/ Development theory which highlights a more humanist and emancipatory role of education that can lead to, among other things:

The full development of the human personality and the strengthening of respect for human rights and freedoms.

Issues central to this approach include equity, social justice, human rights, first language rights, cultural relativity, power and wealth distribution and even world peace. Within this framework the fundamental mission of education is, as the New London Group has put it:

To ensure all students benefit from learning in ways that allow them to participate fully in public, community and economy. Pedagogy is a teaching and learning relationship that creates the potential for building learning conditions leading to full and equitable social participation.
(Cope and Kalantzis, 2000, p. 9)

The remainder of this chapter examines specific aspects of the ITE program featured in this study in order to gain an understanding of the extent to which they acted as “Driving” or “Restraining” forces on the engagement of the non-mainstream students. These aspects include the entrance requirements, course structure and content, facilities for external studies, school practicum, the process of gaining ‘Recognition of Prior Learning’ and the impact of student fees and charges for higher education. While some of these factors may be a function of funding arrangements that limit the HEIs ability to support non-mainstream students, others relate directly to what is referred to here as the Discourse of Academe. It is the extent to which this Discourse of Academe is open to,
and able to accommodate, the Discourses of non-mainstream students that this chapter seeks to address.

4 An Overview of the ITE Program

The ITE program in this study is fairly typical of traditional undergraduate Initial Teacher Education programs described by Wang, Coleman, Coley and Phelps (2003) in Australia and elsewhere in the world. It is a 4-year (fulltime equivalent) undergraduate course of study for students wishing to become primary school teachers. The course is offered either internally or externally or as a mixed mode in which students are able to complete some of their units internally and some externally. As a result of their geographic isolation, and just as importantly their extensive family obligations and work commitments, the EAs elected to do the majority of their units via the external mode. ‘External students’ complete all course work, assessments and exams ‘off site’ and communicate with HEI staff through a variety of traditional (telephone and fax) and electronic (email) media.

Over the course of their studies, the EAs were also able to do some units through the HEI’s Summer School program during their school holidays. The EAs also undertook an internal intensive unit as part of their school-based professional development. This gave them, and the researcher the opportunity to contrast studying internally and externally.

The ITE program for primary teaching in this study was made up of a series of core and elective units that were arranged sequentially from 100 level (usually completed in the first years) to 300 or 400 level units (completed in the final stages of the degree). Core units in the first year included some compulsory foundation and introductory units in pedagogy and some curriculum areas such as Science. The first year also included a very complex theoretical unit on linguistics.
Electives in the first year could be chosen from any 100-level units offered by the HEI. In the second and third years there was a greater focus on curriculum units such as English and Maths that were completed in conjunction with school-based practicum in these areas. Other core units throughout the ITE program include those that focus on assessment practices and the psychology of learning. Core units also briefly cover various aspects of the politics of schooling and inclusivity for students such as those with special needs or indigenous students. Electives in these years include a range of options covering either curriculum areas such as Computing, Media, Theatre, The Arts or Environmental Studies, or more focused pedagogy for Early Childhood Education or Second/Foreign Language students.

It is recommended in the HEI’s handbook that students develop a study plan for selecting units that are appropriate to their area of interest. The EAs in this case study were assisted in developing their plans initially by the staff in the alternative entry course they attended, and later by the CIDHS Trainee Teacher Program coordinator/researcher in conjunction with the Program Chair of the HEI.

The EAs entered the HEI via one of its alternative entry programs and during the course of their study two of the EAs received exemption from several units as Recognition for Prior Learning (RPL).

5 Access and Entry: A Foot in the Door

For most HEIs the first ‘filter’ to screen candidates for the teaching profession along what Wang, Coleman, Coley, and Phelps (2003) describe as the ‘teacher education pipeline’, are the entry requirements and access opportunities available for their ITE programs. While entry requirements vary across institutions and countries, the majority of teacher education candidates enter via successful completion of a set of standardized tertiary entrance examinations following completion of a high school certificate (Wang
et al., 2003, p. 4). In fact, most countries surveyed, which included the United States of America (USA), England, Hong Kong, Japan, Korea the Netherlands and Singapore, used rigorous high school graduation and multi-subject scores from standardised exit exams as the sole means for selecting students for their undergraduate teacher education courses.

Since the 1970s, however, there has been a growth in alternative pathways to HEIs including ITE programs. This growth has been partly fuelled by pragmatic interests and national economic agendas and partly by equity and access agendas (see Chapter 9). In keeping with this, and like many HEIs in Australia, the USA and Europe, a number of alternative entry options were available to the participants in this study. Several of these programs were developed by the HEI in the late 1990s as bridging courses targeting people with disabilities or chronic medical conditions, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, people from non English speaking backgrounds, people from low socio-economic backgrounds as well as rural and isolated people. The program attended by the EAs in this study involved full time attendance on campus for four weeks.

5.1 Finding Out About Alternative Pathways

Significantly, in terms of access, the EAs in this study were not aware that there were alternative access routes to Higher Education until the Deputy Principal and the researcher informed them in 1998. Had it not been for the meeting organised by the school to tell them about alternative access opportunities it is highly unlikely that the EAs would have engaged with the ITE program at all and their journey to becoming ‘teachers’ may never have begun.

Following a meeting called by the Deputy Principal to outline possible career pathways for all EAs and office staff at the school, the three EAs agreed to “try our luck” at enrolling in this course (Personal Communication, Dec 1998). It is important to note that at this stage, and throughout their studies, they repeatedly used terms like “try our
luck” to describe their journey through the course. They did not enter the access course or the ITE program with the assumption that if they worked hard and completed the requisite work they would become teachers. There was always a sense that there was much more involved than effort. They felt that they were moving into a different social position that would involve them taking on different ways of speaking, writing, acting, thinking and being. It was this sense of moving outside of where they belonged and what they thought they were capable of that presented them with the greatest challenge.

5.2  ‘I’m too old, I don’t belong here’
Shortly after submitting their application forms, the EAs received notification from the HEI that they had been accepted into the alternative access program. Once enrolled, the EAs faced their studies with some trepidation. Emma describes her feelings on the first day of the course:

On the first morning of my arrival at the HEI I was feeling lost and nervous. The feeling of scared and anxiety is always playing in my little heart. I was standing in front of sign board car park no: 6. After Christmas Island I feel lost in a sea of crowds! Suddenly I saw a white sedan approaching from afar with the familiar faces of my two mates started to merge, my feeling of anxiety was slowly beginning to cease. As we walk to the Chancellery and there we were greeted by friendly faces. They show us direction to the lecture room where we meet the other participants. We were welcomed by more friendly faces of the lecturers and tutors.

The EAs feelings of anxiety about attempting a HEI course are in keeping with similar findings by Bufton (2003, section 4, p.1) who studied the journey of ‘non traditional’ (specifically working class) students through various Higher Education courses in Britain. Bufton found that the prospective students she interviewed had a strong sense that HEI “is not for the likes of us”. She attributes this to their internalised class based notions that associated academic success at HEI with what they believed to be middle class qualities such as being ‘brainy’, ‘really intelligent’ and ‘academic’. The EAs in this study also had the feeling that Higher Education was not for the likes of them and
approached the HEI course with the belief that they were too old to study and that they
would be the only students for whom English was a second language.

Zaiton’s reflections on the alternative access course confirm that it played a significant
role in helping her to overcome her feelings of “being out of place” and that she did not
have the necessary skills to engage with a HEI course. Prior to being told about the
alternative entrance pathway to HEI Zaiton says:

*I never thought I could get into university, not at my age but when I heard about
this course I thought I would try it out.*

(Interview, Feb, 2000)

Zaiton believes that the most important aspect of the course was:

*It helped me get over the awkwardness and embarrassment of being a mature
age student returning to study. The course gave me the opportunity to see that
there were other mature age students at HEI and that I was going to be accepted
as a ‘normal’ student by the staff and other students.*

(Zaiton, Interview, Feb 2000)

To explain the feelings of isolation and alienation and the sense of “being a stranger in a
foreign land” that her findings point to, Bufton draws on the work of Mann (2001,
p.11); Weil (1986, 1989); Lynch and O’Riordan (1998, pp. 462-3) and Forsyth and
Furlong (2000). Mann (2001, p.11) argues that this is a feeling that most students have
when entering HEI and is akin to “crossing the borders of a new country”. He speaks of
the “bureaucracy of checkpoints”, “limited knowledge of local language and customs”
and that the student’s position is “akin to the colonised or the migrant from the
colonised land” or in other words “a kind of colonising process”. Weil (1986, p. 224)
adds a class dimension to this by claiming that this feeling of “disjunction” is more
pronounced for working class students. This is because there is greater tension between
“learner identity” and their ways of processing information, feeling and behaving in a
learning context, which is different from that which, they initially perceive and then
often experience in a Higher Education setting. According to Bufton, Lynch and
Riordan’s study (1998, pp. 462-3) of working class students in Higher Education, they found that one third of them described themselves as “outsiders” who were often “living between two worlds in what Forsyth and Furlong describe as a “Catch-22” situation (2000, p. 43).

For the participants in this study, many of these feelings of being ‘too old’ ‘out of place’, ‘not belonging’ or ‘not being good enough’ were overcome through the HEI’s alternative entry program. When the EAs enrolled in the summer holiday of 1999/2000, there were approximately 40 students enrolled in this program. Most of the students enrolled in the course in 1999/2000 were mature age women, some with physical disabilities and others with English as a Second Language (ESL). The usual female to male ratio is 60:40 with students with disabilities and ESL students, mostly refugees, as growth areas.

The manager of the course describes the alternative entry program as being designed for people interested in pursuing further education at the HEI. The following comments describe what she sees as the structure and purposes of the program.

\textit{It hopes to give the participant the opportunity to think about the changes that they are trying to make in their own circumstances in the context of some significant changes that are taking place around them in the Australian society.}

\textit{The course is structured like a first year undergraduate unit. It includes lectures and tutorials. There are tutorial groups focusing on the students’ critical learning skills, use of the library and information technology and the HEI’s culture and environment.}

\textit{Specialist tutorial groups are provided in the areas of Social Science, Maths and ESL. The students attend campus from 8.45 to 3 pm each day 5 days a week for 4 weeks.}

(JB, Personal Communication, 2003)

According to the program manager, the number of students is dependent upon and limited by the amount of government funding made available for the course and not necessarily an indication of demand. Also according to the manager, there is a
completion rate of 98%, with a success transfer rate of between 86% and 95% (JB, Personal Communication, 2003).

5.3 Learning Some Tricks of the Trade
Following a brief introductory session held in one of the HEI’s lecture rooms, the three EAs were placed in a tutorial group of around ten people all of whom had English as a Second Language. In this group they were given course readers and guides, which outlined what was expected of them in the four-week program. A great deal of time was spent in small group activities, where the participants were asked to reflect on their reading and participate in small group discussions. They were also required to prepare a short presentation to the tutorial group using a range of technical resources such as overhead projectors. As well as this, the other major assessment tool was a 1,500 to 2,000 word essay on a topic of their choice. Attendance was also a major assessment criterion. During the course the EAs were given a tour of the campus including a skills workshop on using the library’s computer database to access resources.

Zaiton commented on important aspects of the course that made it easier for her to succeed later on:

The written assignment for the course was the first essay I had ever written in English. The essay was about myself as a learner. In the second essay, I had to choose a topic and argue a strong point. The tutor explained how to structure an essay and how to put forward one point of view. I found this quite challenging but with advice from the tutor I did quite well. (Zaiton, Interview Feb 2000)

Zaiton’s comments about essay writing forefront another significant point about the role that such ‘bridging’ courses can play in enabling non-mainstream students to engage with the Discourses of HEIs. As well as making them feel a greater sense of belonging, and that they are not the only ones who are ‘different’ from what they perceive to be the norm, it also provides an opportunity for them to be introduced to some of the ways of
reading, writing, thinking and talking that are necessary to succeed within the Discourse of Academe.

This relates to some of the ideas put forward by Minnis in her study of minority students accessing the discourses of HEI Law Schools which are discussed by Gee, Hull and Lankshear (1996, pp. 7-14). Building on the findings of Minnis, Gee et al note that there are very specialised literacy practices used in typical USA law schools that are not overtly taught by HEI professors and which many minority or non-mainstream students may find difficult to acquire. An example includes being able to engage in a question and answer routine with the professor based on the reading of a particular text:

Before every class meeting, students are expected to have read and briefed, or summarized in writing, several appellate opinions from a book containing pivotal case law on the course or topic. When called on in class, students must be prepared to review and analyse specific opinions, compare the details of several opinions, and explain how the opinions may have been rendered differently. (Minnis, 1994, pp. 352-53. In Gee et al, 1996, p8).

This, according to Gee et al, is a complex task that requires the students to know how the text is structured and in particular, to know how sentences are structured to signal emphasis, importance and other communicative effects, to be able to see which statements render general or specific meanings and which ideas are sub parts of other ideas. Perhaps most importantly, though, is the point that in order to engage successfully with the professor during the question and answer session the student must be able to have ‘read’ the text being dealt with in the same way that the professor did. This involves not only using specific linguistic decoding skills but also brings into play assumptions, values, beliefs and understandings about the nature of law and how it should and does work in society.

The point that Minnis makes and is supported by Gee et al (1996, p.8), is that students are not overtly taught these reading skills within the law school. Rather, it is assumed that they have developed these skills in their prior educational and social experiences.
Again this is not just a matter of displaying certain literacy skills but of also having shared experiences and understandings with the professor, of and about law and society. Minnis argues that this is the key to the relative success of mainstream students compared to non-mainstream students:

Not surprisingly, given that mutual unspoken understanding between teachers and students requires common prior experiences, most good law students are traditional law students. They are those whose economic, social and educational backgrounds are much like those of traditional law professors. These students, that is, are members of middle and upper class society, the dominant culture, the culture that shaped the law. Accordingly they are inclined to accept without question beliefs that are characteristic of that culture and that give them an advantage in law school.

The literacy practices that Zaiton was exposed to, as part of her bridging course, was an explicit introduction into one of the most pervasive types of academic literacy – the way to put forward a point of view. This was a skill that she later reflected, was required throughout the rest of her ITE program. Importantly from a cultural perspective she found this type of literacy ‘challenging’, not only because she had not learned it explicitly at school but also because it was in conflict with the way of communicating a point of view that she had learned in her other Discourses.

According to Zaiton, for example, in Malay discourse the projection of a point of view is less straightforward and ‘up front’ than in Western discourse structures:

*Before the uni access course I had never written an essay in English. I was not used to putting forward my point of view so strongly even though I believed in it I wouldn’t say it this way.*  
(Interview, August 2004)

Topics in Malay discourse, as with some other Asian and Aboriginal discourses, can be described as circular with topics being examined from different tangents and personal opinions subsumed by those of the group. Other features include a greater use of passive voice and a lesser need for explicit detail in recounting events because of an assumed shared knowledge and understanding (Sneddon, 1996 pp 254-255; Price 1998,
These language features were different from those inherent in the academic Discourses that Zaiton and the other EAs were expected to learn in order to succeed within a HEI.

Learning such Western-based academic Discourse though, according to Gee et al (1996, p. 12), is only part of the solution. They argue that it is not simply a question of overtly teaching Western Discourse practices to non-mainstream students so that they can learn to read, write, speak and dress ‘like a lawyer’ [or in this case ‘teacher’] and engage in “rather stilted performances that hyper corrected what ‘real’ lawyers [teachers] look, talk and act like” Gee et al (1996, p.12). Not only would this task be far too overwhelming and beyond the scope of any HEI course, but according to Gee et al, it is not what they should be aiming to do from a critical socio-cultural perspective. From this perspective the aim should be to open the doors of Academe to these new and challenging ‘other’ Discourses and their ways of acting in and thinking / speaking about the world. This would take the role of HEI equity beyond simply a function of equitable access toward the emancipation and human development inherent in a Human Development / Rights philosophical approach.

Emma had very strong views of the important role that the alternative entrance course played in her own ability and that of others from non-mainstream backgrounds to access Higher Education. She believed that alternative entry courses are the only way to enable people with long breaks between school and further study to access Higher Education. Had she been made to complete an exam to gain entry, for example, she maintains that she “would never have entered the course” (Interview September 2004). The most valuable part of the course, according to Emma, was that they asked the students to build on the knowledge they already had developed in their life experiences:
We could tell them about ourselves, what we already know about life, things we learn at school, bringing up our children, our culture. I write a lot about where I grew up, our language, what we do with our children, how we teach them.
(Emma, Interview, Sept 2000)

This enabled those with talent but perhaps not the formal academic skills, to demonstrate what they could do based on their personal experiences. It was an insightful comment demonstrating Emma’s understanding of the other sorts of knowledge that non-mainstream people can bring to a HEI course and her belief that this sort of knowledge should be valued. These were skills, given Emma’s quite extensive life experiences, gained largely through her active involvement in many community groups and organisations that she hoped to be able to use in her further studies.

Perhaps in keeping with her self-effacing character, perceptions about her own abilities and her initial pre HEI beliefs and attitudes about learning and education, Mei Zhu felt the alternative course assessment structure was “not very rigorous”. She is uncertain as to whether it was able to realistically determine whether the applicants were going to be able to cope with a HEI course. Similarly, when congratulated on her success in gaining entry to the ITE program, she replied that:

It was not me it was the tutors who helped me. They made it easy for me.
(Personal Communication, Feb 2000)

Mei Zhu’s concerns about her own ability and the support she felt she needed were issues that continued to haunt her throughout the ITE program.

Despite having successfully passed the alternative entrance program and having been accepted into the ITE program, the EAs were not at this stage ready to have their achievements made public. As an example, when the Deputy Principal wanted to write an article about them in the school newsletter they asked her not to. According to the Deputy Principal, Emma often said to her, regarding their studies at this stage that:
Later, as the EAs passed their second and third years and their confidence grew in their ability to become ‘real teachers’, they increasingly acquiesced to having their studies made public. As later data will show, however, they were never really comfortable with assuming the identity of a teacher.

According to one of the teachers, Karen, with whom Mei Zhu had developed a close working relationship, the EAs’ decision to enrol at a HEI was a significant moment in what was a long and gradual process toward their own acceptance of their abilities to undertake academic studies. Karen, who had also been a mature age student, said that the course was a real testing of the water for them:

*Importantly, they knew they could go and try it out without having to make the commitment of enrolling in the course. The course gave them lots of confidence – it was a huge learning curve but it put the word University into something real. They saw what a campus was like and that the people in it weren’t all on a pedestal and uni wasn’t a place where they would be gobbled up. That is what I used to think, that uni was a place where you went if you were really bright. The course showed them that they were bright enough to go to uni. (K, Interview, April 2000)*

Alternative entrance to HEIs in Australia has developed increasingly in the wake of the Competency Based Education and Training movement and in the interests of access and equity for students from non-mainstream backgrounds. Certainly, according to those involved in this program, particularly the participants, it was crucial in enabling them to both begin a HEI degree and gain the confidence to succeed.

5.4 Future Directions

The manager of the HEI’s alternative entry program believes that the course has improved and continues to improve its delivery of services to non-mainstream students. In particular she says that, lecturers and tutors have developed their skills in working with students from diverse backgrounds, library and computing sessions have been refined and made more appropriate for the students’ needs and there has been greater
follow up with the employment of an equity tutor to assess the students’ progress in their first semester. This last point is of significance for this study. While all the EAs gained entry to the ITE program via the alternative entry program, there is little doubt, as subsequent sections reveal, that without a range of other measures to support their ongoing learning needs the EAs would have found completing the ITE program very difficult.

6 Distance Education – Learning from Afar

The majority of the course work undertaken by the EAs in this case study was done via Distance Education or as it is referred to in this context - External Studies. Studying in this mode generally involved the distribution of course materials and the submission and assessment of assignments via traditional land based (air or sea) postal systems or increasingly, electronic media. Student/teacher communication can be facilitated by post, telephone or electronic forms such as fax, email or web cam technology. This mode of delivery offers much greater (and in some cases the only) opportunities for remote students living outside large metropolitan or regional centres to access education and training.

6.1 Distance Education for the Masses

Smith (1991, p.28) claims that distance education has the potential to expand the teaching population by providing opportunities for people from diverse backgrounds. Robinson and Latchem (2002) have also pointed out that the expansion of opportunities to study externally has facilitated the greater participation of adults from more diverse backgrounds into tertiary education. Investment in distance education, particularly in the case of ‘developing’ countries, has also been viewed (and highly recommended) by various influential international agencies such as the World Bank and UNESCO as a ‘practical and cost effective’ way to increase access to education particularly for adults.
who have work and community commitments and for those living in remote areas (Dodds and Youngman, 1994).

In Australia, distance education has been seen as a viable option for the delivery of education for many decades and, according to Smith (1991), relative to other countries, Australia has a fairly impressive record in providing opportunities for students to study externally. Perhaps in a bid to overcome the great Australian ‘Tyranny of Distance’, HEIs in Queensland and Western Australia established external studies programs as early as 1910 with other universities following suit as the need arose (Smith, 1991). Originally created to cater for the needs of country students, the availability of external studies has increasingly been seen as a way to provide greater opportunities for mature age students and ‘second chance’ students who have work and home commitments that prevent them attending campus lectures and tutorials.

6.2 The only viable option for the EAs
The availability of this option was particularly important for the EAs in this case study given their extremely remote location, some 2,500 kms from the nearest mainland HEI, the high cost of travel and because they all had extensive work and family commitments. All of them acknowledge that without this option they would never have been able to undertake the course and yet, while the opportunity to study externally was crucial to the EAs being able to engage with the academic studies, there were several issues associated with the external mode of study that created major concerns for the EAs.

6.3 ‘Snail Mail’ and other Tribulations
In this case, studying externally involved for the most part having their course materials, assignments and assessments posted to them via the traditional postal system by the HEI’s External Studies Unit. As airmail only arrives once a week on Christmas Island this involved at least a one-week turn around for assignments and course materials, and
due to the irregularities of the postal service on Christmas Island, it could often take much longer than this. The late arrival of course materials was identified by the EAs as one of the most frustrating and difficult aspects of studying externally often exacerbating their anxieties over being able to complete their course work and submit their assignments on time.

In fact their first significant hurdle in their ITE program, once they were enrolled, came with the late arrival of their unit materials for their very first unit. These arrived on Christmas Island some three weeks after the beginning of semester. In their journals and interviews they described their exasperation over the late arrival of the course readers and guides that added to their heightened sense of anxiety:

\[I \text{ went to the Post Office today to pick up our study guides but they are still not arrived. It is already too hard for us starting so late, what can we do but work hard and try to catch up.}\]

(Emma, Interview, March 2000)

\[\text{Now that our course materials have finally arrived I am relieved as I thought we would get so far behind and couldn’t catch up.}\]

(Mei Zhu, Journal, March 2000)

As new students to the HEI and inexperienced or unfamiliar with its culture and practices, their initial response was to do nothing about it except work extra hard to catch up. Fortuitously, a teacher who was also studying externally but at a different HEI, heard that they were concerned and stressed about the late arrival of the texts and advised them to do as she had done and ring their tutors straight away to tell them that their books had arrived three weeks late. Emma, an experienced political advocate, did this on behalf of the three EAs and they were duly given an extension.

This willingness on behalf of the HEI to be flexible in such circumstances was a valuable lesson in the policies and practices of the HEI in which they were enrolled and they subsequently became very proactive in alerting the HEI staff if ever there was a delay in the arrival of their materials. It was a part of the HEI’s flexible practices that
they did not know about and which was different from their previous experiences of education in their school years in Malaysia where deadlines were far more absolute. In this case, however, as in many other cases throughout their course, they learned this new information from friends, tutors and mentors among the teaching staff at the school who were keen to offer their support and advice about the Discourse of the HEI, rather than from the HEI itself. These ‘significant others’ were to go on to play an important bridging role between the often ‘hidden’ Discourse patterns of the HEI and the EAs.

6.4 Communicating with On-campus Tutors
At the beginning of each semester each of the EAs was sent a letter providing them with the name and contact details of a HEI based tutor to whom they were encouraged to address any questions or concerns regarding the assignments or the assessment tasks. To the researcher’s surprise, given the EAs general reticence about their HEI studies, the EAs were on the whole very proactive in making contact with their HEI tutors. In Semester Two of 2000, for example, as soon as the EAs received their materials for a new unit they immediately contacted the course coordinator and requested that he be available for a joint teleconference with them once a week at a scheduled time. They had decided, based on their previous experiences trying to contact tutors, that this would enable them to have more regular and reliable contact with their tutor. Also, as they were all studying the same units, it would avoid the tutor having to repeat the same messages to each of them and they would learn from each other’s questions and answers.

While Zaiton found these teleconferences generally useful she also found them to be frustrating at times because of the difficulties they had communicating over the telephone. For her, conversing in a second language via telephone presented difficulties because both the tutors and the EAs had to rely on listening to different accents and new vocabulary without the aid of other visual and contextual clues such as hand gestures,
and facial expressions that can aid understanding in a face-to-face intercultural conversation. This is particularly the case with the ‘academic’ language being used in these conversations. In her journal, Zaiton noted that it would have been much easier if:

I could have ‘seen’ what he was talking about.

(Journal, Aug 2000)

The EAs describe many of their tutors as very helpful to them, often going out of their way to provide assistance such as offering to preview assignments if they sent them in early. On the other hand, they also found contacting some of their tutors very difficult. They said that they often were not contactable during working hours and were slow to return calls and emails. As the EAs were working in classrooms during the day it was also difficult for the tutors to make return calls to them. The difficulties of phone conversations and making contact lead the EAs to rely increasingly on ‘on island’ informal tutors to assist them with their course work.

6.5 Outmoded Written Texts

One of the greatest difficulties faced by the EAs studying externally, though, was that this mode relied almost entirely upon traditional printed written text forms. This exacerbated other difficulties they had dealing with academic texts. Whereas internal students had the benefit of being able to access information and develop understanding through oral and visual modes in tutorials and lectures to compliment their reading, the EAs, as external students could not. The EAs reported that the few units they did internally were much easier to understand, especially where they had lectures so they could listen to the information and not rely entirely on reading information.

An example of the difficulties presented by studying externally and, in particular, reliance on written modes, can be found in their reflections on the first formal unit they studied as part-time external students. This was a particularly difficult unit both conceptually and in terms of the vast amounts of new academic language, such as
‘morphology’, ‘lexis’ and ‘modality’ that they were exposed to. Assessment for external students consisted of three written assignments and a final, formal open book two-hour examination worth 40%. The first assignment required them in 1000 – 1500 words to analyse a text (a children’s book) using the knowledge they had gained about such linguistic concepts as phonology and morphology from the course readers.

Emma’s comments, when interviewed, reflect her early concerns with the language in the texts and in particular having to spend time looking up the meanings of these words in her Malay/English dictionary:

*I have to look up every word in the dictionary because my English is not so good. But Bob [a teacher at the school] says you can’t do that and Donna [another teacher] says you must write your ideas down and I will help with the vocabulary.*

(Emma, Journal, March 2000)

Mei Zhu’s comments also emphasise her feelings of anxiety about the course:

*My study materials have finally arrived. When I flipped through the Study Guide and read through the first few pages of the Unit Materials Volume 1, I just can’t understand most of the concepts and I immediately thought … unless I get enough help that I need I will not be able to get through this unit – I will definitely fail if I work on my own. Might as well quit now and not waste my time. However, I know that there will be people around to help; at least Anne [the researcher] will provide some help. So I will have a go and do my best. Oh when I look at the diagrams I can’t understand them.*

(Mei Zhu, Journal, March 2000)

As a first year unit, this was an extremely demanding and difficult unit, dealing as it did with significant but very complex and specialised linguistic concepts. All of the EAs found reading the texts very difficult. They expressed the view that many of the examples used were particularly confusing for ESL readers. As an example, one of the sentences used to describe phonetics was *sow a seed and sell a sow*. The EA’s did not relate to the context of the word *sow* (pig) so they were reading phonetically and not contextually. It only became clear when their ‘on island’ tutor read it out loud to them.

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6 It is important to note the Islamic (and socio-cultural) context of this misunderstanding. Pork is not considered ‘Halal’ or edible in the Islamic religion and therefore the Moslem EAs in this study may have had limited contact with the word ‘sow’ meaning female pig.
Other words such as the word *marks* (for letters, signs) were confusing and didn’t easily translate in the Malay/English dictionary they relied upon. These words and concepts were easily understood once explained orally by the teachers helping them at school.

While Zaiton found the texts difficult she was able to use her extensive classroom experience to help her and also appreciated their worth. About three weeks into the course, she wrote:

> As an ESL person, I found the reading was rather confusing. The terms used are very hard and confusing too. Although some of the words I have encountered through classroom experience. But the text has helped in giving me a better knowledge and understanding of language development.
> (Zaiton, Journal, March 2000)

Mei Zhu wrote:

> So far I think that the unit is interesting and boring and hard to cope with. I lack confidence. It’s interesting because the English language is so complex and very different to the Chinese language in many ways. It’s boring because it’s extremely theoretical to me. I read things that I can’t understand and then I fall asleep. I need lots of help in understanding some of the readings.
> (Mei Zhu, Journal, March 2000)

Emma not only had difficulties with the language but also with her study skills. At this stage she had not yet developed techniques such as skim reading, and using headings and summaries as important point markers in the text. This meant that she spent many hours reading over the texts without being able to pull together the main points. She was even reluctant in the beginning to use pencil or highlighters to mark the key points in the text. She had been taught as a child never to mark books, as they were a rare and precious commodity to be shared communally in her school years and so had spent a long time photocopying the course readers to avoid marking them!

Another difficulty presented by some of the external course materials, particularly for ESL readers and people who may lack confidence in their own ability to engage with Academic Discourse, was the occurrence of occasional, but nevertheless significant typographical errors. A Year 3 teacher, who was helping Mei Zhu to organise a
practical experiment, found a page in one curriculum unit’s Unit Reader with several typographical errors. In one example, the numbering system in a list of tasks for an experiment was inconsistent, so they were being asked to measure temperature before putting in the substance but at the end were asked what the temperature was after the substance went in. The teacher said that this simple typographical error had caused them to waste lots of time checking to make sure they understood what they were expected to do. They had assumed it was their English language skills preventing them from following the instructions. Commenting on this, the teacher made an important point related to the quality of the texts being used in the HEI course at that time:

*At the school we are always attempting to adapt texts for ESL learners by using good quality photocopies, adding visual clues and using larger and more interesting font styles. And yet this is not being done at the HEI level.*

(J. Interview, 2000)

Another teacher who volunteered to help the EAs with a unit was exasperated by one particular curriculum unit which he felt was in direct contradiction to current Western Australian educational policy and philosophy. He felt that the Western Australian school system was rapidly promoting an outcomes-focused approach to education with open-ended tasks to suit diverse student learning styles and abilities and a movement away from the regurgitation of facts through external exams, and yet the HEI was still using the “old methods”. He found this particularly hypocritical in an ITE program where he felt the lecturers or course coordinators should at least be practising in their pedagogy and assessment practices what they were preaching in their content.

Mei Zhu commented in one of her reflective journals that as an ESL student she would have benefited from being able to participate in small group discussions to clarify her understanding. She also noted how time consuming comprehending written texts was for her:

*Being an English as a second language learner, it always takes me much longer to go through all the readings required, sometimes spending nearly double the
time needed by native speakers. Moreover I frequently come across words that are too hard as well as some sentences that are too long to understand. Looking for meanings in dictionaries is also time consuming for me, as I often have to use an English-Chinese dictionary first and then an English one if necessary. (Mei Zhu, Journal, April 2000)

These reflections highlight a number of issues related to studying externally and also to the type of language it was necessary for them to engage with in order to succeed. Their difficulties were exacerbated by having to rely on print modes (often poor quality), which was particularly difficult for ESL students. They also had difficulties with developing study techniques. These were not explicitly taught to them in the course but it was assumed they knew how to summarise and draw out the main points from a text. Importantly again, it was largely the support they gained from school staff who assisted them to overcome the difficulties presented by studying externally that enabled them to engage successfully with these units.

7 Studying on Campus

While the majority of the units undertaken by the EAs in this case study were external, during the course of their part time studies they enrolled in two internal intensive units. One of these was a three-week intensive LOTE (Languages Other Than English) methodology course aimed at practicing LOTE teachers wishing to update their skills, or at mainstream teachers wishing to retrain as LOTE teachers. The EAs attended the course as part of their annual ‘off island’ professional development in the second year of their studies. The other internal unit was part of the HEI’s annual Summer School program held during the long summer holidays. Analysis of their journals and interviews following the courses provides insight into how they approached study in an intensive internal mode and how they felt about being ‘on campus’ for the first time since their initial entry course.
7.1 “We are only EAs”

The first on-campus intensive unit they enrolled in, after their access program, was delivered by a lecturer known to the EAs as she had met them several years earlier when she visited Christmas Island to conduct Professional Development for the Saturday language school where they were all teachers. They had also caught up with her during their entry course.

There were about 50 participants in the program and all were qualified teachers. Some were LOTE teachers (mostly Indonesian) and some were emerging LOTE teachers (i.e. wanting to retrain to be LOTE teachers). A consistent theme running through their comments is their initial feelings of inadequacy as they were not ‘qualified teachers’ as the others were and their concerns over their English language skills. Their reflections demonstrate that during the course they began to realize that they knew as much, if not more, about teaching and learning foreign languages than many of the qualified mainland teachers. The course can be said to have demonstrated to them, or certainly reinforced for them, their own skills and self-esteem.

Zaiton wrote about how she felt at this course:

*I felt fortunate being part of the course, thanks to you Anne [the researcher] for organizing it. There were times when I felt confidence knowing there are things that I know or have been practiced by teachers where I have knowledge of (considering I am only and EA and there are qualified teachers who have not done it.). Please I don’t mean anything here, it’s just for me perhaps you can say – in a way that helps to boost my self-esteem. And of course there were times when I felt really small amongst all the qualified teachers – I was feeling unsure, scared worried in case my questions or answers would sound really silly or not be understood because of my ESL.*

(Zaiton, Journal, September 2000).

Zaiton also notes that the course provided her with some important understandings about professional issues related to teaching, in particular the fairly low status accorded LOTE and LOTE teachers on the mainland:

*I learned a lot about LOTE learning and teaching, that there were teachers on the mainland with the same problems as us like having multi-level students and having used ‘themes’ which we now learned were inappropriate. I also learned*
that some teachers have more problems than us where LOTE is not valued or supported in their school by parents or the school and the students are not interested – this is not the case here.

(Zaiton, Journal, September 2000)

Mei Zhu also wrote about her feelings of inadequacy with respect to being “the only EA” at the course. Initially she was also concerned about what she considered to be her relatively poor English language skills. Yet, as the course went on, she began to realise that despite these perceived disadvantages she had quite an extensive practical knowledge of second language teaching and learning compared to the others in the group:

I felt happy at the course but at the same time I felt a little low for being one of the only three Education Assistants attending the course. I felt very happy because I had tried attending this course last year but my Principal told me that only qualified teachers with a degree are eligible to apply. Surprisingly with support and help from you Anne, I, together with my other two colleagues, was accepted into the course.

On the negative side I felt low because all the other participants are better than me (at least in their English ability). However during the two-week course, from working with small groups and with different people, I have noticed that many of the strategies that I was familiar with were new to them.

One of the most interesting parts of the course was when we worked in small groups as LOTE learners. It helped me to understand how any student feels as beginning LOTE learners, particularly the sign language session (for the Hearing Impaired) where the language is totally new to me.

Another interesting thing was a talk given by practicing LOTE teachers. Their talk made me realise how hard it is to gain recognition for being a LOTE teacher at the same level as other members of the school staff, particularly if the admin staff place little or no value on LOTE learning.

I feel myself extremely fortunate to be able to be directly involved in LOTE teaching this year because the key people in the school are very supportive in trying to improve the program.

(Mei Zhu, Interview, August 2000)

In a slightly different vein, Emma’s brief comments demonstrate her continuing feelings of insecurity and lack of confidence, which she partly attributes to her age:
I felt great to be there but a bit awkward and shy of being one of the oldest. I felt very lost in the crowd in terms of answering questions. I have to be very sure before I speak.
(Emma, Interview, 2000)

One very positive outcome of the course was that the EAs, by now team-teaching several year levels of LOTE at the school on Christmas Island, were able to immediately apply what they had learned in their courses in a practical teaching situation. As an example, Zaiton said she had learned a lot in their Second / Foreign Language unit that they could directly apply and trial in their LOTE classes at CIDHS. In particular she had learned that she should speak as much in Malay in her class as she could. This included introducing as much as possible in the target language and then at the end of the lesson revising what had been learned in English:

I did this today and it worked well. I have also begun making up special cards with pictures (SACPACS) and instructions at different levels for students to follow and work independently.
(Zaiton, Interview, September 2000)

The LOTE methodology course enabled the EAs to practise their theory and theorise about their practice in a real context and within a very short time frame. It was also a confidence booster for the EAs, particularly Zaiton and Mei Zhu. It demonstrated to them that they did have quite extensive pedagogical skills in teaching LOTE – more so in fact than many of the qualified teachers from the mainland. It was also significant in that it gave them a range of practical skills that they took with them into their classrooms, many of which they continue to use today.

7.2 A Taste of Summer School
As well as the LOTE Methodology course, the EAs completed one unit via the HEI’s Summer School Program. This program offered students the opportunity to complete selected units intensively during the summer holidays. The EAs’ reflections on this course demonstrate how they went about studying as a group and how attending a
course during the school holidays impacted on their families. Enrolling in the Summer School unit meant that they had to fly to the mainland for their holidays and attend the intensive course on campus. The school agreed to pay for their flights and expenses as part of their Professional Development for that year.

On her return, Emma was brimming with confidence and much more coherent in her understanding of the course than other units she had completed. Her interview revealed a great deal about how the three EAs managed their Summer School experiences. All three EAs stayed together in the student village next to the HEI. Emma says that:

*It was really nice had a nice atmosphere, we had one lady come that came from Busselton that stayed with us, Zaiton, Mei Zhu and myself, so four of us.*
(Emma, Interview, March 2002)

Emma and Zaiton had arrived on the mainland around midnight, the evening before their classes began, Emma flying in from Christmas Island and Zaiton from Kuala Lumpur.

According to Emma, there were about 20 participants in the class doing the course all sitting in small groups when Emma arrived. She joined the first group and Zaiton and Mei Zhu joined the second. Their first task was to prepare for an oral presentation about early childhood experiences to their small group. Emma says:

*I really enjoy it and we talk about early childhood and I been working in early childhood for so long it was seven years when I worked with early childhood and I really enjoyed it I feel so relaxed you know and besides I have kids I have my own kids and grandchildren and it is just like motherhood.*
(Emma, Interview, March 2002)

All of the students in the group were women, mostly middle-aged with children. Emma liked the lecturer, who she described as: “*young and fresh with new ideas*”. In the morning she gave lectures and in the afternoon they participated in a range of group activities including role-play and make believe. As Emma puts it – “*just like the children*”.
Emma took lecture notes while she listened but also used a tape recorder to record the lectures so she could listen to them again in the evening. They were also required to do some reading each evening and sometimes prepare short presentations for the following day. For Emma, the presentations proved relatively easy:

I talk about Malay culture and things like that is traditions and is so simple to me that is what I know and I don’t have to jot down it is fortunate that art and science include food and culture so I talk about food and traditions.

(Emma, Interview, March 2002)

In order to alleviate some of the arduousness of the readings the EAs decided to share them out amongst each other and then compare notes:

What we did, the three of us if we had a very long reading we had to divide it equally the pages if we have like 21 or 24 pages we divide into 8 and then we explain in our own understanding, we are team learning, we share the reading, so we share the burden, if we going to read by ourselves at the end of the day we not going to understand and we take it in turns to read the introduction, the middle and the conclusion. I think that is very helpful.

(Emma, Interview, March 2002)

Emma found the language in the early childhood unit much easier than some of the other units she had done. Her comments also reiterate earlier problems she faced trying to use a Malay/English dictionary to translate words from her texts:

For me with the early childhood, some of the academic words that we don’t understand but it is a bit a lot easier than the other subjects that I took such as science and language, they use a lot of academic language that I never encountered before. I try to look in dictionary in Malay dictionary there is nothing in Malay dictionary that can explain that.

(Emma, Interview, March 2002)

Emma was also impressed with the way the unit related theory to practice, some of which she had encountered in other professional development course she had done at school:

With this early childhood they also refer to whoever has the theory, like Piaget has been doing. I read about Piaget before but I didn’t realise that I read a book about child development and it was Piaget and now when I read this theory and they use a lot of this theory and I read Piaget and Vogastky theory and I read this theory before but I didn’t put them together. But I didn’t put them together until I did this course and this is the use of the theory and then I
say oh yeah this is the theory and when I observe the child I see that this is what
the theory was saying and before I couldn’t put it together and when you
observe the child behave you see this is the theory.
(Emma, Interview, March 2002)

Emma says that they received a great deal of support from their lecturer throughout the
course:

She support everyone and for us she was really good because she knows there
are 3 of us from Christmas Island, there were 3 or 4 ESL but Christmas Island
we need a lot of help, she photocopy and let us study at night you know she
photocopy the whole thing what she did on the overhead and she give it to us to
take away.
(Emma, Interview, March 2002)

In summary Emma found the experience of studying internally very rewarding and
much better than doing external units despite the intensity:

But you ask my recommendation I wanted to have that lecturer live in front of
you than you read in book that will help you with your study as well. To me is
very hard to study externally because you can’t ask questions and if you reading
every night that is how we going to read then the next day we can ask lecturer
you going to get it straight in your head.

At first I was scared because I don’t know whether I survive but then the next
morning she ask us to introduce ourselves and I am not the only one, some of
these people haven’t done this curriculum and don’t have the knowledge that we
have been working with schools for so many years.
(Emma, Interview, 2002)

All three EAs passed their assessments for the Summer School Unit (despite both
Emma and Zaiton going out the night before the exam). They laugh about this but it is
understandable given this was a rare opportunity to visit friends in Perth. Mei Zhu, on
the other hand, stayed up studying late into the night:

During that night (before the exam) Zaiton was the one, she wanted to go out for
dinner and came back late and I went out that night as well with my son and a
friend’s mother in-laws so I came home about 11 or 12 and then I study until 4
o’clock. The next morning I sleep only two hours but I get everything done and I
am happy. I wake up and have breakfast Mei Zhu stayed home, I think she learn
the whole night she didn’t go out. Zaiton and I go out naughty girls! I’m quite
happy with what I am doing but Zaiton says she is very sad that is the worst
assignment I have done. But in the exam when they say put your pencil down,
she still writing. Put your pencil down, she still writing. But she is good she is
very quick she don’t have to learn but I shouldn’t have gone out like her because I am the one who needs to study... but I really enjoyed this course.
(Emma, Interview, March 2002).

8 Assessment Practices

The use of narrowly based ‘one off’ exams and other similar forms of assessment have come under criticism from various researchers and commentators for their bias against non-mainstream students, their inadequacy in making selections for candidates into professions and for informing pedagogical practice (Gillis, in Genzuk, M., Lavandenz, M., Krashen, S. (1994), p.5; Justiz, in Bjork, 1994 p. 289; Gifford, in Bjork, 1994, p.289). The arguments, against the use of examinations in particular, also make the claim that they are not necessarily the best way to select suitable candidates for the teaching profession, regardless of their socio-cultural background. This argument is based on the belief that such examinations are unable to take into account the range of personal attributes, values, knowledge and skills needed to be a successful teacher. Justiz (in Bjork, 1994), for example, has questioned the legitimacy of standardized tests in adequately differentiating between competent and incompetent candidates for the teaching profession. In a similar vein, researchers like Madaus and Pullin and Spellman (in Bjork, 1994, p. 291) suggest that while teacher tests may measure knowledge and skills, no standardized test can accurately measure the full range of instructional skills and personal qualities necessary for effective teaching.

This assertion has been increasingly backed by various policy makers in the USA who have publicly recognised the inadequacies of single tests as measures of individual capabilities. Organisations such as the Education Testing Service and the National Evaluation Systems in the USA have all been cited in Justiz (Bjork, 1994 p. 291) as having been critical of such testing. The National Commission on Testing and Policy
(1990), an interdisciplinary group supported in part by the Education and Culture Program for the Ford Foundation, recommended that:

Test scores are imperfect measures and should not be used alone to make important decisions about individuals, groups, or institutions; in the allocation of opportunities individuals’ past performance and relevant experience must be considered (in Justiz in Bjork, 1994, p 291).

In this case study, the EAs were exposed to a variety of forms of assessment in both their external and internal studies. These included short answer, multiple choice and essay exams that were either open or closed book, assignments, portfolios and learning journals. Another significant part of their assessment was the successful completion of a series of school practicum. Despite a variety of assessments used in the ITE program, many of their course units included a final written exam, which contributed to a significant proportion of their assessment.

Zaiton’s comments on the exams she sat during the course reflect that while she was successful in passing them, she felt that they did not contribute to her knowledge and understanding about teaching. Also, she felt that the use of exams as an assessment tool was in many ways a contradiction given that other more formative and on-going assessments types had been advocated throughout the course as more reliable and useful forms of assessment for use in her own teaching. She felt that the continued use of exams at HEI was “interesting”, as she had learned in her course “how little they told you about a student’s ability” (Interview, September 2004):

*Before I began the course I firmly believed exams were the only way to assess people’s skills. Now I know they are not either the only or the best way to judge peoples abilities.*

(Zaiton, Interview, September 2004).

Overall, Zaiton felt that while the exams had not presented a significant barrier to her as she did pass them. They certainly were not, however, a “Driving” force, as she points out, because they did not help her in any way:
I learned from other forms of assessment such as doing experiments and keeping a journal or writing lesson plans, I didn’t feel I learned anything by the process of sitting an exam.

(Zaiton, Interview, September 2004).

One of the teachers who assisted the EAs with their course work also noted that some of the written assignments they were asked to submit were outmoded and out of tune with current pedagogical practice in Western Australian schools because they did not clearly articulate what was to be assessed:

The content of the assignment is quite unclear, for example, are they testing procedures in following an experiment or subject knowledge – it is not really clear what they are assessing. This is different to the way education is heading today. For example, in our classes we use rubrics for assessment so the kids know what it is we are looking for. But in this course, we won’t know if they are on the right track or where they need to improve until they get the mark on their assignment. It’s hard for us and it’s hard for them. There are no clear expectations of what you have to do.

(AM, Interview, 2000)

One of their greatest concerns with exams and written assignments was their academic English language ability. They were particularly concerned that they would lose marks for their non-standard English grammar:

Sometimes I cannot get my work done because of my limited vocabulary and grammar are one of my main problems. I cannot handle it on my own I need a lot of support and guidance of how to plan.

(Emma, Interview, 1999).

To avoid problems with this they generally sought the assistance of ‘on island’ teachers and mentors who assisted them by checking their spelling and grammar before they submitted their assignments. In some cases HEI tutors took their ESL status into consideration when marking their assignments as is indicated, for example, in the following quote regarding a reflective journal for one of their early units:

As an ESL student you have done very well to write this assignment. If you are interested in improving your English written work perhaps you could get help from someone, especially from the local school. Mei Zhu might help you to arrange this. You might like to get help with your assignments before you send
them in. (Please note I did not take any marks off for your English that would not be fair. I only looked for good ideas and the way you did your study).  
(Written comment from a HEI tutor, 1999)

Despite the complexity of some of their first year units, Zaiton and Mei Zhu in particular did very well achieving, on average, distinctions and occasionally high distinctions:

*An excellent start Mei Zhu – well done! I’ve nothing to add really – you display a sound grasp of most of the main ideas. You’ve explained and illustrated them well and you’ve written clearly and to the point. Keep it up. 90/110 – almost a High Distinction.*  
(Written comment from a HEI tutor, 2000)

Over the course of their second year the EAs began to make rapid progress and gained in confidence, and in their ability to use academic genre. One tutor commented:

*Excellent use of conventional academic format – I can’t believe this is the same person I spoke to 12-14 weeks ago. You have made spectacular progress.*  
(Written comment from a HEI tutor, 2000)

Mei Zhu also noted in one interview the enormous impact that assessments and tutor comments had on her:

*Since enrolling in the course, my motivation is like big waves, going up and down. When I get good feedback from my tutor or score good marks for my assignments, my confidence instantly rises. At other times when I struggle with my English skills and constraints from my family, my motivation decreases.*  
(Mei Zhu, Interview, 2001)

Wang et al (2003, p. 21) in their study of teacher education certification courses in several countries found that whilst exit standards and assessment practices varied between institutions and countries, typically they included examinations, assignments, a teacher practicum and other forms of assessment. In England, since the massive restructuring of teacher education in late 1990s, prospective teachers are also required that take a national test in literacy, numeracy and information technology. This trend towards the increased use of standardised testing as a measure of teacher competence would appear, given the research cited above on the relative poor performance of non-
mainstream students and the inadequacy of such tests in general, to be a retrogressive step in terms of access and equity in ITE.

9 Gaining Credit for Prior Learning: The RPL Process

The recognition and accreditation of prior knowledge and learning gained either through life experiences, the workplace or other formal and non-formal educational contexts, fits within the broad framework of Experiential Based Learning (EBL). Within this framework it is assumed that experience is the foundation of, and stimulus for, learning (Boud, Keogh and Walker, 1993 in Andresen, Boud and Cohen, 2000, p.225). One of the characteristic features of this approach to learning that is relevant to the growth of the RPL movement, according to Kolb (1984, in Andresen et al, 2000, p.226) is recognition and active use of the learner’s relevant life experiences and learning experiences within learning and assessment programs.

9.1 Big ‘C’ Conversations Driving RPL

Various theoretical approaches including Human Rights/ Development and feminist pedagogy have also promoted a broadening of understanding and acceptance of what constitutes learning and how it may be acquired (UNESCO’s Faure Report, 1972 and Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger and Tarule, 1986, in Andresen et al, 2000, p 231). Support for the concept of Recognising of Prior Learning has also emerged from within Human Capital national education and training agendas in Australia and elsewhere. In Australia, RPL first found its practical application amidst the accord struck between the trade union movement and the Labor Federal Government in the 1980s. A key strategy central to this accord was national economic restructuring of skills development and transference, particularly in secondary production. The merging of these two divergent approaches was significant in driving the RPL movement according to Andresen et al (2000, p.234):
The acknowledgement by government, educational providers and workplaces that RPL is an equity matter, as well as according with training reform agendas, legitimised EBL beyond its informal and community roots.

9.2 Issues in its Implementation – Learning the Discourse of RPL

The practical application of the principles of RPL presented challenges to adult educators across the education and training sectors in Australia and globally. As well as attempting to develop or modify tertiary courses to incorporate practical learning such as practicum and internships, HEIs also sought ways to ‘measure’ prior learning in order to give appropriate accreditation for parts or all of a course. These attempts to measure often lead to the development of an inventory of ‘skills lists’, which lead to debates about the legitimacy and appropriateness of such lists to adequately represent the complexity of knowledge and understandings in many professions. There were also issues as to how to enable people to demonstrate that they had acquired the competencies required in the courses from which they sought exemption. Exams, interviews, resumes and increasingly portfolios, were among the methods trialled.

When the notion of gaining credit for their prior experiences, as Education Assistants, was first aired with the EAs by the researcher in 1999, the RPL process at the HEI they attended was still very much in a trial phase. At that stage the HEI had only just won a tender with the Department of Education to develop an RPL process for teachers in Western Australia. At a meeting organised by the researcher with the then ITE Programme Chair early in 2000, discussions first centred on units for which they should attempt to claim credit. As well as this, the nature of the application process was unclear at this stage except that it would be in written form and would have to be submitted by each EA individually to a newly formed panel of academics who would assess the relative merit of each claim. The claims would have to demonstrate in writing that they had sufficient knowledge and understandings of the key concepts (or
outcomes) in each unit so as to be exempted from it. The timing, length and style of these submissions were not clearly articulated at this first meeting.

As the process began to unfold, the EAs were asked to get a letter from their Principal stating the number of years they had worked at the school. After this they were told they would need to write two or three pages for each of the units for which they were asking credit, explaining what they knew about these units. At first this seemed fairly straightforward but in addition to their fulltime workloads, studies, other commitments and importantly their different Discourses and ways of expressing themselves and their skills, it proved an arduous task, taking the most part of a year.

Not only was the process of writing applications for credit an extra burden in terms of time, more importantly it proved difficult because of the type of language they needed to use to put forward their case for exemption. This was a new and challenging Discourse for them. They were not experienced in the technique of application writing in a Western context. In this Discourse they needed to be very ‘upfront’ and explicit about their individual skills, knowledge and abilities. The Discourse required them, for example, to use a series of ‘I’ statements such as:

- In my Year 8 LOTE class I have developed a range of assessment tasks including rubrics, checklists and open-ended written tasks.

- Or

- As a result of my knowledge of the community I have developed lessons that incorporate the cultural understandings of the students.

Whilst these statements were clearly accurate, the EAs were generally reluctant to take credit for, and to openly admit to, having developed these skills independently. In order to overcome these difficulties, and given the EAs unfamiliarity with this Discourse and the process of applying for RPL, the Deputy Principal and the researcher offered to actively assist them in the writing of this new Discourse. This process involved regular
weekly meetings where the applications were drafted and redrafted with the support of the Deputy Principal and the researcher (see Chapter 7 for further details).

With this support from the school and despite their reluctance to use this terminology, Mei Zhu and Zaiton were able to complete their RPL applications and gain significant credit towards their degrees, which amounted to around one year of full time study or two years part time study. For various reasons, Emma did not attend more than two of the scheduled meetings to draft her RPL application despite the researcher’s reminders and willingness to reschedule. Emma did not, therefore, submit an RPL application and did not gain any uncredentialled credit towards her degree.

The decision about the units for which to claim credit was largely based on recommendations made by the Programme Chair in consultation with the researcher. These recommendations took into consideration the EAs’ personal experiences as second language learners, their background knowledge and their experiences working in classrooms. Based on his advice the EAs submitted applications for credit in four units. These included three curriculum units related to assessment and multicultural issues in education and one optional unit. This amounted to around 15 of the 96 points needed to gain a Bachelor of Education degree. Importantly for Mei Zhu and Zaiton who, as part time students, were enrolling in two or three units per year this amounted to a reduction in completion time by two years. It also reduced their HECS debt quite significantly.

The EAs had to wait several months for the HEI to contact them regarding their RPL applications. This was an anxious time for them despite the reassurances from the researcher that it was likely they would gain some credit. Once the letters were received confirming Mei Zhu and Zaiton’s RPL credit they were extremely relieved and grateful. The Deputy Principal and researcher set about counting how many points they now had and how many there were to go – this gave them a very clear ‘light at the end of the tunnel’ of what had at first seemed an almost impossible journey. It also
demonstrated to them that they already had a level of knowledge, understanding and skills in teaching through their experiences as EAs, which was being formally recognised by the HEI. This was an important acknowledgement of the legitimacy of their prior knowledge and experience.

10 Experience Based Learning: The School Practicum

As with most ITE programs internationally, the course in which the EAs were enrolled consisted of both theoretical and practical components (Wang et al, 2003). This meant that in order to graduate with a Bachelor of Education, they had to complete a series of practicums, linked to curriculum units in both primary and secondary classrooms.

10.1 The Theory Behind the Practice

School practicum is another form of Experienced Based Learning, which is used extensively in teacher education. It builds on the notion that practice is a valid and, for some proponents, critical part of the learning process. Exponents of the use of ‘practice’ both in the learning process and as a form of learning come from diverse philosophical approaches. They are particularly associated with humanist/developmental, emancipatory, feminist, socialist and other left wing ideological frameworks. Marxist philosophy, for example, emphasizes the critical co-dependence of theory and practice in which theory depends on practice and in turn serves practice. Similarly, Mao Tse Tung highlighted the importance of both knowing and doing and in fact argued that practice was a higher form of knowing:

All genuine knowledge originates in direct experience…. human knowledge can in no way be separated from practice….practice is higher than knowledge. (In Andresen et al, 2000, p. 230).

The concept of the dialectical relationship between practice and knowledge was also central to Paulo Freire’s (1986) influential work on education for liberation.
The use of school practicum as a means to develop learning through practical experience and of assessing students for their suitability as teachers is common practice in ITE internationally according to Wang et al (2003, p. 21). The way it is implemented, however, varies in terms of timing, length, supervision and the extent to which it is used to determine teacher certification across institutions and countries (Wang et al 2003, p.21). Duration can range from three to four weeks in Japan to 12 to 18 months in the Netherlands. Supervision is generally shared between classroom-based teachers and HEI staff.

**10.2 Changing Trends in School Practicum**

There are increasing trends, though, for the length of teaching practicum to increase and for there to be a greater devolution of responsibility for supervision to schools through various ‘partnership’ models. In Singapore, for example, recent changes to school practicum, as part of a general restructuring of their ITE course, have included an increase in their duration, further opportunities for engaging in extra practicum before and during the course, increased strategies to build on the practical wisdom of school practitioners through their engagement as adjunct lecturers and advisors in ITE courses, and the increased use of school staff as mentors to guide and oversee school practicum. Some educators, however, raise questions about trends toward a greater emphasis on the more practical components of ITE course to the detriment of, or at the expense of, theoretical aspects. These aspects, they argue, provide prospective teachers with deeper and broader insights into various pedagogical traditions and in particular the transformative nature of education that may not be gained from classroom experience or classroom practitioners.

According to Berrie (2002, p. 68) it has been recent criticisms of teacher education [fuelled largely by human capital theory] in the USA and Britain that have lead to an increase in the amount of time student teachers spend in schools and an expansion of the
role of mentor teachers as teacher educators through the creation of professional
development schools. According to their review of the literature, for student teachers
and teachers alike, teacher education is increasingly being thought of as synonymous
with time spent in the field. This notion of the value of school experience is, according
evidence that not all school experience is worthwhile, Zeichner, 1990 (in Berrie, 2002,
p. 68), claims there has been little research into the various models for school
experience which are all too often, “developed out of convenience or tradition” Berrie
In a similar vein, Deng and Gopinhan (2001, p. 2) commenting on recent changes to
school practicum in Singapore, claim that they are at least in part driven by the
economic and pragmatic problems that the general restructuring in ITE created for the
country’s sole ITE provider, the National Institute of Education (NIE). Increased
numbers of students entering ITE courses, for example, put pressure of HEI staff as they
had more students to supervise over longer periods. Devolution of responsibility for
supervision of practicum students to school principals through the HEI-School
Partnership model can, in this context, be seen as a way to reduce the extra financial
burden placed on the NIE (Goh and Gopinthan, 2001, p. 10).
Perhaps more importantly, it can also be seen to reflect continued strong support from
government and ITE planners for a ‘training model’ of teacher preparation (Goh and
Gopinhan, 2001, p. 10). They argue further that while the government rhetoric
favoured a shift toward a transformative model for teaching in the 1990s, where the
teacher is seen as a facilitator and motivator of the learner in the learning process, in
practice current trends in ITE still perpetuate a technical and practical emphasis in
teaching and teacher education. Also, according to Goh and Gopinhan, these
orientations and a training model cannot capture the complexities of teacher education
nor stand up to the needs of current and future educational initiatives in schools. The authors believe that the current technical and practical model is fundamentally incompatible with current trends in education and that there needs to be a shift toward more theoretical foundation units linked to practice so that teachers can reflect on teaching practice. They also believe students need to have the opportunity to reflect on their own school experiences if they are to be able to reconceptualise them to suit differing educational philosophies and practices.

This trend toward the development of closer ‘partnerships’ between HEI and schools in the supervision of school practicum and, perhaps more importantly, an increasing devolution of responsibility for supervision and assessment to schools and away from the HEI, has also been occurring in Australia. Edith Cowan University in Western Australia, for example, has recently promoted its new approach to school practicum within school districts as an innovative and progressive step toward improving their ITE course. Their school practicum program has focused on developing closer partnerships between schools and HEIs. The new practicum arrangements included sending more student teachers into the same school, appointing a HEI liaison member to each school, and mentor teachers assuming responsibility for assessing the student teacher. The central idea according to the HEI was a shift in thinking within the school about the role of the student teacher:

Partner schools are encouraged to see the student teachers as competent, contributing and active members of the school community who can contribute to wider school initiatives and priorities ie as an extra resource, rather than just an added responsibility (West Coast District Newsletter).

HEI staff in the program were given responsibility for a small number of schools with student teachers. Their role was to act as mentor to student and teacher rather than assessor. Responsibility for assessment lay with the classroom teacher who is given guidance and collegiate support by the academic staff member. While a case can be
made that the shift in responsibility for school practicum represents an innovative and progressive move aimed at improving school practicum and the majority of teachers approach this extra responsibility with dedication and professionalism, it is also the case that it has the potential to bring cost savings to the HEI as the greater responsibility shifts to the schools. Importantly, selection of suitable supervisors with the requisite skills and knowledge of current ITE teaching theory and practice and the monitoring of their role is a contentious issue.

10.3 Managing Practicum at CIDHS

Through-out the ITE program, the EAs in this study, like other students enrolled in the course, were expected to complete a number of school practicums and related curriculum units. The practicums began in their first year with a weeklong practicum, which involved observations and short lesson presentations, which were supervised by a self-selected classroom teacher. During each practicum they were given assignments by the HEI which asked them to trial lessons and then reflect on their experiences. These assignments, along with the classroom teacher’s assessment of their lesson preparation and presentations, were sent to their HEI-based supervisor who used them to evaluate the students. The classroom teacher was paid an allowance for taking on a practicum student.

In later years they were required to do longer practicums covering a range of curriculum areas including English, Maths, Science, Art, Physical Education and Music in different primary year levels. Finally, in their last year there was a requirement to spend an extended period of time in a classroom, observing and then presenting a range of lessons throughout a full term.

For the majority of students enrolled in the ITE program school practicum generally takes place in a number of feeder schools where the HEI engages classroom teachers, to supervise the students. HEI staff are employed to oversee and monitor these practicums.
often visiting the student and the classroom teachers two or three times during the practicums. Normally ITE students are expected to do at least one of their two week practicum in the metropolitan area but as external students living some 2,500 kms from the metropolitan area, the EAs in this case study were given special permission by the HEI to do all of their practicums at Christmas Island DHS. The HEI also gave permission for the researcher, as a Doctoral student and a Deputy Principal to act as the practicum supervisor on behalf of the HEI. This suited the EAs, as it would have been extremely difficult for them to attend school practicums on the mainland given the cost and their work and family commitments. It also avoided the HEI paying the very high costs of air travel that would have been involved had they needed to send a supervisor to the island.

The school, for its part, allowed the EAs to do their practicum within their regular working day and the Deputy Principal completed supervisory responsibilities as part of her administrative role. The students, classroom teacher and supervisor were provided a comprehensive guide to supervision and assessment of the school practicums by the HEI. As part of this it was expected that the supervisor observe the students at least once a week, hold lunchtime tutorials where necessary, meet regularly with the classroom teacher, complete a comprehensive half way and final evaluation and feedback in collaboration with the classroom teacher. As the supervisor was also the Deputy Principal she was available to observe and provide assistance in the supervision of the EAs on a regular and ongoing basis. Also as the EAs worked in classrooms with their mentors they had extensive and on-going classroom experiences as well as the official school practicum.

All the EAs successfully passed their first introductory practicum in their first year. This meant that the teachers who monitored them considered that each had successfully prepared and delivered two or three lessons in a primary and secondary class. The first
really significant curriculum-based practicum occurred during their third year of part
time study. Zaiton worked in a Year 1 class, Mei Zhu and Emma in two different Year
2 classes for two periods a week for two terms. The EAs, with advice from their
mentors, selected the teachers who they would work with and approached them to see if
they would be willing to supervise them.

Two of the EAs completed their practicum with their supervising teachers highly
recommending them in their assessment profiles. Emma, however, failed to meet the
requirements in her first major practicum and her supervising teacher recommended that
she withdraw.

It was not only Emma who found the practicum components difficult despite having
worked in classrooms as EAs and untrained LOTE teachers for many years. Reflecting
on their practicum experiences the EAs expressed concerns about their English
language skills and what the parents would think of second language speakers teaching
their children English. Commenting on the practicum units that they completed one of
the mentors reflected that:

_The thing that they have feared the most has been in their school experience
where they have had to teach older grades in English. I know that all of them if
they had their wish would elect to teach junior primary and have had to be
pushed to teach older grades. And its not that they don’t like the older children
it is just that they feel that they don’t have the English language skills to work
with the older grades. And despite what I said it wasn’t until Mei Zhu actually
got into a Year Six class and began teaching that she realised that the children
could understand her and they weren’t going to laugh at her accent and the
parents weren’t going to come up and complain that she was teaching their
children and now she feels less intimidated.
A lot of the language in the texts was difficult for them – especially if they had
colloquial Australian jargon and idioms like “as blind as a bat” which just
takes them a bit of time to register as an idiom._
(Jen, Interview, 2004)

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7 After several meetings between the supervising teacher and coordinator concerning Emma’s progress in
the classroom and attempts by the supervising teacher to assist Emma, the coordinator decided she should
intervene and discuss the possibility of Emma withdrawing from the unit. At this meeting the coordinator
explained that it was perhaps better for Emma to look for other career options and that if she decided to
withdraw from the unit now she may be able to gain credit towards a degree more suitable to her skills
and long-term interests. Following this meeting Emma agreed to withdraw from the B Ed course.
Despite their own personal reservations about teaching, particularly in the upper grades, two of the EAs achieved outstanding success in their practicums. Their classroom supervising teachers found them to display all of the qualities necessary to manage primary classrooms of all ages. They were innovative, dedicated and highly professional, willing to take on advice from their supervising teachers and self reflect on their own practices. They did not receive any negative feedback from the parents, students or the community.

11 The High Cost of Studying

In countries where the government is unable or unwilling to fund the cost of higher education, fees are often charged to individual users. Some institutions charge ‘up front’ fees while others may offer a range of options including student loans. Scholarships may be offered to some students to assist with the cost of HEI fees. Fees for Higher Education, however they are structured, like all forms of direct taxation, logically have a disproportionately negative impact on lower income groups for whom the proportion of their income needed to pay the fees is higher than that of those on medium to high incomes. Many social justice and equity groups argue against the charging of fees for Higher Education in the belief that fees act as a disincentive for people from low incomes accessing Higher Education and are therefore discriminatory and contribute to the elitist nature of Higher Education institutions. In Australia, there was a brief period in the late 1970s, where a Labor government abolished tertiary fees. But with the re-election of a conservative government at the end of the 70s, they were reintroduced.

In order to facilitate student payment of fees many governments have increasingly developed systems to offer loans to students (Frank Newman in Bjork, 1994 p. 352). While this can be seen as an enabling factor for those who do not have the financial
means to pay ‘up front’ fees, Newman argues that loans too can have a disproportionately negative impact on minority students and low socio-economic families who have a greater reluctance than others to borrow large amounts of money for education. This is because in many cases, the cost of a year’s fees at an expensive private college can be greater than the annual income of many poor families.

Because minority students come disproportionately from poor families, they are disproportionately affected by this aspect of the loans programs (Bjork, 1994, p. 354).

He argues that the USA government needs to reverse the current trend in its aid policy direction to de-emphasise loans, re-emphasise grants, reignite enthusiasm for work-study arrangements and linking aid to community service. Newman argues that work-study grants offer better opportunities for minority student success in part because they link their study to work in the field. This means that they can earn while they go to school, perform community service in their community (which many minority students already do), learn skills on the job and have a sense of connectedness and worth at HEI, rather than just becoming indebted. Newman cites several examples of schemes at Higher Education Institutions such as the inclusion of a labour assignment as part of the course, that fulfil paid work, study and community service objectives.

Whilst it may be the case that the abolition of fees or the introduction of aid programs assists low-income or non-mainstream students to access Higher Education, Foley (1987, p. 19) argues this is not a panacea for equitable access. Like Bourdieu, Gee, Bufton and others cited in this chapter, Foley acknowledges that there is a range of factors militating against non-mainstream access to Higher Education of which fees is only one. These groups also need other forms of support – including assistance with other costs such as the purchasing of books and the opportunity cost of loss of income and remedial/study skills support. Perhaps more importantly, non-mainstream students
need to feel a sense of belonging at HEI and that their Discourses (ways of thinking, speaking acting and their belief systems) are likely to be accepted and valued before they will begin to take up places within universities.

Apart from the brief time in Australia during the 1970s when HEI fees were abolished, fees have gradually increased. Options for payment of these fees include upfront fees (usually at a reduced rate) or deferred payment through the tax system. Once the student has completed studies and reached a specified minimum income level, the government automatically deducts an amount from the student wages through the taxation system to repay the debt. Each of the EAs in this case study chose to defer payment of their Higher Education debt.

Despite the ability to defer payment, the cost of their studies was a concern to all of them. Zaiton, for example, who has two daughters also studying, felt enormous guilt about adding this extra burden to her family. Her daughters and her husband, however, insisted that this was not a concern for them. Mei Zhu and Emma, also with children to support, felt ashamed at spending so much money on themselves rather than their families. These feelings of guilt about spending time and money on themselves, particularly among women students, are supported in the findings of Kelly (1987). Added to their other insecurities about studying, clearly fees were more than a financial burden and yet despite this, they continued to study regardless of the financial costs incurred. They all agreed though that had they had to pay up front fees they probably would not have agreed to enrol.

12 Conclusion

The women in this case study entered a HEI with a set of Discourses that they learned from their families, through their school experiences and in their working lives on Christmas Island. These Discourses included aspects of Malay/Islam, Confucianism
and colonialism/neo-colonialism. Each of these Discourses shaped the life experiences of the EAs. In particular the “Big ‘C’ Conversations” that the Discourses conveyed informed their beliefs and attitudes about themselves and both their right and ability to take on the socially-situated identity of ‘teacher’. These Discourses positioned them within their own communities and in relation to the mainstream Australian community according to their gender, age, ethnicity and socio-economic status.

This chapter has sought to describe the differences between the Discourse of Academe and those of the EAs in this study. It has also sought to identify where these Discourses have collided and the extent to which this and various other aspects of the HEI in this case have study acted as “Driving” forces or “Restrainers” in the EAs’ attempt to successfully engage with the ITE program in this study.

Certainly, as this study has shown, the alternative entry program served as a crucial bridge between the Discourses of the EAs and those of Academe. The program not only enabled them to gain entry but also provided them very real, although to some degree limited, opportunities to learn some critical aspects of the Discourse of Academe that they would need for their further study. These included knowledge of Western academic style of essay writing, contributing to small group tutorials, using ICT and Western academic ways to put forward points of view. Importantly, the program also served to break down their own perceptions, derived from their experiences growing up in Malaysia in the 1970s and living on Christmas Island through the 1980s and 1990s, that mature age students and particularly Asian women did not belong in HEIs. Through the program they developed a sense of belonging albeit tentative. Thus the alternative access program was a significant step in introducing them to some aspects of the Discourse of Academe, which they would need in order to move on into their early units of work.
Just as the alternative access program was crucial in their initial ability to engage with an ITE program, so was the provision of external study options for the women in this study. Both their extensive family and work commitments and their location in a remote community prohibited them from attending a mainland Australian HEI. No matter how much they wanted to study or become teachers they could not and would not have left their families, jobs and communities to do so. In this respect the HEI’s external studies option was a significant “Driving” force in their ability to engage with the ITE program. Studying externally did, however, present certain difficulties. Many of the units in this course, for example, relied almost entirely on quite outdated print communication modes for the delivery of content and the assessment. As well as this, the students did not have the benefit of lectures, tutorials and informal face-to-face discussions with all their oral, visual and contextual clues, and “other stuff” (Gee, 1999) to supplement the written texts. This was particularly significant for ESL users. Contact with tutors and course coordinators provided some support but, as the women pointed out, this was often limited by difficulties in contacting tutors and the need to communicate by telephone. Alternative forms of communication such as web cam were not available at the time the women were enrolled in this course. Other difficulties included the late arrival of course materials, sometimes poor quality photocopied readers and guides, some of which had confusing typographical errors and most of which could have been enhanced by the use of more creative font styles and other contemporary multimedia graphic organisers.

Being able to access some credit for their prior learning was significant for the EAs as it reduced both the time and the cost burden of their studies. Just as importantly, it demonstrated that what they already knew from having worked in classrooms as EAs for many years was valued and valuable. The RPL process was, however, in very early stages of development at the HEI in this study. As a result there were no clear and
specific guidelines for the women as to exactly what was expected in their submission. They therefore relied heavily on the school staff to assist them with completing their submissions. Also, as with the alternative access program, had it not been for the researcher learning about the RPL process through her academic contacts, the EAs would not have known that they could apply for such uncredentialled credit.

Whilst some units posed more difficulties academically than others, in general the women coped with their theoretical and practical units very well. Of particular importance, though, was the support they were able to receive from their school mentors in developing their note taking and summarising skills and with editing their work. These skills did not form part of their course and it was assumed that they had developed them prior to entry into the course.

Also of importance was the fact that the HEI was flexible enough to allow them to do all their school practicum at Christmas Island District High School. As with their ability to study externally this meant they did not have to be dislocated from their families and work for extended periods of time. For the women in this study this was a significant factor contributing to their ability to study successfully.

Without exception one theme runs through the journals and interviews regarding the women’s participation in the ITE program. Repeatedly the women point out that they could not have succeeded without the help of teachers and the school administration team, including the researcher who provided them with both resources in terms of time, and academic and moral support. While the HEI’s policies and practices were flexible in some respects, much of this flexibility was the direct result of the researcher’s ability to negotiate with her academic contacts for changes to the course to suit the EAs’ specific needs. There was little in the way of coordinated or structured leadership from the HEI to facilitate these changes.
The school and the mentors played a pivotal role in enabling the women to engage with the Discourse of Academe they encountered through the HEI course. Without the support of the school, it is unlikely the women would have engaged with the ITE program to the extent that they did. The HEI would have remained a distant and unreachable bastion where they felt they did not belong and where they initially believed they could not succeed. These people, including the researcher, other administration staff, teachers and mentors, in varying ways provided support to the EAs often by making explicit that which was hidden within the Discourse of Academe as well as, in many cases, challenging attitudes and practices within the HEI, the school and the community so that the needs of the EAs were accommodated and addressed. Their role is the subject of the next two chapters.
Chapter 6    Coaches, Gurus, Sages and Mentors

1    Introduction

Throughout the course of their studies the EAs were provided support and assistance from a variety of people on the staff at Christmas Island DHS. This chapter examines the impact that these people had on the EAs’ engagement with an Initial Teacher Education Program at an Australian Higher Education Institution. The people involved are referred to variously as ‘coaches’, ‘gurus’, ‘sages’ and ‘mentors’. The different names are used to signal the different roles each person played and the types of support they offered.

In common usage, the term ‘coach’ usually refers either to private tutors or to sports team instructors. The word ‘guru’ is Malay for teacher but in its English sense it can also refer to a revered teacher or spiritual teacher. The terms ‘coaches’ and ‘gurus’ are used in this chapter to describe those people who predominantly provided the more formal types of academic and job related support during the women’s studies. This is distinct from those who provided a much more diverse range of support including both professional and personal assistance. These people are referred to as ‘sages’ or ‘mentors’.

According to the Oxford dictionary a ‘sage’ is a person who is wise, discreet, and judicious and has the wisdom of experience. This dictionary also describes ‘mentors’ as experienced or trusted advisors. Other writers have given the term mentor an even broader meaning. Many, for example, refer back to its classical use by the poet Homer in the Iliad. Homer gave the name ‘mentor’ to the advisor to whom the young hero Odysseus trusted with the upbringing of his son Telemachus while he was away fighting the Trojan Wars. The mentor’s role in this case would have gone far beyond that of a
tutor or coach, and would have involved such things as providing advice and support on social, emotional, political and moral issues.

Perhaps the role of mentor can be likened to that of a substitute parent rather than a tutor. As a result of the broad meaning that has been attributed to the term mentor in the literature, Vardi and Vardi (1995, p.2 & p. 4) have described it as a “hybrid construct”. In this respect, they see essential differences between the acts of coaching and mentoring, claiming that mentors motivate and advise through both their “cognitive and affective impact”. For Vardi and Vardi (1995, p. 4), mentors are like transformational leaders who are charismatic and expert role models that can inspire and empower learning and change. Vardi and Vardi (1995, p. 4) also see the mentoring relationship as a dyadic and reciprocal one where one person shares their educational and pedagogical vision with another. This, according to Vardi and Vardi (1995, p. 3), is different from a coaching relationship which is traditionally one where senior staff unilaterally coach their mentees in specific job related training. For Vardi and Vardi (1995, p. 4), mentoring is a special relationship which needs to draw on the principles of adult learning where the special needs of personal attributes, anxiety over learning, work and family commitments need to be accommodated.

Others have also pointed to the complex nature of the mentoring relationship that includes both a professional and personal aspect. Meyers and Smith (1999, p. 78), for example, saw that the aim of mentors in the Coming Home Programme ITE program designed for non-mainstream students was to address:

The psychosocial and vocational needs of students with a focus on empowering them through meeting their need for personal development, role construction, professional competency and systems awareness.

Levison (in Caldwell and Carter, 1993, p. 12) goes even further to say that “Mentoring is best understood as a form of love relationship.”
Such varying definitions of ‘mentoring’ fit with Dodgson’s findings (in Caldwell and Carter, 1993, p. 10) that:

The definition of mentoring is elusive and varies according to the view of the author.

Despite this wide variety of opinion on the role of mentors, the most common characteristic that seems to differentiate ‘sages and mentors’ from ‘coaches and gurus’ is the very personal, and in some ways reciprocal, aspect of the relationship.

In this case study many people played varying supporting roles for the EAs. Those whose support was limited to the professional aspects of teaching or academia are included in the section on ‘coaches’ and ‘gurus’. Those whose support went beyond that into the realms of personal, emotional, moral and political support are included within the framework of ‘sages’ and ‘mentors’. Neither the coaches and gurus nor the sages and mentors in this study were given any specific guidelines on how to coach, tutor or mentor. Nor were they provided with any ‘Guides to Mentoring’, despite there being a plethora in the literary and professional development market place (Burke, 2002; Sweeny, 2001; Niebrand, Horn and Holmes, 2000). Instead, they were left much to their own devices to develop a style of mentoring that suited their own needs. As a result, the relationships they developed were dependent on what they perceived to be the role of a guru, coach, sage or mentor and the needs of the mentees within this particular context.

The purpose of the rest of this chapter is to describe the various roles and responsibilities taken on by the different mentors in this case study: how and why they became mentors; how they mentored; their views on mentoring; and their recommendations for mentoring programs. This will provide useful information for those wishing to develop mentoring programs for staff development, particularly in an intercultural context.
2 Coaches and Gurus

Over the course of the five years since the EAs first enrolled in the ITE program, many people have offered them assistance in a variety of forms. Each of these people, in their own way, has contributed to the EAs’ ability to engage with the course. Even many years prior to the EAs’ enrolment in the course, various people supported them in the sense that they provided them with advice and support to develop and improve their professional skills. When asked to comment on who had assisted them in the past the EAs listed many people including teachers, friends, members of their family, ‘significant others’ within the school and the university community and the researcher. All these people played varying roles to a greater or lesser extent.

2.1 The First Gurus

The first gurus included teachers with whom the EAs had worked and who had encouraged them to consider retraining to become teachers 10 or 15 years before they actually enrolled in the ITE program. People who encouraged them included teachers they worked with in the mainstream school, as well as the then coordinator of the Saturday Language School where the EAs taught Malay or Mandarin each Saturday morning. This coordinator was committed to maintaining and promoting first languages in the school and the community on Christmas Island and was integral to the development of the Saturday School and its teachers. As part of her role, she invited a university lecturer from the mainland to run a variety of professional development workshops for the Saturday School teachers. During the course of this professional development the lecturer, realising the skills already being displayed by some of the Saturday School teachers, encouraged them to consider retraining to become mainstream LOTE teachers.
Other significant people at the time were classroom teachers with whom the EAs worked in the mainstream school. Zaiton recalls being encouraged into teaching by a Year 1 teacher she worked with in the early 1990s:

_The first person who ever mentioned a career in teaching to me was a Year 1 teacher back in 1990. I was her assistant but she trusted me to take groups to have control for the class and she involved me in planning, decision-making and report writing. It didn’t stop there she encouraged me a few times to be a teacher._

_Much later in 1998 I worked with another Year 1 teacher who brought back the thought to me (the very slight thought I had before). Her encouragement and trust made me develop the trust that ‘I can’ and made me want to have a go._

(Journal, May 2000)

When the idea of retraining to become a teacher was first put to Zaiton, she felt that it was an impossible dream. She was not aware then that there were alternative access routes to universities, and she had four young daughters still living at home. The prospect of doing pre-university studies and having to sit a university entrance exam just to get into a course was simply too daunting at the time.

Mei Zhu also remembers the important role that classroom teachers played in giving her the ‘idea’ that she could teach. She recalls that:

_One year, when I was working in a Year One class, I had a chance to take the class on my own for about an hour. Normally teacher assistants are not allowed to ‘take charge’ of a class for such a long time. This is how it happened._

_One morning, the Year One teacher suddenly felt unwell and needed to go home. The school was unable to get a relief teacher in time. After consulting the Deputy Principal the teacher advised me to take the class until the relief teacher arrived. The lesson had been prepared but she gave me the opportunity to do something different if I wish to. But I did what she had planned._

_I was amazed by the children’s behaviour. They treated me just like a teacher, which gave me the confidence to teach them. I thought to myself “I think I can be a teacher too!”_

_The next day when the Year One teacher returned to work, she asked me about the session. I told her there weren’t any problems at all and that in fact I quite enjoyed the experience._

(Journal, May 2000)
These teachers gave the EAs the initial belief that they could become teachers. It took many others later on to develop this seed of an idea into a realistic prospect. The first of these, described in the next section, played the role of coaches in the sense that most of their support came in the form of academic assistance.

2.2 Coaches

2.2.1 Simon
When Simon began helping the three EAs in their first years of study, he was the senior secondary math/science teacher at CIDHS. As the son of a teacher, Simon spent his early years of school in a variety of small towns on the mainland. It was only when he reached high school that his family decided to move to the city.

Simon describes himself as an easygoing student, he was pretty good academically and found the work pretty easy. While he had no particular career goals at the time, one thing for certain was that he was not going to become a teacher! This was because his father, aunty and sister were all teachers. After completing a science degree at university, though, he found that teaching was a career that would enable him to continue playing sport so he decided to do a Graduate Diploma in Education.

Simon had been teaching for 17 years in metropolitan schools when he came to Christmas Island and began to assist the EAs with their coursework in Maths and Science. Simon became involved with working with the EAs, after Zaiton and Mei Zhu had been spending quite a bit of time in the Maths office getting help from the other Maths teacher. He said that they asked him to help in order to take the pressure off the other teacher. Over the course of the semester unit both teachers helped each of the EAs at different times:

*I probably helped them all, at different stages, I think they were really aware of trying not to load us up too much so they were quite good at monitoring who they were using up and how much time they were spending time with, so over the semester I helped all of them.*

(Interview, November 2000)
Simon assisted the EAs voluntarily during his free periods at school and during lunch times, as well as before school and after school. He also gave extra help to Emma at her home quite often after school:

I gave them a copy of my timetable and said I was available any time I wasn’t teaching. This assistance built up over the semester. At the beginning of the term it wasn’t very much but during the middle of the course when there were lots of experiments and projects due it amounted to 3 or 4 hours a week!
(Interview, November 2000)

The type of support Simon gave varied between the EAs. Mei Zhu had worked as the Science Laboratory Assistant at the school for several years, so she had the most experience with Science. Emma and Zaiton both said that they didn’t really like or understand Science when they were at school, so Simon spent a lot of time “explaining things and giving them the basics” as well as helping them to set up experiments. According to Simon, their biggest problem was reading the texts and understanding Science terminology. Before they met with him, Simon would painstakingly read the text and highlight the key words and try and help them that way.

Generally speaking, Simon found the course was pretty hard for them, especially the requirement to know all the scientific terms. He wasn’t sure why primary teachers in particular needed to know this information. Also, he felt it would be very difficult for them as they had not done any Year 11 and Year 12 sciences. When asked why he spent so much time and effort helping the EAs, he said it was:

Because they needed it, they would have struggled, I think especially Emma would have struggled any way I don’t know how well she would have gone in the exam but they really needed the help and wouldn’t have been able to do it without us.
(Interview, November 2000)

Simon found working with Emma more difficult than the others. He said that in many cases he almost needed to do the work for her, whereas the others just needed some guidance. In the end Simon realized he was giving Emma too much help. He decided to
only check what she had done herself and not offer too much in the way of suggestions.

Reflecting on his role, Simon said:

*It was like teaching; I gained the satisfaction of helping out and helping them to gain understanding. It’s the normal things teachers want to get from students.*

(Interview, November 2000)

Simon didn’t get any payment for his work but they often brought him food and invited him for dinner.

### 2.2.2 Jesse

When Jesse started working with the three EAs she was a Year 3 classroom teacher.

Later she was to win the position of Curriculum Improvement Officer at the school.

Jesse, who was in her early 30s, was born and raised on the mainland and hadn’t left Australia until she went travelling in her mid 20s. She describes her school life as typical - “if there is such a thing these days”. She went to a state government primary school then to a state government high school. She didn’t do very well in her university entrance exams so she went to work for a year and then re-sat them. After this she went to university and lived at home with her parents, and younger brother and sister.

Jesse describes herself as a good student at school:

*A real ‘squid’. I was always the person the teacher picked to do all the jobs. And I was well liked and I wasn’t teased or anything because I did well. There were stages all through primary school that they thought that if you did well they bumped you up a year level that you could skip grades and that was the answer and I went to numerous, numerous tests all through primary school but no one was ever quite ready to make those jumps at the time.*

(Interview, September 2001)

Jesse says that she always wanted to be a teacher ever since she was a little girl. This was mainly because of her mum’s cousin:

*I thought mum’s cousin was the most amazing lady in the world. She was blonde and tall and gorgeous and always smelled nice and she was a teacher and we saw a lot of her and it never wavered except once I thought I would become an accountant but it didn’t last long.*

(Interview, September 2001)
Jesse lived at home while she was at Teachers’ College and her father influenced her to treat university like a 40 hour a week job. So she worked hard from day one and achieved good results. Everything she handed in was her best effort. After Teachers’ College Jesse was sent to a small country town. She says that the town was a big shock to her and, although work was exciting, it was really tough. She had thirty-six Year 1 students at one stage. Many were Aboriginal students and many of them had big problems coping with school but she received lots of support from the administration, even though most of the staff were new graduates.

Jesse’s first experience of working with EAs was when she was appointed to Christmas Island District High School. As a Year 1 teacher, Jesse had an EA working in her classroom most of the time. She found this invaluable, as the EA was able to support her with small group work and with translating and getting to understand more about the cultures and languages of her children and their parents.

Jesse admits to not having a great understanding of the real value of the first language in second language learning in her first years of teaching. After completing an ESL in the Mainstream course and through other professional development she became increasingly aware of its value as a strategy to promote learning (DECS, 1993). Unlike most teachers at the school, Jesse made a conscious effort to try to learn at least the basic greetings and classroom words in Malay and Chinese.

Jesse commenced working with the EAs retraining to become teachers through the newly established Year 3 Languages Other Than English (LOTE) program. This was the first time Malay as a LOTE had been introduced into the school curriculum. Emerging from recommendations made by the LOTE committee, Malay and Mandarin as LOTE were to be taught by EAs in the Year 3 classrooms along with the teacher. This was in an attempt to make LOTE much more integrated into the curriculum. Jesse,
as the Year 3 teacher, therefore became integrally linked with Zaiton and Emma through the Year 3 LOTE program.

Jesse remembers a certain reluctance about being involved in this new program at first, especially just having returned from a year travelling overseas:

_Umm I was kind of just put into it. I walked back in to school, I had Year 3 and all of a sudden there was a meeting and I was in it. The initial groundwork was done while I was away um and I actually don’t remember there being any talk of it in 1998. At that stage I didn’t want to be involved, I just wanted to be in my van running around the world and worrying about currency exchange. I was pretty much chewing heads off chickens being back so I didn’t particularly like it. It was something I just had to get up and do so I did it._

(Interview, September 2001)

Jesse describes working with one of the EAs in the Year 3 LOTE program as particularly difficult at times:

_We had planning time together where we tried to outline the term’s plan and it was meant to relate to what was going on in the Year 3 classroom not just be isolated. So we would sit together and plan the term’s work and then the EA would turn up and she would have a totally different lesson than what I had imagined we had planned. And we had agreed that most of the lessons would be oral but they ended up just being worksheets. I was really conscious of not wanting to take over I didn’t want to be the LOTE teacher. But I knew it wasn’t working and it was really frustrating. Like even with class management, if the kids were getting away with things and I was sitting in the room it was like they were getting at me as well._

(Interview, September 2001)

In order to overcome the problem, Jesse decided to treat the relationship between herself and the EA as that of teacher and student teacher. This meant developing her own, much more regular and structured, approach to the LOTE program:

_I would meet with the EA the day before the LOTE class and she would go through with me what she was planning and I would help her with ideas. And this made things better but it took up a lot of time and I was often having to go and find her and chase her up and even then the lessons didn’t go as we had planned. It was as if there was a communication gap – I don’t know – it was hard not to get frustrated when what I thought was happening didn’t. It was like I couldn’t communicate. Sometimes it was like she thinks that if the kids get all ticks then she is a good teacher. She doesn’t understand the outcomes philosophy and I haven’t tried to talk about that level._

(Interview, September 2001)
Despite having been thrown into the program headfirst and having difficulties working with her EA, Jesse found working in the LOTE program rewarding:

Oh it is has been great seeing how well the class works with the LOTE lessons and learning how important their first language is in helping them to understand and feel proud.

(Interview, September 2001)

Reflecting on her role in working with the EAs in the LOTE program, Jesse felt it needed much more structure so that everyone understood their relationship – just like a teacher / student-teacher program:

Like when I did my long term practical they said, ok tomorrow we will be looking at classroom management – so I would read up on it and really prepare for that aspect and they would assess it and give feedback. This would help breakdown barriers and avoid people feeling uncomfortable about their roles and whether they should be saying things or not.

(Interview, September 2001).

2.2.3 Bob

Bob was born in Penang, Malaysia in the mid 1950s. He was the eldest son of a ‘Eurasian’ family with a typical mixed colonial heritage. Bob’s father was born in Sumatra just before the Japanese occupation in WWII. He was the son of a Dutch tobacco plantation owner and a Japanese shopkeeper. His father put Bob’s father in an orphanage after his Japanese mother was forced to return to Nagasaki in disgrace. During the war the Catholic nuns of the orphanage took their charges to safety in the British Straights Settlement of Penang. Bob’s mother is French/ Chinese Malaysian. Both of Bob’s parents were schoolteachers in Penang and migrated to Australia during the 1960’s when Bob was about nine years old. This was the time of the White Australia Policy so they were only able to migrate because Bob’s grandfather was Dutch and he was therefore considered white. Assimilation of migrants was a key government policy during these years, and so Bob’s family made a determined effort to become ‘Aussies’ by speaking only English at home and learning to live life in a ‘typical’ Australian way. As a result, Bob could not speak Malay or any Chinese
languages. Despite their efforts at assimilation, the family maintained many cultural ties with Malaysia and continued to enjoy Malaysian food and culture.

Bob came to the island in 1996 as a primary school teacher. Because of his empathy with Malay culture, especially his love of food and his sense of humour, he quickly and easily made friends with the Chinese and Malay Education Assistants, office staff, cleaners and gardeners. They often brought him special treats including island fruits, curries and desserts. As a result of the close relationship he had developed with the Malay and Chinese staff, when the EAs enrolled in the ITE program they turned to him for tutoring support. Emma, Zaiton and Mei Zhu went to Bob for one hour tutoring sessions after school with Bob for their first years of studying.

Emma described his teaching style in an interesting way:

He is very good the way he teaches gets into your brain. I think because he is Asian – I know he is half Dutch and half Malay but he can understand how we think. If he leaves next year I think we will fail. Last year he helped us pass and get good grades. The tutors at university have said we do very well – it is because of him.

(Interview, July 2001)

Bob became involved in tutoring again at the beginning of February 2001 when the researcher asked the three EAs if they still wanted Bob to tutor them once a week. They all said definitely that they did, reiterating Emma’s thoughts that they would fail without him. One of their major concerns, though, was that he was now married and they felt it might not be appropriate for him to do this any more. They felt that perhaps his new wife would not understand and he may not have so much spare time any more.

In response to their concerns, the researcher went to see the new Principal and explained that Bob had voluntarily tutored the EAs every week for the past year, and asked if it were possible within the school’s current staffing allocation for him to be given some time off during the school week to prepare his tutoring sessions. The new Principal supported the concept of assisting the EAs to retrain and agreed that this was a very
good idea. She suggested the researcher see the primary Deputy Principal to see if this could be arranged. The primary Deputy Principal was also very supportive of the program and agreed to organise one period a week for Bob to prepare his tutoring sessions. This was a small but very significant step – it was the first time the school had officially given what can be called tutoring time to a staff member, and was the first official support given to the EAs. It was crucial recognition for the EAs, their study and the program.

Bob explains that prior to their weekly meetings he would read the relevant sections in their course materials and highlight the important aspects, noting particularly the terminology that he considered may be difficult for ESL learners. At the meeting he would then go through the readings with them discussing the pertinent points and also providing them with essential study skills such as recognising topic sentences, key words and so on.

Bob considered the most difficult aspect of the course for them was the written form of language used in the texts and the higher-level technical terms which were difficult for them to make meaning from. He described the readings as:

> Often too verbose, almost to the extent of being arrogant!
> (Interview, September 2001)

Having read through the course materials prior to each tutoring session, Bob was in a good position to comment on the courses the EAs enrolled in. Commenting on them he said:

> Many of the units have large chunks that bear little correlation to work being undertaken at schools. For example in one Psych unit they did it seemed pointless to go into some of the out of date theories at this level. Maybe in a Masters degree. Also a Science unit required them to learn chemical formulae, which has absolutely no relation to work done in primary school.
> (Interview, September 2001).

Tutoring all the EAs at once placed Bob in a good position to be able to identify the significant differences between their study habits:
Zaiton was extremely good at skimming and scanning the texts and selecting the most important points. This made her study habits efficient and she was able to get assignments completed ahead of the others. Mei Zhu was very thorough. She read and re-read and wanted every nuance explained. Assignments were worked over and over again. She was successful through sheer diligence and usually attained good results because of this. Emma, on the other hand, often found the readings really confusing and found it hard to separate the important points from the less significant aspects of a topic. (Interview, September 2001)

Bob felt that Emma needed to be given much more direction and structure in her study habits and writing techniques than he could give in the one-hour sessions each week.

Over the two years that Bob tutored the EAs, Bob had noticed that their confidence had developed significantly. They completed readings and assignments quite independently and turned to him for assistance less and less. Bob believed strongly that the school or the Department should have provided the EAs with some study leave as they were beginning to do with some Aboriginal and Islander Education Workers in WA. This would not only make life easier for the EAs who all had families, community commitments and worked fulltime, but would also demonstrate a real, rather than tokenistic level of support for them retraining to become teachers.

In their third year of study, the school did in fact build into its School Development Plan a timetable with three periods a week of mentoring time for three teachers to work with each of the Education Assistants. The program became known as the Christmas Island Trainee Teacher Program, central to which was the establishment of this mentoring arrangement.

3 Mentors

3.1 Early Mentors
Interviews with the various people who ‘mentored’ the EAs over the course of their studies sheds some light on who they were, what sort of assistance they gave and what motivated them to assist the EAs. For the most part this assistance was given
voluntarily as it wasn’t until several years into the course that the school was able to provide timetabled support for the EAs through its School Development Plan.

3.3.1 Donna
Donna was one of the first teachers, other than the researcher, to voluntarily take on the role of mentor to the Education Assistants when they enrolled in their first year of their Bachelor of Education degree. Donna was a teacher in the Four Year Old Kindergarten Centre, known as Tom Pat on the island. Tom Pat was situated at the bottom of the mountain completely separated from the main school. As a result of the centre’s physical isolation, Donna worked largely on her own with the assistance of one Chinese Education Assistant who spoke several Chinese languages, Malay and English. For the majority of children entering the four-year-old program on Christmas Island, kindergarten was the first sustained contact they had with Europeans and with using the English language.

Donna had had experience working with EAs and student teachers prior to coming to the island. During her twenty years teaching experience, Donna had been involved in training programs on the mainland to retrain primary teachers to become Early Childhood Education (ECE) teachers, had numerous trainee teachers working with her, had worked in programs to train Teacher Assistants and had been involved in working with Aboriginal Teacher Assistants studying at a university, in Queensland. As a result, Donna had a wealth of both teaching and mentoring experience in intercultural contexts.

Through her experiences working with Aboriginal children in ECE, Donna also had a good understanding of second language or dialect learning and a philosophical commitment to honouring and supporting first language development.

In her second year at CIDHS, Donna worked actively to promote the skills of the Education Assistant (Ling) who worked with her at the Tom Patterson kindergarten. Donna recounts how invaluable the EA was given that she was able to speak, write and
translate in English, Malay and at least five of the Chinese language varieties used on the island. Donna recalls:

*When I came here it was an automatic response to involve her in the class. She could alternate with me reading stories in Chinese and Malay to support the languages of the children in my classes. The majority, 80 – 85% of children that come here, don’t speak English when they arrive at the 4-year-old centre. So we worked together as a team and I certainly respected her as an equal professional in the early childhood setting.*

(Interview, March 2000).

As a result of Donna’s active lobbying within the school’s administration, the Department of Education and the Commonwealth Department of Territories, Donna was able to access ‘off island’ professional development for Ling. This was the first time an EA had been provided with ‘off island’ PD, despite suitable funds having been included in the budget. Donna’s lobbying to gain professional development for Ling set the precedent for all other EAs, and eventually office and library staff accessed ‘off island’ PD in the following years.

Accessing PD for Ling was not a simple process as there was some resistance to the idea from the school’s administration team and the government who perhaps feared that it would open the floodgates for others to apply, as it did. Resistance in a more subtle form also came from other EAs who thought Ling was getting special treatment, and from Ling herself. She was worried both that she may not cope with the course and that she would have to leave her husband and young family to travel to a place she had never visited before. Ling did successfully complete the course, and after the PD Donna acknowledged a marked change in Ling’s confidence. Donna recalls that:

*After she came back from her PD in Indonesia where she had done exams, she was in the advanced course, she got incredible marks, got used to study, made a lot of network opportunities with friends in the teaching profession. So she had recognition for her language skills there and the confidence that she had the ability to study and do exams and did very well. So her mindset changed quite dramatically after accessing that PD.*

(Interview, March 2000)
In 1997, Ling and all the other EAs from the District High School accessed various PD opportunities on the mainland. Following this, Donna continued to promote the value of the EAs as language and cultural experts at the school. By 1998, Donna was joined by others on the staff in her quest to both promote the use of first languages and in the up-skilling of the EAs. This provided Donna with a network of support to continue with her campaign.

*After Ling had been to the mainland for Education Assistant PD, I continued to encourage her with the concept that she could move from being an EA to a teacher. Then in 1998, Paula came on staff and you (the researcher) were involved in your Masters studies so then I had a network of professional support in the main school that could see the value and the merit of local Education Assistants having teaching training skills.*

(Interview, March 2000).

Donna’s reasons for supporting the EAs’ retraining to become teachers were pragmatic.

*For me the big one was that I wanted the language skills brought into the school and the bringing in of the whole community into the school and we needed local trained teachers to break down those barriers.*

(Interview, March 2000).

Donna was so successful in encouraging Ling into further study that, in 1999 when Ling had to leave the island to move to the mainland with her family, she enrolled in a Bachelor of Education course at a mainland university. Later, Ling successfully transferred over to a degree in Information Technology. With Ling gone, Donna took on the role of voluntary mentor for Mei Zhu and Emma who, by this stage, had successfully completed the University’s alternative entry course and were enrolled in the first of the introductory units as external students. Zaiton, at this time, was getting support from other people.

Donna did not get any financial support for assisting the EAs with their studies; instead she exchanged her support in the EAs’ course work for Indonesian cooking lessons with Emma.

*Together we would cook a meal and then sit down and go over the course readings. Emma would have everything ready and I would arrive and she would...*
show me how she made the food and I would help cook it and then we would sit down together and go through the readings and she’d highlight the phrases she couldn’t translate or understand.

(Interview, March 2000).

Donna explains that although Emma’s English language skills were reasonably good she still found academic language challenging.

The language of university is a language in its own right and so as an ESL speaker it’s a bit more challenging. I’m probably a bit more sensitive to that because I studied Indonesian in universities in Indonesia so I know what it is like to miss the gist of something because of the higher language, so we would sit down of a night and do that.

(Interview, March 2000).

The mentoring sessions took place with Emma and Mei Zhu about once a fortnight, depending on their workload. For Donna the most difficult part was convincing the EAs to reduce the amount of time they were spending on their studies. Both women were aiming for high distinctions – admirable in its self but, according to Donna, had the potential to lead them to becoming over tired, stressed and possibly affect their health. This striving for perfection and fear of failure, however, was to be a consistent thread in both Mei Zhu and Emma’s engagement with their studies and may be linked to their Malaysian / Chinese upbringing and philosophies. Donna’s concern for their health and wellbeing demonstrates that she saw her role more as a mentor than simply a tutor or a coach.

They were so incredibly dedicated. They worked so hard. I kept saying just go for the pass, I want you to just pass I don’t want you to just burn out. I did not succeed in that and I still have not, both ladies are still going for high distinctions, and it’s totally within their personalities and I have just given up. They cannot do anything unless it is 150% so I would highly recommend them to any employer that is fortunate enough to get these ladies when they qualify.

(Interview, March 2000).

Before the end of the first year of study Emma did in fact become ill and was hospitalised. Despite doctors orders she continued to try to study in hospital. Donna then took on a greater role by typing out her work as she dictated.
From her experience working with the EAs at CIDHS and her previous experience, Donna made several insightful recommendations for retraining EAs, especially those for whom English is a Second Language. Primarily, Donna called on course writers and academics to develop an understanding of the complexities of second language learning, particularly the significant difference between speaking and listening, and reading and writing.

_Tutors and lecturers, if they haven’t studied a second language, it’s like the experience of jumping out of a plane - you need to do it to know what it feels like. If you haven’t tried to write assignments in a second language using university language even if you speak it beautifully at the interviews there is a big amount of time in writing it. It’s one thing to write a note to your girlfriend it’s another thing to write in university language so that puts a lot of pressure on and the reading from a textbook is much harder than listening to a lecture for external students._

(Interview, March 2000).

Donna was also strongly committed to the need for paid, as opposed to voluntary, mentoring. Based on her experience, voluntary mentoring, particularly in a cross cultural context, put added pressure on the mentees who felt either beholden to the mentor or reluctant to continually ask for assistance.

_I think it puts pressure on them because they are conscious of the time people are giving. With me, we swap translation times, and they are always trying to think of something or someway to give me back, even though my gift will be when they pass the courses and I keep saying that but because of their cultural base they cook me something or drop me in little treats._

(Interview, March 2000).

Donna’s role in encouraging not only the EAs in this study but also other EAs who she worked with is crucial. Similarly, her role as mentor went beyond that of coach and guru as she focused very much on aspects of the women’s personal lives. Rather than a formal working relationship, she developed a relationship based on empathy, trust and friendship. This is exemplified by her concern for their health and the willingness to provide tutoring support completely voluntarily. Donna’s background experience working with indigenous education workers and her own personal understanding of
studying at a tertiary level in a second language were invaluable in giving her commitment to supporting the emerging trainee teacher program at CIDHS. Donna was also important in that she became one of a group of teachers at the school who were able to support each other in bringing about a new pedagogical paradigm at CIDHS.

3.1.2 Karen
Karen was another of the teachers from the school who volunteered to help the EAs with their studies. Karen had come to the island in the middle of 1998. She was a Bachelor of Education student in her final year, but as there was a shortage of teachers at the time and the school needed an urgent replacement for a Year 1 teacher, Karen was given the position.

As a new graduate, Karen had no experience or training in working with EAs. She had, however, worked as a teacher aide for an autistic child in a primary school on the mainland prior to enrolling in her own ITE program. Karen had been a mature age student at university and, as a result, felt she understood much of the anxiety the EAs would feel entering a university course as mature age students.

Karen first met Mei Zhu on the plane coming to the island. Mei Zhu was just returning from a PD course for EAs. Karen was introduced to Mei Zhu on the flight and took the opportunity to meet and talk with her throughout the 6-hour flight. Her first reaction was how much intensive knowledge Mei Zhu had of the children on Christmas Island. So while Karen had no preconceived notions of the role of the EAs in the classroom, she quickly realized, during the flight, that Mei Zhu would be extremely supportive and helpful with anything to do with the students and their language and culture.

As it turned out, Mei Zhu became Karen’s EA in her Year 1 class. Initially, Karen had Mei Zhu do what most other EAs did and that was spending most of her time listening to the children read their English language home readers to her. Then, Karen found a group of students in her class who she considered at ‘educational risk’ but who were not
identified as such or had not yet been targeted by the support staff. Karen set up a program to target language and reading support for these children, which Mei Zhu ran in a small group situation.

As the year went by, their relationship grew stronger and Karen quickly realised that Mei Zhu was a capable teacher in her own right. Karen recognized that she had more knowledge and skills than herself and was happy to give her more responsibility in the classroom:

*Mei Zhu accepted this but she was always very unassuming about her own capabilities. She always put herself down. It was partly a mature age thing, partly cultural and a lot to do with personality.*

(Interview, April 2000)

Importantly, according to Karen, as their relationship developed through the year Mei Zhu became much less unassuming.

Karen can’t exactly remember when or who began talking to Mei Zhu about enrolling in an ITE program and becoming a teacher. She may have suggested it herself on occasions, but she certainly remembers the look on Mei Zhu’s face when she first said she could become a teacher. Karen describes it as an ‘oh what me!’ look. Karen remembers talking about becoming a teacher with Mai Zhu often during lunch and after school. Despite Karen’s encouragement, Mei Zhu was always hesitant and felt inadequate – she didn’t think she was bright enough to go to university. Karen kept reassuring her that that was how she had felt going to university, yet she had succeeded.

Karen describes her role as a mentor, as one of helping Mei Zhu with her assignments: going through the assignment questions and brainstorming ways to look at the questions - ‘what tack to take’. According to Karen, much of the wording in the texts and assignment tasks was ambiguous. She felt that this was what university courses were meant to do but that it was hard for ESL students to think laterally when they were struggling with the meanings in the written text. Also they were unaccustomed to this
style of teaching and learning because of their limited schooling experiences. Karen also helped with interpreting the texts, especially an Australian studies unit which dealt with lots of Australian cultural issues like myths and ethos.

Right from the beginning Karen offered Mei Zhu help and stressed she could come to her whenever she needed it. Discussing issues was made easier because Mei Zhu was Karen’s EA and so they were in contact everyday. Mei Zhu would leave draft assignments on Karen’s desk for her to check and they would talk about the course three or four times a week. This was not on a formal, regular basis, just at lunch and after school. Mei Zhu also went to Karen’s house about five times through the year and rang her at home when she needed help. Karen remembers at one time that Mei Zhu was anxious that Bob (who tutored the EAs more formally once a week) would be upset if he knew she was coming to Karen for extra help. Karen had to reassure her that Bob did not feel affronted by the extra assistance in the least.

Karen’s reflection on mentoring was clear. As with Donna, she saw her role as much more than a tutor: she was there to provide encouragement and support whenever Mei Zhu needed it. As with other tutors and mentors, Karen had to be careful not to put too much of herself into the support she gave Mei Zhu:

*I think a mentoring role is a supporting role, listening, reflective listening, challenging the student, not doing the work for them – although that is hard not to put too much of yourself in the work. Being available and giving ‘big time’ support and encouragement. I think I have been a mentor whereas Bob is more like a formal tutor – he is there on regular time slots but I’m there when they need me.*

(Interview, April 2000).

### 3.2 The Official Mentors

By mid 2001, the administration team at CIDHS, which included the researcher in her new position of Acting Deputy Principal, was committed to expanding the dual LOTE program and providing more formal support for the EAs’ retraining to become teachers. The shift toward a more culturally diverse workforce, in line with the Education
Department’s commitment to greater equity and diversity in the workforce, became part of the school’s new four year School Development Plan which included scope for mentoring assistance for the EAs as well as a range of other strategies to promote the greater inclusion of local Christmas Island workers in the school’s decision making processes. It was decided that Mei Zhu and Zaiton would be given a team teaching role alongside a mentor to teach the Mandarin and Malay LOTE classes from Years 3 - 10. Emma, who had increasingly demonstrated an interest in Home Economics (having worked as a Home Economics Assistant), would work with the Home Economics teacher. The choice of who would become their mentors was fairly obvious in the case of Mei Zhu and Zaiton but finding some one suitable for Emma was to prove more difficult.

3.2.1 Mei Zhu’s Mentor - Jen
Mei Zhu had been working in the Year 3 classroom for two years with Jen as an EA and as LOTE support. They had developed a close friendship both in and out of school. Jen, for her part, had developed a keen interest in Chinese language and culture and was studying Mandarin through a university external course. Jen, believing in Mei Zhu’s great potential to become a teacher, was more than happy to take on the role of fulltime mentor with Mei Zhu. The school allocated both Jen and Mei Zhu three periods per week for mentoring time as well as providing Mei Zhu two periods per week to undertake her school practicum as required by the university.

Jen was born in 1953. As a child she wanted to either be a nurse or a teacher but chose teaching as she enjoyed being with children. She went to Teachers College, which in those days was a set of old converted army huts, but she says they moulded her into an imaginative, versatile and inventive teacher. During college Jen married and had children, finally achieving her B Ed in 1992 after completing the last two years studying externally while working fulltime at a private school. By this stage, Jen had separated
from her partner and become a single parent raising four children. These experiences would place her in good stead to understand the difficulties Mei Zhu would go through.

One of the things she said that made her determined to get through was that her then principal kept telling her she could never do it!

Prior to coming to Christmas Island Jen had had fifteen years teaching experience. Her first teaching appointment in a government school was a Year 1/2 split class of 30 children in a demountable classroom. By the time she got the appointment in April the students had had three different teachers. Jen came to Christmas Island because she had always dreamt of living on an island and because she wanted to expand her teaching skills. As with many new teachers, Jen felt insecure about teaching on the island because she knew so little about the children’s own languages and cultures:

*I felt inadequate in teaching or dealing with cultural festivals. At the same time I was aware that by teaching the European festivals only I would be telling the children that the European festivals were more important. My EAs were in Perth when I arrived and I didn’t know to ask them, or in fact how they could help. I worried about doing the wrong thing.*

(Journal, October 2000)

In her first year though, Jen made great efforts to find out more about the culture of the island and desperately sought ways to communicate with the parents:

*I love learning about the different cultures for each child and I dearly wish to be able to communicate with parents.*

(Journal, October 2000)

Jen turned increasingly to the EAs for support and developed close relationships with all of them, but in particular Mei Zhu:

*I communicate well with EAs. I respect their religious beliefs and am interested to learn as much as possible about them.*

(Journal, October 2000)

As a Christian, Jen was particularly interested to learn about the various religions on the island and was also committed to ensuring that what she taught did not conflict with
parents’ beliefs. She was very conscious of ensuring all information that went home was translated, and relied heavily on EAs to help her break down barriers between her and the parents:

My own faith decrees that parents are responsible for their children’s education, and they select the school their children are to attend. This being the case I am required to find out as much as I can about how the children are raised so as not to teach in conflict with the parents. The EAs are an invaluable source of information

(Journal, October 2000)

Jen also strongly believed that children needed to be encouraged to use their first languages so that they could communicate effectively with their parents. This was essential to maintaining families, which Jen believed were the basis of a civil society.

As I have great respect for the home, it follows that I must also respect and encourage communication between parents and children. In many cases this will be done in a language other than English. It is easier for a child to learn a second language than an adult. It is imperative that children see the language that their parents use as valuable and as worthwhile as English. This can only be done if we encourage the use of first language at school. In many ways we inadvertently give signals to the children that cause the lessening of respect for their own culture and older members of the family. I have always had high esteem for the family, the right to one’s culture and language.

(Journal, October 2000)

In order to improve her understanding of the languages and cultures on the island, Jen attended Mandarin classes, conducted by the LOTE teacher, during her free time at school. Jen used the language she learned in her classes and found the children were very excited by her attempts to learn Mandarin and showed a renewed interest in their own language development. Jen remembers that:

The atmosphere generated was so positive that the LOTE teacher and I discussed ways we could include more LOTE in my mainstream classes, which was in line with the new Curriculum Framework goals of integrating learning areas.

(Interview, July 1999)

As a result of Jen’s obvious interest in learning Mandarin and the relationship she had established with Mei Zhu, she was asked to be a part of the Year 3 LOTE trial program which involved having EAs teaching LOTE in conjunction with the classroom teacher.
In these lessons, Mei Zhu and Jen team taught but Jen was always conscious of not expecting too much of Mei Zhu as an untrained teacher. Together they planned what would be taught and devised strategies and monitoring tools. Following the lessons they reflected on how the lesson went and what outcomes had been achieved:

*Mei Zhu and I have great respect and affection for each other. She seeks advice on teaching methods and strategies, knowing that I value her willingness and ability to plan and implement a simple program. We team-teach. The children see her as a teacher. However I still accept that she is still untrained and as such many teaching responsibilities cannot be expected of her.*

(Journal, September 2000)

From an early stage Jen recognised that Mei Zhu was very insecure about her teaching capabilities and required regular positive feedback. To avoid adding to her insecurity, Jen always ensured she chose only one negative aspect of her teaching to develop at a time:

*It is so easy to notice all the teaching faults in a practicing teacher when you are experienced yourself. I have concentrated on correcting one aspect of Mei Zhu’s teaching at a time so as not to discourage her. To begin with Mei Zhu used lots of Chalk and Talk, with the children learning by rote. By commenting on her fine preparation and appropriate content I could show her that I valued her efforts but we then reflected on alternative ways to present the material. This gave her the opportunity to practice new strategies without undermining her efforts.*

(Interview, 2000)

Mentoring has given Jen as much as she feels she has given Mei Zhu. It has enabled her to keep abreast of new educational theory as Mei Zhu discusses the course work with her and Mei Zhu has also helped Jen with her Mandarin studies. Jen also takes great pride in the fact that she is helping to develop a great teacher. On top of that, Jen has made a good friend with whom she often shares ideas about religion. Mei Zhu is a devout Buddhist and Jen a committed Christian.

Jen’s greatest concern with the mentoring program was that it put a lot of pressure on the EAs. As a mentor she was a fierce advocate for Mei Zhu, insisting that she be given adequate preparation time and a much-reduced teaching load. Over the years, Jen also
began to play a greater role as a liaison person with the university, eventually taking on much of the responsibility for organising their in-school teaching practicum. Jen’s style of mentoring differed greatly from the others, particularly Greta, who had a much more relaxed approach. Jen had rigorous and consistently high expectations of Mei Zhu throughout the program. This lead to some conflicts between the mentors who felt at times that the others weren’t doing what they were supposed to do. While Jen saw the mentoring role metaphorically as “a star that guides and comforts and enlightens” she was for the most part a loving but very strict star.

3.2.2 Zaiton’s Mentor - Greta
As with Mei Zhu, the choice of a mentor for Zaiton was also fairly obvious. Since the researcher had taken on the Acting Deputy Principal role, a young teacher called Greta had been assigned to work with Zaiton in the Year 8 and 9 Malay LOTE classes. Greta had done an Indonesian language course in Bali and was enrolled at a university studying Indonesian externally. While Indonesian is a different language to Malay, there are certain similarities, especially at the level non-Malay speakers were learning. Perhaps even more importantly, Greta also had developed a close personal friendship with Zaiton.

Greta was born in South Australia in 1971. After high school she completed a degree in Anthropology and History, followed by some travel overseas and a one-year Graduate Diploma of Education course. Greta says that:

\[ \text{To be honest I did a teaching degree because it was a one-year course and would mean I could get a job with good hours and holidays!} \]

(Interview, Sept 2002)

After a year and a half of relief teaching in a government school, where she worked in the Intensive Language Centre and the Education Support Unit, Greta accepted positions in various country towns where she worked mostly with Aboriginal students, many of who were educationally at risk. A lot of this teaching Greta describes as
pastoral care. Greta came to CI with her partner in January 1999 because she had always wanted to live on a tropical island in the middle of the ocean!

While working in the Malay LOTE program, Greta developed a close working and personal relationship with Zaiton. At the same time Zaiton had also started coming to Greta for help with her assignments.

_She was comfortable coming to see me as we had already developed a friendship and we helped each other. She helped me with my Indonesian and I helped her with her studies so it was a bit of a two way street._

_I think what was important too, with Zaiton and Emma, was the fact that I was trying to speak Malay, which made me more approachable because every morning I would come in to work and try to speak as much Malay as I could I’d stuff up but they would encourage me and speak to me in Malay which gave us a common ground._

(Interview, March 2002)

Like Jen, Greta remembers only being given a very loose idea of her role as mentor by the administration at the school. As a result, she and Zaiton just set up their own program that suited them. In the three periods a week that they were allocated Zaiton and Greta kept a mentoring journal which they would bring to the meeting.

_A lot of it initially would be day to day questions and issues about the running of the school or classroom, particularly Managing Student Behaviour procedures and then we would get into the nitty gritty planning of our lessons and programs for LOTE. Zaiton would always come up with the ideas such as focusing on fruit and vegetables during Healthy Makan [food] Week and ask me what I thought._

(Interview, August 2003)

The majority of Greta and Zaiton’s mentoring time was spent on planning lessons especially as the school was moving towards an outcomes-focused approach and they both had to become familiar with the new Curriculum Framework. As Zaiton became more confident over the year, much less time was spent planning and more on Zaiton’s study:

_A lot of it was incidental stuff that happened during the week – such as the way she was dealing with a particular student._

(Interview, August 2003)
When helping with her study, Greta spent most of her time editing the work to improve the English grammar:

Zaiton did not seem to have much trouble with the concepts in the work. She generally understood the questions really well; it was mainly just helping her to refine some of the language to use more university type language and things like referencing. But she is a smart cookie.

(Interview, October 2002)

Things became most difficult around reporting time for Zaiton. Greta was a fairly experienced teacher who wasn’t too fazed by reporting but Zaiton, as an emerging teacher, was spending hours and hours trying to decide exactly what to say and this took up lots of their time:

One of the problems was that Zaiton did not feel she was competent enough to make judgments about children. It was a lack of self-confidence in her own ability.

(Interview, July 2003)

Greta also spent a lot of time ensuring that Zaiton was given the status of trainee teacher by both non-teaching and teaching staff:

I used to get really annoyed with staff who thought they could use Zaiton as their own private translating service any time of the day or night and not taking her role as a teacher seriously. And that goes for teaching and non-teaching staff. Lots of little prejudices like not being allocated photocopy paper when all other teachers were and having to pay for the use of the fax machine. They were just little things but they did serve to undermine her and I had to go to Administration on her behalf and have these things changed. It’s not so bad now but still happens when you least expect it. I think the prejudices will go on for a long time for some people. They still see her as just an EA, good for photocopying and moving furniture. But it is getting better.

(Interview, March 2003)

According to Greta, she has gained a great deal from her mentoring role:

Zaiton is such a brilliant teacher she has inspired me to be a bit more passionate towards my teaching. Nothing is too much trouble for her. She does amazing things in her class with kids doing a hundred different activities at once. She is not scared of noise, which is really important in LOTE. We ran a LOTE camp together which was really memorable and that brought us closer together. And generally we can sit down together now and we know enough about each other that we can talk about just about anything, there are no secrets between us anymore. We get to know all about the different parts of the island that we live in. And we do favours for each other – so it’s a great friendship now.

(Interview, October 2003)
Greta’s recommendations for other mentoring programs included the fact that schools need to allocate sufficient time for mentoring to take place. In this respect she thinks this school has been really supportive:

*Mentoring is not just about what happens in the classroom it can be about study and family life. Questions like, are you getting support from your family, do you have enough time to study, and how are your children - that sort of thing. In those cases when Zaiton comes to me and says she has got lots of things to do outside of school and work I sit down with her and see how we can plan her time better and offer to help in any way that I can, it might mean taking a lesson or two or we stop the mentoring meeting and she goes and gets what needs to be done, done.*

(Interview October 2003)

Clearly Greta saw her mentoring role as much more than that of a tutor or a coach. Whilst she provided professional support to Zaiton with the practical aspects of teaching such as lesson preparation, managing student behaviour, reporting and the theoretical components of her university course, Greta also provided ongoing personal and emotional support. She recognised that Zaiton had other commitments and responsibilities outside of her work and study which would impact on her ability to successfully engage with the course. Zaiton also played the role of political advocate for Zaiton when issues or problems arose between her and other EAs, teachers and the administration. Mentoring sessions often provided opportunities for Zaiton to raise these personal and professional issues with Greta and for Greta then to develop strategies to overcome them.

### 3.2.3 Emma’s Mentor - Eileen

Finding a mentor for Emma was to prove more difficult than the other two. Emma had shown a keen interest in training as a Home Economics teacher and had developed a good working relationship with the incumbent Home Economics teacher for whom she was a teacher aid. Unfortunately this teacher had to leave the island quite late in the year and so a new Home Economics teacher had to be appointed. This meant that the administration team had to choose a person coming new into the school as Emma’s
Neither Emma nor the new teacher knew each other but the new teacher was very experienced as a classroom teacher and had previously been a cooperating teacher for several students completing practicum in other schools. As a result of these qualifications outlined in her CV, the Administration team thought that she would be able to take on the role of mentor.

Eileen remembers being apprehensive but excited when the Principal rang her and asked if she would mind being a mentor for an Education Assistant retraining to become a Home Economics teacher. She had had lots of trainee teachers in the past, a couple had even stayed at her house when she lived in the country. As she was starting in a new school she felt a little overwhelmed by the prospect of supporting a trainee teacher but she accepted the invitation.

As with the other mentors, Eileen was given very little guidance as to what was expected of her until a few weeks into the term. In the first few weeks during her mentoring sessions, Eileen and Emma negotiated which classes Eileen would take on her own and which Emma would observe and eventually take. As Eileen had back-to-back year groups it was easy for Eileen to first model a lesson and then Emma to take the same lesson later in the week. While Eileen says that Emma coped reasonably well with this format, before long Emma was required to do official school practicum for her B Ed. This required her to begin to prepare and present her own lessons rather than just mirroring Eileen’s.

Eileen gave Emma a great deal of assistance during the first term, but by the beginning of the second term the pace of full time work, school practicum and her B Ed studies began to prove very difficult for Emma. She continued to miss deadlines for lesson plans set by Eileen and began to fall behind in her university assignments. Both she and Eileen became increasingly frustrated. Eileen felt that all her mentoring time needed to be spent assisting Emma to prepare lessons for her practicum and Emma felt that Eileen
was not giving her enough support in her university assignments. Eileen felt all along that it was all going much too fast and it would have been better to concentrate either on the study or the practicum and not both.

Just before the middle of the second term in their first year of formal mentoring, Eileen and Jen (Mei Zhu’s mentor) decided that a formal assessment would be useful to provide feedback to the mentees and to give legitimacy to the program. They requested that the researcher who was by then the Deputy Principal and coordinator of the mentoring program develop these guidelines (See Appendix 4). While Greta agreed with the principle of developing some guidelines, she insisted they be flexible enough to accommodate the less prescriptive way that she worked with Zaiton.

The criteria for assessments developed by the researcher were modelled on those used to assess first year out teachers. Prior to this assessment being conducted Eileen approached the Deputy Principal to warn her that she felt that Emma would not be able to pass. At the same time, the supervising teacher for Emma’s school practicum also informed the Deputy Principal that she was considering failing Emma. Both Emma’s mentor and her cooperating teacher felt they had given Emma more than enough support and opportunities to develop suitable lessons for them to observe. They had even modelled lessons and asked that she simply mirror them for a different group to assist her in developing her presentation skills. They frequently gave her extra class time and extensions to complete lesson plans.

On many occasions, however, Emma did not meet these deadlines and came to class without an adequate lesson plan or without the appropriate resources. As a result of being ill prepared, these lessons were often chaotic with the teacher having to step into either manage the student behaviour or provide extra work to fill the time period. Emma’s reasons for her late submission of assessments and her lack of preparedness for lessons usually centred on her ill health which continued to plague her. She did,
however, continue to maintain a hectic life outside of work and study, including her role as a shire councillor which involved frequent trips off the island on shire business. As the term progressed Emma found it increasingly difficult to keep up with the demands of a fulltime job, study, preparing for teaching practicum, shire and Islamic council business and family commitments. Also amongst these commitments Emma often did not prioritise or concentrate fully on lesson preparation, which was crucial to her successful completion of the ITE program. Above all else she had to demonstrate to a regular classroom teacher that she could adequately prepare and deliver a lesson to a primary school class. Emma was not able to demonstrate either the organisational or interpersonal skills required of a primary classroom teacher.

With two very experienced teachers reporting similar problems to the researcher / Deputy Principal which, despite their patience and varied attempts to provide support, had not lead to any significant improvement, she decided it was necessary to call a meeting with Emma. During the course of this meeting the researcher / Deputy Principal explained to Emma that, based on the cooperating teacher’s observations over the last two weeks, she felt it was unlikely that Emma would pass this practicum, and that if she could not pass the practicum components of the program she would be unable to pass her B Ed she advised Emma that it was perhaps better to withdraw from the B Ed program and look into other tertiary courses that were more suited to her interests and abilities rather than continue and fail.

It was an emotional meeting but the Researcher / Deputy Principal was able to convince Emma that primary teaching was possibly not the best career option for her and that this was not necessarily a failure on her part especially given her age and status in the community. Emma agreed that such things as having to “role play the actions of a lion for a group of Year 2s on the mat” during a reading activity just was not her style or demeanour. Emma decided at this meeting to look into other university courses, and
together the Deputy Principal and Emma found a course in community services that would build on Emma’s extensive work and knowledge of local council and community.

As a result, Emma withdrew from the B Ed program and the traineeship. She went back to being an EA but continued her further study in another field that was perhaps more suited to her interests and skills. Throughout the rest of that year and the following year Emma continued to suffer from ill health, but continued with her role as shire councillor which involved several trips off island on council business. As a result, she was absent from work for almost a semester.

Eileen had found the mentoring experience very stressful. Her recommendations for other mentoring programs are clearly the result of the difficulties she experienced working with Emma:

*Participants must be more carefully chosen for their suitability. They must have a certain standard of written English skills and demonstrate an ability to work effectively with students.*

(Interview, September 2003)

Eileen also believes there needs to be a clear set of guidelines with checklists and standards to be reached at certain stages. Also, according to Eileen, it is not a good idea to have a person new to the school take on this role as they do not have the cultural background or knowledge to support the EA. She feels that Emma may have been able to succeed, but it would have taken a lot more time than the university course and the traineeship could possibly have allowed her. At the end of the day though, according to Eileen, no amount of extra support or time really would have helped:

*Some people simply are not suited to teaching and this was one example.*

(Interview, July 2003)

3.2.4 The Researcher as Mentor
The role of the researcher as mentor forefronts the kind of direct impact that academic research can have on a field of study. In many instances, the very fact that the CIDHS
Trainee Teacher Program was the subject of a Doctoral dissertation gave it a degree of credibility that it would not have had had it not been the subject of academic research. From the outset, there was a reciprocal relationship between the researcher and the Education Assistants. Whilst this was never a conditional relationship, it was generally accepted that the researcher would provide them with a variety of types of support throughout the course of the ITE program. Initially, the researcher supported the EAs to gain entry to the HEI through assisting them to enter the alternative entry course. The researcher also assisted them with their first unit of study until they invited other teachers to help – recognizing that the researcher was very busy with study, work and family commitments of her own.

The researcher was the primary person liaising with the school administration, the Department of Education and the Federal Government to access support such as opportunities to attend Summer School for their PD, a tutor at school and eventually a pay rise as trainees. A key area where the researcher played a leading role was in the negotiations with the HEI to access RPL. This meant the EAs were able to get almost a year off their study program. When the researcher became the Deputy Principal at the school she was also able to ensure that the program became part of the School Development Plan thus giving it long term and sustainable legitimacy.

Beyond this the researcher had, over the years she worked with the EAs, developed a close personal relationship. When issues, such as the EAs not being able to access photocopy paper or being asked to do translations, were raised by mentors, the researcher, in her capacity as program coordinator / Deputy Principal, was able to assist. Throughout the EAs’ transition from EA to teacher the researcher provided ongoing educational and emotional support. As a working mother and studying herself, she had an empathy with the three EAs, which helped her relate closely to the difficulties they faced balancing parenthood, community commitments, work and study.
4 Conclusion

Over the course of their studies, the EAs sought assistance from a variety of teachers. The main type of assistance sought by the EAs in their first years of study was in understanding the technical or academic language in the external study guides and editing their work for English language errors, particularly certain aspects of grammar such as tense. The EAs also required assistance with learning the techniques of summarising and note taking so that they could manage the quantity of written information they needed to absorb and understand. In the early years, all of this assistance was purely voluntary with the EAs paying teachers back ‘in kind’ either with Indonesian or Mandarin language lessons as was the case with Donna, Greta and Jen, or with special gifts of food or home cooked meals. While all of the people who helped gave of their time freely, they acknowledged, as did the EAs, that the voluntary nature of the program placed an extra burden on the EAs who felt guilty about using up other people’s valuable time. Yet without this support the EAs felt very much that they would not have passed their first years of university study.

Many of the people who provided technical support for their units can be described as having a role as ‘coaches’ or ‘gurus’ in that their support was limited to professional issues in isolated contexts. In many ways they were like extra, although unpaid, university tutors who supplemented the support provided by the external tutors on the mainland.

By their third year of study, the school administration had made the first step towards providing the EAs with officially recognised and financed academic support by giving Bob, their chosen tutor, one period a week in his timetable to prepare for the tutorials he ran after school. Bob also continued to provide them with professional support in their studies. However because he had a special relationship with them as a result of his common cultural background, he can perhaps best be described as a ‘guru’ in the
Malay/Indonesian sense of the word as being a revered teacher – one for whom they had great respect and admiration.

The administration’s decision to provide Bob with extra time to tutor the EAs was a small concession, but proved to be the ‘thin end of the wedge’ as in the following year they and their mentors were given three periods per week to assist them with their studies and their teaching. By this stage though, with the exception of Emma, the EAs were gaining increasing confidence and skill with their academic studies and relied less on others to assist them with this. For the most part, they had developed the skills of note taking, exam preparations and essay writing, and mainly asked their mentors to edit their work before it was submitted. More of the mentoring time was taken up with supporting them with their practical teaching skills, such as managing student behaviour and report writing, and increasingly a range of other professional and personal issues.

A significant role for the mentors at this time was that of professional advocate. The mentors played a crucial role in liaising between the EAs and the administration and other staff. Concerns raised by EAs during mentoring sessions over such issues as classroom allocations and timetabling were brought to the course coordinator by the mentors on behalf of the EAs. Many of these were delicate issues involving different personalities on staff and their attitudes towards the EAs becoming teachers. Because of the close relationship the EAs had with their mentors they were able to raise these issues and have them dealt with in a professional manner. The role of mentors increasingly shifted from that of professional ‘coach’ or ‘guru’ to that of ‘sage’ or ‘mentor’

The case study highlights both the importance and complexity of mentoring relationships. The roles that Jen and Greta played were certainly more than that of tutor or student teacher/teacher. They did more than guide their mentees in ‘the ways of the job’. They gave them confidence, shared their own experiences, were concerned over
their private lives and commitments, and they were professional advocates in what were at times complex issues related to their changed status.

Of particular interest in this study is that the two EAs who self selected their mentors, having established close personal and professional relationships, had greater success in engaging with the ITE program than the EA who, due to unforeseen circumstances, was not able to self select. It would be easy to make a simple causal link between self selection based on pre-established relationships and academic success. This, however, would be over simplistic as the data gathered in this study suggests that, despite Eileen and the other coaches and gurus best efforts to provide Emma with professional support in her studies and teaching practicum, Emma proved unable to adequately demonstrate her ability to prepare and deliver lessons to meet the criteria established by the university.

According to Mei Zhu and Zaiton, the ‘mentors’ with their special relationships that went beyond coaching and teaching were absolutely crucial in enabling them to successfully engage with the ITE program. Similarly, their ability to self-select mentors aided in the process of establishing a close personal and professional bond. It has to be acknowledged that mentors, as wise and trusted as they may be, are not magicians: they alone cannot make people unsuited to academic studies or a career in teaching pass the course, no matter what the personal or professional relationship is like.

The ‘coaches’, ‘gurus’, ‘sages’ and ‘mentors’ in this study played a decisive and integral role in supporting the EAs to engage with the varying Discourses of Academe and the school. Informed as they were by their social positioning within their own individual Discourses, such as those of Malay Islam and Confucianism, and those inherent in the colonialist and neo-colonialist contexts in which they all grew up, these other Discourses were not only different but in many ways alien and alienating. The mentors and others who assisted them provided them with an ‘in road’ into these other
ways of doing, thinking and being, not only through their practical advice and support, but also through their commitment and belief in the fact that they could succeed in Academe and could become ‘good’ teachers despite their gender, age, language and ethnicity. In this they were supported by yet another player, the researcher, whose role is described and analysed in the next chapter.
Chapter 7  Juggling, Jesting and Jousting

1  Introduction

This chapter focuses on the critical role that ‘I’, the researcher, in my many roles as a Doctoral student, Deputy Principal, mentor, political advocate, lobbyist and friend played in enabling the EAs’ to access the Discourse of Academe and to take on the socially-situated identity of ‘teacher’ in their own right. In this chapter I have deliberately chosen to use the first person to convey my experiences, observations and insights to the reader. This is in keeping with the major theoretical assumptions driving this work. These assumptions, drawn from socio-cultural and Discourse theory, foreground the critical role that Discourses, including words and all the “other stuff”, (Gee, 1999) play in mediating human actions and the world. The use of first person and the inclusion of extracts from my reflective journals enables me to present my experiences and views using my voice and in the way that I ‘speak’ and ‘write’.

The chapter also fits within a socio-cultural framework and the Heuristic methodological principles and techniques that underlie this study (Neuman, 2003, p. 75). As is the case in this research, Heuristic researchers often use participant observation and field research, which may involve many hours in direct personal contact with those being studied, as a major part of their data collection strategy. This is so that the researcher can develop a deeper understanding of viewpoints of the participants. As well as this, according to Heuristic theory, it is also crucial to make explicit and to legitimise the researcher’s own perspectives, personal experiences and involvement in a study. This is both an acknowledgement of the belief that all research involves a certain way of ‘reading’ the data, which is subjective, and also that the researcher’s viewpoints and experiences gained from working closely in the field are valid and significant. Throughout the course of this study I kept a reflective journal.
detailing both my observations of the events that occurred and my feelings and thoughts about the case (Appendix 5).

The use of Heuristic principles was particularly important in this study because I did play various roles in the development of the program. My roles included that of visionary, leader, administrator, coordinator, mentor, political advocate, advisor and personal friend as well as academic researcher. Each of these roles contributed to the successful development of the program and therefore my actions, insights and experiences must form a significant part of the data.

This chapter examines these actions, insights and experiences in my many roles as a juggler balancing the various Discourses and Big C Conversations at play, a jester\(^8\) providing wisdom and advice to the key players and a jouster championing the cause of access, social justice and transformative education within the school, community and HEI contexts in which I worked.

In the first instance, the chapter examines the way I used my vision and knowledge, developed through both life and work experiences and post-graduate studies, to develop and promote the program. It then analyses the way I used my leadership, political and organisational skills, through my role as Deputy Principal, to enact the program. It also focuses on the way I was able to use my interpersonal and mediation skills in an environment where conflicting and competing Discourses often collided in order to enable the EAs to successfully engage with the program. It is argued here that these skills, combined with my commitment to social justice, diversity within the teaching profession, socio-cultural theory and transformative education, enabled me to envision

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\(^8\) The term Jester here refers to the jesters of Ancient China rather than of medieval Europe. In China jesters were men [sic] of great wisdom who would advise the king by jest, when the king may have become angry if told directly of his flaw (Achterman). Use of the term in this sense fits within the cultural context of the study and suits the conciliatory way in which a great deal of the negotiations for establishment of the Trainee Teacher program took place.
the CIDHS Trainee Teacher Program, have it embedded within the institutional structures of the School and the HEI and follow it through to its conclusion.

2 The Jester Arrives

I first came to Christmas Island in 1996 having won a merit-selected position as a secondary Society and Environment teacher at the school. Prior to this I had completed a Bachelor of Arts degree at an Australian HEI, majoring in history and politics. Importantly, I had been the first in my family to complete a Bachelor’s Degree and like others with a working class or non-standard background found the experience of life at a HEI unfamiliar, daunting and challenging (Bufton, 2003). After gaining my Bachelor’s Degree, I travelled for three years in Europe, North Africa and Asia, working in hotels and restaurants. These travels gave me a very grounded understanding of other cultures, languages and ways of living that I had only previously heard of and read about. When I returned to Western Australia I wanted to keep travelling and learning so I enrolled in a Graduate Diploma of Education course to get a “real job”.

At the completion of this course I was sent by the Education Department to teach in a small district high school in the remote north of Western Australia. The majority of the students in this school were indigenous Australians for whom English was a second language or dialect. Despite having travelled in Asia and Africa I found this experience to be the biggest ‘culture shock’ I had ever encountered. In this town I was confronted with the realities of the appalling socio-economic situation many indigenous Australians have found themselves in. Growing up in the suburbs I had never witnessed this in my own country before. I stayed five years in this town slowly developing an understanding of indigenous culture and language, second language teaching and learning and ways to adapt the state curriculum to better suit the needs of these students.
Looking back I am often ashamed of how little I knew of even the basic principles of English as a Second Language/Dialect teaching in those days and wonder if my students learned anything from me.

In 1990 I had my first child in the town’s regional hospital. The others in the maternity ward were some of the girls I had taught and they seemed to know much more about having babies than I did. Together we sat in the common room and watched TV with our new borns and it was their turn to teach me how to feed and care for my new son.

After a year on maternity leave I moved to the south west of the state with my partner. In the following year I had another child and at the same time began working part time as the coordinator of a new Technical and Further Education (TAFE) program in the southwest of the state. The program was specifically designed to cater for the educational needs of indigenous adult women who had experienced alienation from school or had disrupted educational backgrounds. As the coordinator of this course I was responsible for structuring it in a way that would encourage women to enrol, make them feel welcome and comfortable in an educational setting and support their learning and personal needs. This involved finding a suitable venue, arranging for a crèche, selecting appropriate staff and establishing a timetable that suited their particular needs.

As part of this job I attended professional development workshops organised by Indigenous education officers through the regional Technical and Further Education (TAFE) College. At these workshops I was introduced to Aboriginal Discourses, languages and worldviews and I began to develop an understanding that they were not deficit but strong, powerful, important and very different from my own and that of mainstream Australians. This knowledge and the opportunity to work with indigenous adult women with disrupted educational backgrounds, and often difficult and complicated lives, was a rich and humbling experience and one that later helped me when I began working with the EAs in this study.
At the same time I enrolled in a Master’s Degree course in Education as a part time external student. While coordinating the indigenous education program and caring for my two small children I completed course work units towards my degree. Many of these units were concerned with issues related to gender, equity, indigenous education and the politics of education. My practical experiences working with indigenous students and as a mother as well as my academic study provided me with a fundamental knowledge, understanding and empathy for the critical issues related to minority education, feminism and anti-racist pedagogy. It was this knowledge and understanding that inspired me to work actively to create change within the post-colonial context I was confronted with on my arrival on Christmas Island.

In order both to develop my understanding of minority education and in order to redress the pedagogical practices in the school at the time that I believed were unjust and serving to perpetuate the cycle of inequality, I decided to undertake a three-year qualitative research project as part of a Master’s Degree:

_I went to a parent evening last night for my son’s year group – it was shocking – Most of the parents were Chinese and Malay, many can’t speak much English. The teachers talked educational jargon without stopping – the translators were in the back and obviously couldn’t keep up. The teachers just kept on laughing and joking in English, ignoring the Malay/Chinese parents. They wonder why they don’t all come along to these things. And most of what they did say was irrelevant – just a lecture to us about sending our kids with shoes on sports days when parents want to know how their kids are going at school._

(Reflective Journal, March 1997)

Motivated by a commitment to social justice, I actively set about developing my knowledge and understanding of international issues related to minority education. Informed by the socio-cultural philosophies I encountered in these readings, I began to seek ways to create change within the school and the community.
3 Transforming Ideas into Action

3.1 Embedding the Idea into a Strategic Plan
Initially I began by talking informally with like-minded colleagues about a range of social justice issues for minority language students and the locally engaged staff that concerned me. These issues included their limited access to professional learning, the under utilisation of their language and cultural skills within classrooms and the limited role they were able to play in school decision making. It appeared me that within the school, as was the case generally on the island, there persisted a two tiered power structure where expatriates on short term contracts held the positions of power in institutions and workplaces while locally engaged (mainly Chinese and Malay) employees occupied less skilled and more menial positions. Not only did this appear to be inequitable and discriminatory in the short term, it was, from my point of view, serving to perpetuate the neo-colonialist system on the island where local people were not in a position to be able to become self-determining in the future.

With the support of like-minded colleagues with whom I often discussed these issues, I began to voice my concerns through the school’s committee structures and with the administration team. I also began to make formal presentations to staff and the community on an additive approach to second language theory and practice that I had been researching through my Master’s Degree studies. By the end of my third year at the school I had won significant support from among staff and the administration for the socio-cultural approach to second language learning I was advocating. As a result, I was able to have a range of inclusive pedagogical practices embedded within the school’s policies and in the school’s long-term strategic plans.

I had thus been able to use my knowledge and skills to inform the staff and the community about more inclusive socio-cultural approaches to second language learning and minority education and my political skills to ensure that these practices were
formally integrated into the school’s overarching development plan. This ensured that the changes were sustainable, supported by the staff and, importantly, able to attract financial and human resources. The changes which formed part of the priority area entitled “Honouring our Community” included: a greater emphasis on the valuing of first languages and culture; the establishment of a dual Malay/Mandarin LOTE program (to replace the previous single Mandarin program); a community language program in the junior primary school; intensive staff induction; a more culturally inclusive curriculum model; and a change in role and status of Education Assistants. This plan then provided the administrative and financial framework through which the EAs could be provided with on-going support, including a formal mentoring program to assist them with their studies.

It was the last recommendation that provided the impetus for the three EAs in this study to enrol in an ITE program in order to become teachers as part of what became known as the Christmas Island Trainee Teacher Program. It also became the subject of the researcher’s subsequent Ed D dissertation.

3.2 Jousting with the ‘Feds’
During the course of the first year of their study, I became acting Deputy Principal and subsequently won the position, through a merit selection process, permanently. In this role I was able to negotiate directly with my administration colleagues to provide support for the program. This support was very minimal and ad hoc in the beginning. For example, the EAs were provided airfares to attend the alternative access program but this was part of their annual professional learning entitlement and was not extra support. By the end of their first year I was able negotiate a reallocation of resources to provide one of their self-selected tutors, Bob, one extra free period within his timetable to make up for the time he tutored them after school. This was only really a token
gesture, as it did not cover the amount of time he spent preparing for this tutoring but it proved to be a critical turning point.

During their second year of study I began to lobby strongly at the school, district and central office, and at state and Federal government levels for more substantial assistance for the EAs. I used as a model in my discussions various programs being trialled for indigenous Education Assistants on the mainland. These programs included access to paid block study leave and participation in mentoring programs. I discussed these programs with key stakeholders at the state and Federal level including the District Director and senior management staff within the Equity Branch of the Education Department’s Central Office.

One of my central arguments was that the EAs on Christmas Island should be eligible for similar types of support as Aboriginal and Islander Education Workers (AIEWs) were given on the mainland as part of the state government’s commitment to support the retraining of indigenous Australians to become teachers. I argued that, given the cultural and linguistic function the EAs played within the school, and the island’s recent history of colonialism, that they had suffered injustices which had educationally and economically disadvantaged them, similar to indigenous Australians. To facilitate this claim for such entitlements, I met with the Equal Opportunities Commissioner on her visit to the island in 2000 and raised the issue with her. In a written reply, the commissioner maintained that it was within the spirit of the Equal Opportunity legislation for the EAs on Christmas Island to be regarded as linguistic and cultural representatives for the Christmas Island people and therefore entitled to such support.

Section 51 (of the Equal Opportunity Act) provides a defence to a complaint of racial discrimination, where it can be shown that the alleged discrimination is a measure designed to give equality of opportunity to a particular racial group, or is to meet the needs of a particular group in relation to welfare, employment or education of that group.
Section 51 is not limited to Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islanders. In theory therefore the sort of program that you describe that EDWA are providing for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people could be provided to people of Chinese and Malay descent from Christmas Island. (Equal Opportunity Commissioner, Personal Communication, 2000)

I then sent this letter to the District Director with a request that the Education Department consider providing support to the EAs such as block study leave. Despite the legitimacy given to the claim by the Equal Opportunities Commissioner, it was rejected by the District Director who argued that whilst he gave his full ‘in principle’ support to their studies, under direction from the Federal Government’s Department of Territories and Regional Services, he was not able to lend his support to their claims for study leave.

In principle I support the concept of study leave for any person wishing to further their education and indeed in the spirit of ‘equal opportunity’. I have discussed the matter at length with the Territories Office in Perth and in this situation I regret I cannot lend my support to the request for eligibility for study leave for your Teacher assistants [sic]. It is important that all teacher assistants work their full rostered days and are continually seen to be doing so. I agree with the Territories Office in their effort to ensure that this scenario is achieved and that they are not able to support any special cases. (District Director, Personal Communication, May 2000)

This communication was a severe blow to the EAs both financially and morally, and to me. Not only did it mean they would not be given any time off to study but the tone of the letter suggested to them that from now on they would be carefully monitored to ensure that they did not use any of their working hours to study or to complete parts of their degree. It certainly did not feel like a vote of confidence from the Federal Government.

In my journal I wrote at the time:

Yesterday was a hell day!!! I arrived at school and was called in the Principal’s office. He said he had two faxes from the District Director. One rejecting my application to see my Doctoral supervisor as part of my annual PD the other rejected our request for study leave for the EAs. The first letter made me feel really angry and annoyed after all the work I’ve put into this school. One day
Ironically, however, given this communication in 2000, the Federal Government was quite happy to take credit for the Trainee Teacher program once Zaiton’s success became evident and it was being applauded in the community. An article submitted by the newly appointed Minister for Local Government, Territories and Roads to the local Christmas Island newspaper stated after describing the program and congratulating Zaiton that:

> It is very pleasing to see a positive outcome and I am very pleased that the Australian government has been able to assist in these achievements.
> (The Islander, November 2004, P. 38)

A significant stumbling block for the program at this stage was that the EAs on Christmas Island, unlike those on the mainland, were employed under a unique Federal industrial award that had been established following the industrial disputes of the 1970s and 1980s. This meant that the EAs terms and conditions were different to those on the mainland and they were not entitled to the sorts of programs being developed by state governments under state awards. For the EAs to access changes to their terms and conditions, such as block study leave, their union the UCIW would have to negotiate this through an Enterprise Bargaining Agreement with the conservative Federal Government. As this option had the potential to take a significant period of time – possibly years and was unlikely to be successful, I decided in the interim to negotiate support through the school’s own administrative and financial structures. This was possible because, although the school was legally administered and financially supported by the Federal Government, it was able to determine how it allocated its human and financial resources as long as it was in line with policies and practices in other government schools in Western Australia. It was this principle of ensuring that
practices existing in Western Australian schools applied to CIDHS that I subsequently used in many of my arguments with the administration and District Office to gain support for the Trainee Teacher program. In particular I presented the mentoring model being widely developed in Western Australia for indigenous EAs, as the raison d’être for establishing a formal mentoring program at CIDHS.

Dear District Director

I am writing to ask for your assistance and support in accessing financial support to assist Education Assistants in the Indian Ocean Territories to retrain to become teachers. As I am sure you agree the training of local people with extensive linguistic and cultural knowledge to become teachers has a number of very positive benefits in a linguistically and culturally diverse school such as ours. This is certainly becoming and increasingly important priority within the Education Department of Western Australia.

(Letter, March 2000)

4 Winning the Battle at the School Level

During the course of this research and, in particular, my studies of the indigenous programs being trialled in Western Australia, I became increasingly aware of the potential benefits of providing the EAs with mentors to support them in their studies.

As a result, by the end of the second year, following my successful lobbying, the School began to develop a mentoring program for them.

As part of my role as acting Deputy Principal, I was given responsibility for coordinating and managing what was becoming known as the CIDHS Trainee Teacher Program. Part of this role was to manage the mentoring program. Initially there were no specific written guidelines provided to the mentors and the EAs, except that they were to assist them with their HEI studies, classroom practicum and any other issues that arose.

Prior to this they had each received both formal and informal mentoring support from a variety of staff members including myself. This had occurred in a very ad hoc manner and there was no official payment or structured program involved but the EAs usually
paid for this support in their own ways and often with food as the following extract from my journal demonstrates.

**Union Day Public Holiday, 2000**

*Mei Zhu asked me on Friday if she could come and see me on Monday [public holiday] for some help. She invited me to lunch at the Buddhist Temple first – it was full moon one month after Chinese New Year and the women from the Buddhist Association cook vegetarian food on this day. I joined her there at 12 and we ate lunch together at the back of the temple in the gardens. I’d never been there before it was beautiful under the Bodah [sic] tree and I felt very lucky to be invited. I was the only ‘Quilo’ [local term for white person] there. We talked over lunch about my studies and what I had to do to become a Doctor. After lunch we went through Chapter 5 of her reader. It was about graphetics and graphemics and Mei Zhu had highlighted the bits she didn’t understand and written down some questions. We spent the time looking for examples in the texts she had brought with her.*

By the end of term one, however, two of the mentors requested that more formal guidelines be established. This request mainly came from Emma’s mentor who was finding it difficult to reach agreement with Emma as to what should be done during mentoring times. She felt a set of guidelines would reduce the uncertainty she was facing. In response to this request I developed a set of guidelines for the program, which I called the CIDHS Mentor Role Statement (Appendix 4). This statement built on the work of Martin (2000) and his Mentoring Graduate Teachers publication. The key functions of a mentor identified in the CIDHS role statement were to provide the trainee teacher with support in the preparation and delivery of lessons, to provide support in a range of personal and professional issues as they arose, to provide support for HEI studies and to promote the trainee teacher program in the School and the community. Thus, by the beginning of their third year of study, the EAs were being provided extensive mentoring support for their studies funded out of the school’s budget. They were also able to use their off island professional development entitlements to attend summer school and intensive courses on campus. The Trainee
Teacher Program was firmly embedded in the School’s strategic planning and significant human resources were being devoted to it.

5  **Harnessing Union and Government Support**

In the first few years in which the EAs were enrolled in their B Ed studies they continued to be paid as EAs. This amount was significantly less than other teachers and, as their teaching responsibilities grew, it became increasingly obvious to them, their mentors and to me, that this was not only unfair but a potentially exploitative situation. In view of this, during their third year of study in 2002, the EAs, with my support, took the matter to the General Secretary of their union, the UCIW. He subsequently arranged a meeting with the Principal and a representative from the Federal Department of Territories to negotiate a pay rise for the EAs given their extra responsibilities and duties. The UCIW and the Principal presented a strong case and in this instance and to my surprise, the Federal Government agreed to the wage increase to an amount equivalent to an untrained teacher’s salary on the mainland. The pay rise was a significant coup for the EAs. Not only was it a financial incentive to continue with their studies but also it was also a significant boost to their morale and clearly demonstrated that the Federal Government was now prepared to support them financially. This was a huge turn around from the time in their first year when the Federal Government had refused to offer them any support.

6  **Action through Research and Research through Action**

From the very first days when the EAs decided to enrol in the alternative access program, I played a crucial liaison role between the EAs, the School and the HEI. As a student myself at the HEI I had already established contacts within the School of Education who were able to assist me to modify the program to suit the EAs’ specific
needs. I was, for example, able to gain them access to RPL even when it was only in its very early trial stages and I was able to negotiate for them to complete their school practicum at Christmas Island DHS and under my supervision. This meant they did not have to leave the island to do their practicum and was a cost saving measure for the HEI.

Thus my role as a post-graduate student was significant in that it gave me contacts within the HEI. The impact of my role as a researcher studying the case is also of interest and significance. This role, as a Doctoral student undertaking post-graduate research and the status (or socially-situated identity) this gave me, provided me the opportunity to raise the issue of the trainee teacher program with various people and at various levels within the community, HEI and the state and Federal Government bureaucracies. As an example, through arranging interviews and meetings with local community members, school staff, HEI staff, Education Department staff and Federal Government bureaucrats, the program was discussed across a wide cross section of the community and thus had its profile significantly raised. Similarly, the academic knowledge that I gained as part of my studies added weight and credibility to my discussions and arguments about the legitimacy of the program and how best it could be managed. My identity as a Doctoral student then gave me access to a number of powerful Discourses that as a teacher or even Deputy Principal I may not have had access to. My research also, in a dialectic way, assisted the development of the program and the program formed the basis of my research. In this way it can be seen as critically-oriented praxis with theory informing practice and practice informing theory (Neuman, 2003, p.84).
7 Juggling Disparate Discourses

One of the most challenging roles for me with my various identities as Deputy Principal, program coordinator, researcher and advocate was dealing with a range of personal and professional issues that arose throughout the course of the program. Most of these issues were related to what staff, the EAs and the community perceived to be the EAs changing role and status. From a socio-cultural perspective, these issues often represented underlying tensions and struggles that emerged through the course of the program as the EAs tentatively moved between various Discourses. Within the context of Christmas Island and from a socio-cultural perspective, these tensions must be related to broad issues such as colonialism and neo-colonialism that have played an important role in informing attitudes and practices on the island.

The CIDHS Trainee Teacher program created circumstances where certain practices that had separated EAs from teachers at the school were being challenged. This meant that previously distinct boundaries became blurred and sporadic tensions developed as a result of this new identity ‘Trainee Teacher’. This new identity lead to some confusion among other EAs and teachers as to what the Trainee Teachers were entitled to and what they were expected to do.

Tensions often emerged in what seemed like trivial matters such as the distribution of photocopy paper, the use of the fax machine and the ‘clocking in’ books. A closer analysis reveals that these issues often masked deeper issues about power and status within the school and it became my role as program coordinator and Deputy Principal to deal with these tensions as and when they arose. As an example, on several occasions both the mentors and I tried to encourage the EAs in their role as Trainee Teachers to take on more ‘teacher’ like responsibilities such as requesting other EAs to collect or prepare resources for their classes. The Trainee Teachers found this particularly difficult, as Emma pointed out on one occasion:
We are only EAs, it is not right for us to give other EAs a job to do.
(Reflective Journal, February 2000).

As another example, throughout the first three years of the program Zaiton, Mei Zhu and Emma continued to complete the clock in book for EAs, cleaners, gardeners and office staff. The Assistant Registrar closely monitored this book and ensured local staff accurately completed it every time they came on and off the premises. Teachers did not have such a tight regime placed on their movements, as they were given a degree of professional responsibility, which enabled them to leave school on school business without having to have this recorded in a book. On one occasion Zaiton expressed concern that she had had her pay docked because she had left the school premises to buy resources for the LOTE program. Following this incident I organised for management of the Trainee Teachers working hours to come under my jurisdiction.

On another occasion I wanted to write an article for the local paper about Zaiton and Mei Zhus’s innovative LOTE programs. Mei Zhu was reluctant to give permission for this as she said:

People will think we are trying to look like teachers when we are not.
(Reflective Journal, March 2000).

The EAs were very conscious throughout the course to ensure that they did not assume the status of teachers or aggravate these tensions by creating a greater divide between them and the other local staff than was necessary. As an example, despite the Principal’s suggestion that they have an office in the ‘teachers’ office’, they preferred to maintain a desk in the EAs’ room. Zaiton, in particular, was insistent that she did not want to move desks, as she felt that this would be perceived by the other EAs as a sign that they thought that they were better than the others. She did not want to create such an impression among people who had been her friends and colleagues for many years.

One interviewee, who had experienced working in Malaysia and Christmas Island in the past, described these attitudes as a ‘banana’ mentality. By this she meant an attitude
that some Asian people held towards other Asians taking on professional positions traditionally, within a colonialist system, held by white people. Such people were derogatively called yellow on the outside and white on the inside. In other words, while they appeared Asian at a surface level, their thinking and ways of behaving were more representative of western/white cultural discourses.

Within a colonialist context, becoming a ‘banana’ not only distances the person from others but also casts them as part of the group that has or continues to oppress them. Added to this is a feeling that they may not even be as good as a white person doing the job. Again this attitude can be attributed to colonialist attitudes where the belief that the coloniser is morally or intellectually superior to the colonised is pervasive.

I dealt with the problems that occurred in consultation with the EAs and their mentors. These struggles and tensions did, however, often cause me a great deal of frustration, as I could not understand why the very people the program was meant to help were seemingly undermining it. In my journal I reflected at the time:

*I'm not sure whether it is jealousy or personality or what. I can’t understand why the other EAs don’t support this. Surely they can see it will be good for the island and themselves in the long run.*

(Reflective Journal, Sept 2002)

Looking back I can see how presumptuous my feelings were at the time.

On most occasions I helped settle the disputes and problems by ensuring that where policies or practices applied to teachers, the Trainee Teachers were included. With greater clarity and understanding among the teaching and non-teaching staff of the conditions that applied to the EAs in the Teacher Trainee program, and as they neared the end of their ITE program, many of the problems that had occurred in the first years were minimised. It seemed that their new identity as Trainee Teacher was beginning to be accepted and as a result supported. This was particularly the case with Zaiton who increasingly gained the support of the Malay EAs and members of the Malay
community who looked to her as an outstanding role model. Some EAs even began to request that they be able to work shadow her to see what being a LOTE teacher was like and many reported how much they enjoyed working alongside her.

Mei Zhu, however, continued to face some resistance from some members of the non-teaching staff who continued to question her ability and authority. This caused Mei Zhu an enormous amount of stress and in the end the Principal intervened by removing one of the EAs from a support role in her class. Both myself and her mentor gave Mei Zhu extra support during this stressful time advising her that she did have the authority to ask the EA to complete jobs for her and that she did have a better knowledge of LOTE teaching methodology and assessment than the EA concerned.

Dealing with these personal and professional issues was one of the most difficult roles I had to play. In hindsight there were processes I may have put in place to avoid their occurrence. In particular, greater discussion about the program among the community may have helped air some of these issues prior to its commencement. That I had not anticipated these issues was a clear example of how my world view was limited by my western cultural understandings and limited knowledge of the other colonialist discourses that were impacting on this phenomenon. It was also a confirmation that the grounded style of research I had selected was the most appropriate for this intercultural context.

8 Conclusion

As a leader, friend, mentor, administrator, program coordinator, academic researcher and, perhaps most importantly, activist and lobbyist, I played a significant role in enabling two of the three EAs to achieve their goal of becoming a teacher. Throughout the course of the program I championed their cause at the local school, district, HEI, state and Federal Government levels. It was my vision, knowledge of minority
education, commitment to fight for social justice, sincere personal concern for the participants’ wellbeing, as well as my organisational, interpersonal and political jostling, juggling and jousting skills that instigated the program, embedded it within the school’s formal structures and gave it the flexibility required to accommodate the largely unchartered needs of the EAs as they journeyed through and between the various Discourses at play.

Several factors enabled me to accomplish this. One of these was that, as a Doctoral student, I had already gained access to the Discourse of the HEI. My privileged socially situated identity as an Ed D student enabled me to converse with various senior academic staff members with whom I could, like a jester in the King’s court negotiate changes to the B Ed course to suit the EAs’ needs. My ability to negotiate on the EAs’ behalf was a significant factor but so was the willingness of various individual staff at the HEI to be flexible in the delivery of the program under their control. In particular this enabled the EAs to successfully gain exemption from several units through the HEIs RPL process and allowed them to complete their school practicum on Christmas Island. As the EAs confirm in the following chapter, these were important “Driving” forces in their ability to reach their goal. My status as a Doctoral student also gave the program credibility in the eyes of the community and the bureaucracy. This helped me to gain ongoing support from the staff, administration and District Office.

Similarly, a particularly important step forward was in 2002 when I won a Western Australian Department of Education’s Equity and Diversity Award on behalf of the School and the program. The prestigious award served to heighten awareness of the program in the community, state wide and within the Federal Government. Importantly, it also gave the program added credibility when it came to further negotiations for continued financial resources. Having had such an honour bestowed upon it in the
name of the much-heralded Discourse of Equity and Diversity, it was hard for any one to challenge the legitimacy of the program.

Perhaps most importantly, my role as Deputy Principal was crucial in enabling me to coordinate the management of the program and facilitate the organisational changes and human/financial resource allocations that were required to support the program. This administrative role combined with my vision, leadership skills, academic knowledge, political nous and commitment enabled me to develop the program and juggle the various competing Discourses that collided in its wake.
Chapter 8  Driving and Restraining Forces

1  Introduction

The Education Assistants in this case study had as their goal to become fully qualified teachers in a mainstream Australian school. This chapter explains how Kurt Lewin’s Field Theory has been used in this study as a methodological tool for analysing and conceptualising the rich qualitative data gathered through extensive field research. This methodology was used because it provided the kind of analytical tool that was needed to gain both a comprehensive and inclusive knowledge and understanding of the positive and negative forces that impacted on the EAs’ achievement of their goal.

Lewin’s Field Theory is useful and effective in this research because it is both comprehensive and inclusive. The theory takes into consideration a wide range of forces that exist for the participants and examines them from their perspective. The approach also allows for the inclusion of other significant forces that may not be consciously perceived by the participants but can be observed by the researcher as having demonstrable effects (Lewin, 1953, p. 5).

Trustworthiness of the findings is gained by including factors, both personal and environmental, that are significant from the point of view of the participants and the researcher. Personal factors include the individual’s relevant life experiences, needs, goals and motivations. Environmental factors include the physical world as well as the economic, legal, political and cultural spheres. All these factors are interrelated according to Lewin’s view, and form what he calls the “field” or “life space” of the individual (Lewin: 1952, ix). Lewin refers to those factors or “forces” that work towards the achievement of a goal as “Driving Forces” and those that work against it as “Restraining Forces” (Lewin, 1952, p. 4). These terms are also used throughout this chapter.
Lewin’s methodology is also useful because it helps the researcher to better conceptualise what are often seemingly intangible or elusive forces which are often ignored in other methodologies. By including these concepts, breaking them down into their “elements of construction” and relating them to the context, they can be better understood. As an example, concepts can be broken down and organised according to whether they acted as “Driving” or “Restraining” forces and what type of cultural or political values, beliefs or events may have caused these concepts to exist.

Lewin’s Field Theory also takes into consideration the role of the researcher in the selection and description of data. He believed that researchers cannot avoid making assumptions of a “metaphysical or epistemological sort” and that these assumptions necessarily:

Shape the nature of the descriptive concepts formed, the phenomena observed and the way data is collected (1952, p. ix).

Lewin argued that it was, in fact, the role of a researcher to translate phenomena into concepts. In order for this process of conceptualisation to be more representative of the views of the participants, however, he concluded that researchers needed to be rigorous about the way that they develop concepts (Lewin, 1952, p. ix). The breaking down of concepts that have been identified by the participants and the researcher into their “elements of construction” was a way to minimise researcher bias and develop a better understanding of the illusive concepts being analysed.

In this research, specific methods drawn from Lewin’s Field Theory have been used to determine what the participants consider to be the “Driving” and “Restraining” forces that have impacted on the achievement of their goal. Added to this have been those forces that the researcher has observed as having had a demonstrable effect. Through the use of a Force Field Task, conducted following the collection and initial analysis of data, concepts were broken down and analysed by the researcher, along with the
participants, to ascertain their elements of construction. Participants were then asked to complete a Relative Impact Task with the aim of discovering which forces had a high, medium or low impact on them. Following this, the researcher developed an Impact Effort Matrix to determine which forces could most practically be changed, so as to make valid recommendations, based on sound data, for the development of Initial Teacher Education courses that accommodate the cultural and educational needs of students from non-mainstream backgrounds.

2 “Driving” and “Restraining” Forces

The first step in the analysis process was to collate an initial list of possible major significant forces. This list was developed by the researcher based on her analysis and conceptualisation of the data collected from interviews, journals and participant observation through the course of the study. Using techniques borrowed from Glaser and Strauss (1967), the researcher had labelled concepts as they emerged. Once a very general list had been developed, the researcher broke each of the concepts down into what she considered to be the ‘elements of construction’ of each concept. So, for example, the broad concept of mentors/tutors could be broken down into categories such as informal mentors, formal mentors and according to the types and extent of support they offered. The concept of ‘attitudes’ could be broken down into ‘family attitudes’, ‘husband’s attitudes’, ‘teacher attitudes’, ‘attitudes of other EAs’, ‘community attitudes’. This more precise list was based on the amount of data collected through interviews and observations that signalled it as a possible significant category. To ensure their relevance to the participants she had discussed these concepts with the participants during formal and informal interviews.
2.1 Researcher’s List of Major Forces

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Alternative Access Course</th>
<th>Union Support / Pay Rise</th>
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<td>HEI Assessment Practices</td>
<td>Husband’s Attitudes</td>
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</table>

The researcher-generated list was then used as the basis for a Field Force Task, a Relative Impact Task and, from this, the development of an Impact Effort Matrix. Each of these tasks is described below.

2.2 The Field Force Task

To conduct this analysis the researcher met with each participant individually. This was so that she could ascertain which forces were significant for each participant. The researcher set up the task by using masking tape to draw a line down the middle of a large teacher’s desk. The participant’s goal ‘To Become a Qualified Teacher’ was written in large print across the top of the desk. On either side of the masking tape were printed the words ‘Driving Forces’ and ‘Restraining Forces’. Prior to the task the researcher had transcribed her list of possible forces on to individual cards. Each participant was then asked to read each card and place it on either the ‘Driving Forces’ side or the ‘Restraining Forces’ side of the tabletop, keeping in mind the goal written across the top. Initially, the researcher expected the participants to place each card on either side of the marking line, however, it soon became apparent with the first
participant that she was hesitant to place some cards on either side. The researcher advised that these cards be placed in the centre to be discussed later.

As the cards were placed on the table the researcher encouraged the participant to discuss why she had chosen to place it under a particular heading. These comments and explanations were recorded by the researcher and formed the basis of further analysis of the data. As an example, using these explanations the researcher was able to break the initial list of concepts down further into their elements of construction as viewed by the participants. This was particularly significant for those concepts that the participants had placed in the centre. In most cases the participant had placed the card in the centre because she considered it to have had both a “Driving” and a “Restraining” force. As, for example, was the case with the concept ‘colonialism’ which they considered to have had both a “Driving” and “Restraining” impact. To illustrate this point, Zaiton placed the ‘colonialism’ card in the middle because she said it was “both a Driving and a Restraining force” for her. When asked to explain this she said:

\[\text{The colonialist system I experienced on Christmas Island, where Asians are considered as second-class citizens and where white people held the better positions, makes me stronger. It makes me determined to overcome this system and to prove that Asians can do just as well as white people.} \]

(Interview, September 2004).

The participants were then asked to add any new concepts or forces that had not been included in the researcher’s initial list. These added forces and the discussion that ensued about them was to prove to be some of the most interesting and important data collected. The added forces proved critical in understanding the data and in the development of future recommendations.

Each participant approached the task differently reflecting their individual ways of thinking about particular issues. Zaiton, for example, was more cautious and reflective about placing the cards on the “Driving” or “Restraining” side of the line than Emma. In fact Zaiton placed the vast majority of cards in the centre demonstrating that she was
able to see both positive and negative impacts within these broad categories and her natural tendency to break things down into their elements of construction. The cards in the middle, as well as those added by Zaiton, became the subject of a lengthy reflection and discussion session for both Zaiton and the researcher. During this discussion and after clarification from the researcher, Zaiton made the decision to place some of the cards on either side of the line. Others she chose to leave in the centre so she could think about them further.

On the other hand, before Mei Zhu placed the cards on the table she continually asked for clarification from the researcher to ensure that she fully understood what the cards meant to the researcher. This was typical of Mei Zhu’s tendency to be accurate and follow correct procedures when attempting a task. Like Zaiton, she placed many cards in the middle as she felt that they could be construed as having a “Driving” and “Restraining” impact and therefore needed further clarification.

The data analysis method used proved enlightening and informative because it enabled the researcher and the participants to reflect upon, and discuss the forces that had impacted on the achievement of their goal. As they reflected on the Trainee Teacher Program and talked about their decision with the researcher, they were able to further explain or refine what the labels meant to them. They were also encouraged to add other concepts that were important to them but had not been included in the initial list provided by the researcher.

The initial list developed by the researcher was an important starting point and was critical because it had been gleaned from her analysis of the data which made it relevant and comprehensive enough to cover many of the major themes that had emerged in the course of the study. It was limited, however, because, despite the use of a wide range of data collection techniques, the concepts she had developed were based on her own Western academic cultural perspective which was different from that of the EAs. Using
the Field Force data analysis technique thus lead to a more detailed and inclusive list of forces that accommodated the view points of the participants and the researcher. It also lead to a better conceptualisation of the categories as they were broken down in their elements of construction as they existed for the participants.

2.3 The Major Forces Impacting on the Group
It was likely that many of the “Driving” or “Restraining” forces would have impacted on the EAs as a group given what Bourdieu (1984) refers to as a class or cultural ‘habitus’. In other words, given that the EAs, had shared experiences of growing up in what might be called post-colonial Malaysia and of coming to neo-colonial Christmas Island where their subordinate ‘social positioning’ as ‘Asians’ had been born out in a history of both institutional and attitudinal practices, it is likely that many of their experiences and the way they interpreted them would have been similar. At the same time, though, they are all very different individuals with different personalities and different life trajectories which would also have informed the way they thought and felt about the B Ed course and taking on the socially-situated identity of ‘teacher’. In order to gain an understanding of how the forces had impacted on the EAs as individuals, a Field Force analysis was conducted independently with each participant. Forces that were identified by all three form the basis of the following section, and then each individual’s differences are examined.

As was expected, despite their very different personalities, learning styles, abilities and expectations, all of the EAs in this case study found many of the “Driving” and “Restraining” forces that had a high impact on the achievement of their goal to be the same. In keeping with Lewin’s Field Theory, it was acknowledged that these forces were, to a large extent, interrelated and interdependent, but for clarity they are dealt with separately in the following discussion. Also, for structural clarity these are divided into sections related to the HEI, the School and the broader community.
2.3.1 Forces Related to the HEI

The Alternative Access Course

All of the EAs acknowledged the overall importance of many of the features of the HEI in this study in assisting them to achieve their goal. In particular they agreed that the provision of an alternative access program was crucial in enabling them to gain access to tertiary studies but also in making them feel that they were not the only mature age women with English as a second language attending the HEI. The program also gave them important foundation skills that they needed to be successful in their first years of study.

External Studies

The opportunity to study externally was also critical as none of the EAs could have or would have left their families or work commitments to attend the HEI. Studying externally, however, did present certain significant difficulties. The late arrival of course materials, sometimes poorly produced texts, difficulties in contacting tutors and the reliance on written modes made studying externally particularly confronting for ESL students. Once again they were able to overcome some of these problems with the assistance provided by the school through tutors and mentors. Without this the EAs are uncertain whether they would have coped with the external course. The school based tutors and mentors filled the gap left by the sometimes ‘difficult to access’ HEI tutors and helped them to overcome problems created by reliance on written texts.

For Zaiton the opportunity to study externally was a “very important” factor in her ability to achieve her goal of becoming a teacher. She was not in a position to leave the island to study so simply could not have done it. At the same time, studying externally was very difficult “especially for an ESL student” because there is a greater reliance on written text modes. Zaiton felt studying internally would have been much easier and better mainly because:
At uni we can listen to the lecturers and see them and ask more direct questions. (Field Force Task, September 2004).

**Recognition of Prior Learning**

Another significant “Driving” force for the EAs was their ability to access Recognition for Prior Learning (RPL), which saved them both time and money. It also demonstrated that the HEI valued the experiences that they had already gained as EAs. This was an important confidence booster. Even Emma, who did not submit an application for RPL, acknowledged that this would have been a great help to her. It is important to note, though, that while the HEI did provide them with RPL, it was largely the result of the researcher’s close links with the HEI through her studies and her lobbying skills that enabled them to access it when they did. At the time the process was in its infancy and was not widely known about or advertised. Fortunately the researcher was able to negotiate successfully with an empathetic member of the HEI staff to enable the EAs to activate their submissions. Without this support the EAs would not have known about the RPL opportunities, and without the school’s support in assisting them to write the applications they believe they would not have gained RPL.

**School Practicum**

The HEI was also supportive through its flexible approach to their school practicum component. In particular, the Primary Practicum Coordinator was particularly helpful by allowing the EAs to complete their practicum at CIDHS and under the supervision of the researcher. Once again, because of the isolation and cost of travel, it would have been extremely difficult for the EAs to complete their practicum on the mainland. It would also have been very costly to have HEI supervisors travel to the island to supervise the practicum. Had the HEI staff been inflexible with these arrangements the EAs would not have been able to complete their practicum - which was a critical part of their assessment.
Zaiton said that the HEI had been “very flexible” in allowing her to do her teaching practicum at CIDHS and this was “very helpful” as it was an important part of the course assessment structure.

**Course Work**

All of the EAs found the course work challenging particularly in the first few years. With support from their mentors and tutors and their growing confidence in reading academic texts and writing they were able to engage with the course successfully. Emma found writing in English for her HEI course work very difficult. She believes that when she writes and talks it is in the “Malay way” which she describes as being more circular than direct.

*You go round and round and often repeat yourself, this means that you are often way over in the word limits and have to learn to cut back and not repeat yourself so often.*

(Field Force Task, August 2004).

Mei Zhu described the language used in many of the course readings as “unfriendly, jargonistic and overly academic”. She believes that academics and course writers should recognise that not everyone’s English is that good and they can encourage people to learn better by making the texts easier to understand.

**HEI Assessment Practices**

In the course of their studies the EAs were assessed through a variety of assessment practices including written assignments, exams and reflective journals as well as the teacher and supervisor observations that formed part of their school practicums. As with most students, the EAs found assessments, particularly exams very stressful and were particularly concerned that the limited time frames would disadvantage them as it took them longer to read and write as second language users. Mei Zhu said that the most difficult exams for her were closed book exams and in particular one that she had
where they were not allowed to even take in a sheet of notes. This limited her access to words that could trigger her thoughts.

Zaiton felt that the use of exams as an assessment tool was inconsistent with the outcomes-based approach to teaching and learning being advocated in the curriculum units and by the Department of Education at the time. They found other forms of assessment more valid and appreciated the feedback that they received from their tutors. On the whole though as they performed well in all their assessment tasks they did not find them to have had either a high positive or negative impact on their studies. They acknowledged though that their mentors had been critical in assisting them to prepare for exams and written assignments and without this they may not have been so successful. They were also convinced that had they had to sit an exam to enter the HEI course they would not have been successful as they were not experienced in exam techniques.

HEI Tutors

Emma felt that while some tutors were very good, others were “not helpful or easy to contact”. Zaiton placed this card in the middle because generally she had little to do with HEI tutors during the course of her study and much less so as she progressed through. She said that some had been very helpful and offered lots of support whereas others didn’t want to be bothered too much: “you could tell in their voices”. Overall, she said that students needed tutors but they had little impact in the end.

Studying as a Cohort

Enrolling in the course as a group of three was also an important “Driving” force particularly in the early years. It enabled them to overcome initial embarrassment and uncertainty and they were able to engage in professional discussion with each other. It also meant they could share a tutor and help each other with understanding the readings. As they progressed through the course their reliance on each other reduced and they
began to select units separately according to their specific interests. Zaiton in particular began to move through the course faster than the others and enrolled in several units each semester. Emma was not able to keep up with this pace and she suffered from the lack of support from the others as they chose other units. Undoubtedly, in the first year at least, it was very important for them to enrol as a group.

Emma, in particular, felt that it had been critical that the three EAs had enrolled in the alternative entry program together and that they had continued to do the same units at least for the first few years. This meant that they could:

Help each other, share the readings, discuss and work together with one tutor.
(Interview, Feb 2000)

Since Emma has changed course from a Bachelor of Education to a degree in Community Services she has found studying on her own very difficult and has since withdrawn.

2.3.2 Forces Related to the School

The Researcher and the School

The most significant of the high impact “Driving” forces for all of the EAs, was the support of the researcher as a friend, social justice advocate, researcher and as Deputy Principal. This was a high impact “Driving” force that all of the EAs added to the initial researcher-generated list. Initially it came up in the Filed Force Task with Zaiton. At the end of the task the researcher asked if there were any “Driving” or “Restraining” forces missing and Zaiton said:

There is one and it is the most important one and that is the role you [the researcher] of the school had in all of this.

If the school hadn’t have supported us we never would have even begun the course let alone get this far. You and people like the Principal and the Deputy Principals in the past gave us so much support and encouragement.
(Field Force Task Notes, September 2004)
A few days after both Zaiton and Mei Zhu had completed their Field Force Tasks, Mei Zhu went to see the researcher and asked if she could add another “Driving” force. She said she was sorry she had not mentioned it at the time but it was only after the task when she had reflected on the factors that had helped her that she realised that she had not included the researcher and the school administration team. In her words Mei Zhu said:

*These people treated me as an equal with the other teaching staff. This gave me the confidence to keep going. The admin team also helped to solve professional and personal issues that arose. This is like a big jigsaw puzzle and the school admin team is one of the most important pieces of it.*

(Field Force Task Notes, September 2004)

As a friend, the researcher offered them on-going moral and personal support often sharing her own personal experiences as a mother who was also working full time and studying. As an advocate and fellow trade unionist, she worked alongside the EAs’ influential union (the Union of Christmas Island Workers) to gain support within the community and when negotiating with the Federal Government. This assisted them to negotiate a pay rise during their traineeship. Through her links with the HEI she was able to inform them about the alternative pathway to HEI and assist them to apply. She was also able to negotiate, on their behalf, for Recognition of Prior Learning and to have their School Practicum completed at CIDHS and supervised by her self. As well as this she often provided them academic support and advice in their studies.

As Deputy Principal the researcher was able to use her political skills and her position within the administration to lobby for, and to enact resource allocation and policy changes that supported the Trainee Teacher program. This included the establishment of a mentoring program, the opportunity to use their PD to attend HEI courses and complete their school practicum on site and within their normal working hours. As well as this she was able to deal with a range of professional issues that arose during the course of the program such as the attitudes of other staff and the need to complete time
sheets. The EAs all agreed that without this extensive support they would probably never have even begun the course let alone succeeded to the extent that they did.

The researcher could not have achieved all this had it not been for the support of the school, in particular the Principals, Deputy Principals and other staff members who actively supported the development of the program. These people were prepared to listen to and accept her arguments that there would be long term benefits both to the School and the wider community gained from the investment in this program. As a result, they were prepared to channel financial and human resources into the EAs professional development and mentoring support. They were also prepared to support the program at the community, district, state and Federal levels.

**Mentors**

Both Mei Zhu and Zaiton listed the support of mentors as having a high positive impact on the achievement of their goal. For Zaiton her mentor had provided her with support in her teaching skills, HEI studies, professional issues and, equally importantly, emotional support. Mei Zhu also acknowledged the critical role her mentoring relationship had played but for her it was the professional support that was most crucial. This is perhaps a reflection on Mei Zhu’s personality and that of her mentor. While both had a close personal relationship this was founded on their professional relationship more than the relationship between Zaiton and Greta. For these two it was often the personal issues that took priority. Again this may be because, in most cases, Zaiton was quite competent in dealing with professional issues and it was the personal support she valued most. Emma’s mentoring experience had not lived up to her expectations and she therefore saw it as having only a moderate impact on the achievement of her goal. To an extent, Emma blamed her lack of success on the mentoring relationship. She also attributed some of her problems to the fact that she could not pay for a tutor. While the others agreed that having money to pay for tutors in
the first years would have been greatly beneficial, they did not prioritise this as highly as did Emma.

Perhaps because of her own experiences, Emma believed very strongly that it was important to have a close relationship with your mentor. She felt that she had not received enough support from her mentor for her studies and this had meant she had not been able to keep up with the course work. “You must know your mentor well”.

According to Emma, mentors needed to be able to:

> See and read into your face how you are feeling because they have a personal relationship.
> (Interview August 2004)

**Attitudes of Non-teaching Staff**

Despite having discussed the issue of the attitudes of non-teaching staff quite extensively during their field force tasks, all of the EAs said that it only had a fairly low overall impact on their goal. It seems that while these attitudes were unhelpful and at times made them feel uncomfortable, they did not deter the women from pursuing their goal. It also appears that over time these attitudes changed and were reduced by the interventions of the researcher and the greater clarification of their role and status. Certainly, it seems the more units the EAs passed, the greater support they were shown from the non-teaching staff and the community.

Emma felt that not all, but certainly some, of the non-teaching staff had resented her enrolment in the B Ed course and as a result created “a feeling of rejection”. They thought she was foolish for attempting to study, particularly given her age:

> They think I am a silly old woman.
> (Field Force Task, August 2004).

She also felt that some were jealous of the support and differential treatment being provided to the Trainee Teachers:
They are jealous of the special treatment we are given like using the fax machine for our study for free.
(Field Force Task, August 2004).

Emma believed that some saw this as: “a form of segregation from the other EAs”.

She commented that:

*This created uneasiness when they should have been giving encouragement.*
(Field Force Task, August 2004).

Like Emma, Zaiton felt some EAs were supportive and others were not and any negative feelings were largely the result of jealousy:

*Some EAs have always been very good and supportive. Others don’t care either way but others seem to be jealous of the extra/special treatment we are getting.*
(Field Force Task, September, 2004)

Zaiton felt, though, that this has been more of a problem for Mei Zhu than herself. On the whole Zaiton has “felt fairly supported”. At times, however, she said that:

*The atmosphere and awkwardness created by some of the non-teaching staff has definitely been a barrier to her achieving her goal.*
(Field Force Task, September, 2004)

Mei Zhu said that the majority of EAs were supportive:

*But a few showed attitudes of a lack of respect for me as a teacher.*
(Field Force Task, September, 2004)

Mei Zhu thinks this is because they believed they could do as good or better a job at teaching Mandarin than she was. The attitudes of these EAs caused a great deal of stress and unhappiness for Mei Zhu over the years.

These attitudes can be contextualised within the complex, but interrelated, Discourses of colonialism which at their heart stratify society based on social status and economic position which in turn is most often determined by membership of a particular ethnic group. In colonialist and post-colonial Malaysia these divisions are very pronounced and continue to pervade the economic, political and social spheres (Gomez and Jomo, 1997, p.10). By seeking to move from the position of EA to teacher, the participants in
this study were seen by some of the non-teaching staff to be breaking solidarity with them and joining the ranks of their colonisers. And within the context of ongoing industrial disputes between the UCIW and the Federal Government and continuing inequities on Christmas Island this was a very significant issue. The feelings and attitudes held by some non-teaching staff have been embodied, by some in other contexts, by the phrase – “turning into bananas” they are becoming yellow on the outside and white on the inside – referring to the belief that while they may still look like Asians from the outside they have taken on the characteristics and attitudes of white people. And in a colonial context white means those that have previously and, for some, continuously oppressed them. Conscious of this, the EAs made particular efforts not to distance themselves from the non-teaching staff. As an example, despite efforts by their mentors to encourage them to eat in the staffroom (where teachers eat) they continued to have their lunch with the EAs in their room.

**Teachers Attitudes**

Emma recalls at one time being told by one of the school’s administration team that:

> It was a waste of time and money for the EAs to go to the mainland, as we would not understand enough of the English in any of the courses we attended.

(Field Force Task, August 2004).

This she said had instilled in them a belief that they were: “not good enough”.

Zaiton added that there were occasions when teachers at the school were not very supportive and they didn’t really understand that she had a hectic workload and was really only learning to be a teacher. This meant that she was likely to make some errors of judgement.

**Changing the Time Roster**

For the first few years of their study the EAs had continued to ‘clock on’ by signing a time book in the front office. This was a regulation set by the Federal Government who employed all the non-teaching staff at the school including the EAs, office staff,
cleaners and gardeners. This was not a regulation that extended to teaching staff who were employed by the state government and came under a different set of industrial award conditions. The mentors raised the issue of the 'sign in and sign out' book with the researcher as Deputy Principal on several occasions during the course of this study. Both the EAs and their mentors felt that as they took on more teaching responsibilities they should be given the professional responsibility and ‘privilege’ of monitoring their start and finish times as other teachers did. The researcher negotiated with the Federal Government to develop a different system for their sign in and out, which suited Federal Government regulations but was less punitive and prescriptive. For Mei Zhu this was a significant demonstration of the “school’s faith in their professionalism”. Mei Zhu said that this had been a significant turning point for her and demonstrated the extent to which the administration team “valued and respected her work”.

Prior Experience as EAs

Several other factors were also considered to be very important for the EAs. These include their prior experience as EAs which not only assisted them to gain RPL but also helped them to understand much of the course material. Unlike many new students, they already had a depth and breadth of knowledge about children and their learning gained from years of observing teachers and working in classrooms. They were able to draw on these experiences in many of their assignments and practicum. It also meant they were familiar with the school environment and had developed links with the teaching staff and administration. Thus, having experience as EAs made them a logical and prudent target group for teacher training programs.
2.3.3 Forces related to Regulatory Authorities

The Option to Defer Fee Payment

Throughout their studies the EAs had the choice to pay up front fees for their units or defer these payments and pay them off through taxation once their incomes reached a certain level. All of the EAs chose the latter option. Whilst the need to pay fees to study had been of a concern to them and made them feel ‘guilty’ for taking money away from their families to spend on themselves, it had not deterred them from studying. This was especially the case because they were able to defer the fees until a later date.

Getting a Pay Rise from the Federal Government

Zaiton considered that the claim made by her union (Union of Christmas Island Workers) for increased wages, so that in their latter years of study they received an untrained teachers wage rather than an EAs wage, was significant. “This was a very important ‘driving’ force”. She also acknowledged, while the Federal Government had not been overly supportive of her studies, “they had not been obstructive either.”

Mei Zhu felt that it was important that the Federal Government had agreed to her union’s proposal to pay them an untrained teacher’s wage. While she said, “this was not a lot”, it showed that they valued her and the extra work she was doing.

These comments need to be put into the context of the past history of the island and the on-going industrial relations issues that have gone on between the Federal Government and the UCIW. There still exists on the island a great deal of suspicion and animosity between members of the local community and the Federal Government. These problems have escalated in recent years as the Federal Government has sought to privatise key services, such as health, and has refused to allow the granting of a casino licence to the CI Resort. Both of these moves have been seen as a threat to union membership and to long-term employment prospects on the island. It is within this
climate that the EAs guarded comments with respect to the Federal Government’s role in their studies must be taken.

**Funding for Tutoring**

Emma added that she believes that one of the biggest issues holding them back was that there was a lack of funding to pay local tutors to provide them support. Throughout the course she says she had lobbied for this with the union and the government but was unsuccessful. She believes that it would have been much easier for her to access the support she needed from local tutors if she could have paid them rather than relying on their generosity. Emma’s passion about the need to pay tutors may have been because she, more than the other two, relied heavily on tutors for support in her academic studies. Without this intensive support she found coping with the texts extremely difficult.

**Merit Selection**

In order to win a position as a teacher at the school, the EAs would have to compete with over 100 other applicants state wide. The merit selection process would include the submission of a five page written application and a thirty-minute interview. This was a daunting prospect and had the potential to deny them access to a job as a teacher at the school despite having been through the Trainee Teacher program. Zaiton included this process as a “Restraining” force initially because she was in the process of writing an application and preparing for an interview. It was a very nerve racking time for her. Zaiton also believed, however, that the merit selection process could also be viewed as a “Driving” force because if she was successful it would mean that she could demonstrate to the community that she had won the position competitively and on her merit. This would prevent people saying that she wasn’t as good as mainland teachers and had only succeeded because she had been given special treatment.
2.3.4 Forces Related to the Context and the Discourses in the Community

Malay / Islamic Values

For Emma, it is the emphasis on “community togetherness” that she finds so supportive in the Islamic religion. “Sharing prayer and other religious and social activities in the Islamic community”, she says helps her to overcome difficulties during the day:

Even when there are problems or disputes in the community they all get together in the afternoon to pray and be together. This helps.
(Field Force Task: August 2004).

Zaiton’s first comment when considering this force was that these two categories needed to be separated for her to explain. This is an example of her breaking a concept down into its elements of construction in a way that the researcher did not. As far as Islamic values went, she believed that they were: “on the whole a ‘Driving’ force”.

The Islamic faith calls on followers to work and study hard and to achieve the best you can. This helped me to keep trying to do the best in all my studies.
(Field Force Task, September 2004).

According to Zaiton though, the traditional Malay value system or way of thinking on the other hand held that:

Women should be at home to look after their husbands and family and that the woman should not hold a higher status position than her husband.
(Field Force Task, September 2004).

In this discussion Zaiton touches upon a very strong Discourse informing some attitudes and ways of behaving on the island. This Discourse clearly articulates social positioning and who should have access to more powerful positions in a society. In this case it is men. It was this sort of attitude that sometimes made Zaiton “feel uncomfortable” about the amount of work and study she did and the new identity she was taking on. Zaiton said that there had been occasions when some people in the Islamic community on Christmas Island had raised questions about women studying as well as the way many Christmas Island Moslem women did not wear a ‘tudong’ (head scarf). This made Zaiton feel “uncomfortable” for a while but she overcame these
problems through discussing them with her husband and had stuck to her own beliefs. As her studies continued, though, these feelings lessened in the community so that by her final year she said: “There was less talk of it in the community now”.

**Confucianist Values and Beliefs**

Mei Zhu found it difficult to explain what she felt the main beliefs and values of Confucianism meant for her and her family. After the researcher described what she understood some aspects of Confucianism to be (for example, respect for elders, respect for teachers, striving to achieve your best), Mei Zhu said that these were certainly values she had grown up with in her family but didn’t think that they had a very strong impact on her thinking or her goals now. One value she had grown up with from childhood that did impact on her, though, was:

* A belief in the value of academic achievement and that education is a good thing in itself because you can learn good things from it.
  (Field Force Task, October 2004)

Another influential traditional Confucianist belief that she was taught by her family was that men were more important than women and that:

* It was a waste of time and money for girls to get a higher education especially as they would eventually marry and their skills would then go to the husband’s family.
  (Field Force Task, October 2004)

Rather than stopping her, though, she said this belief made her angry and even more determined that women were just as capable as men and had an equal right to higher education. Mei Zhu also believes that her education in a small Chinese school influenced her way of thinking and studying:

* In those days my mind was stuck with the idea of being able to memorise as much as I can so that I can answer the exam papers correctly and that was considered good learning. Obtaining high marks to bring honour to your parents and teachers as a high performer and therefore successful.
  (Field Force Task, October 2004)
The approach to learning that had been instilled in Mei Zhu through her school years was very different to that which she encountered through her studies at the HEI where she was not required to rote learn large amounts of information. She, never the less, placed very high expectations on herself in all her studies and was often disappointed with herself if she did not attain the highest marks possible. Unlike Zaiton who believed that over 50% was enough to pass, Mei Zhu felt that each mark below 100% was evidence of her failure. This often made her stressed and tired as she worked late in the night to achieve the best results she could.

**Husbands, Families and Children**

Zaiton’s children were very supportive throughout her studies and so she considered them to be a “Driving” force. At the same time, though, as a mother she constantly felt guilty when she was busy studying and perhaps not giving the family the time they needed. “My children never complained but I felt guilty”.

Zaiton was also fortunate to have the full support of her husband. She said that while he couldn’t give her much academic support or help with her course work he gave her “lots of moral support especially during exam times or when assignments were due”.

In an earlier interview with Zaiton’s husband, he said:

*Its good that Zaiton have this ambition and I support it very much I think she has the personality to be a good teacher, although she is a good mother I’m not sure about being a good wife. [Laugh]…that is yet to be proven after her teaching career. Yeah I think it is a good thing, lah, it is a good example to my kids and the community and the school…. . (make sure you say all the good things).*

*No, it doesn’t effect us very much she is very lucky that I am easy going, simple, no problem type of person – if there is no food I just get something simple (get out that one is not true) .. [laugh]. Yes the family is looked after; the kids are all grown up and can help – no problem. One positive thing about Zaiton doing her study is that I can spend more time fishing she don’t mind its more time to her study – she is sitting in front of the computer ignore me so much* [laugh].  
Emma’s husband gave Emma a great deal of support with her academic English at times and was generally happy “if she is happy” but was concerned that “she tries to do too much. She should relax more” (Personal Comment, May 2001).

Mei Zhu was satisfied that while her husband did not necessarily give her his support at least he did not stop her. “He just said nothing”.

**A Personal Valuing of Chinese Language and Culture**

Mei Zhu said that what drove her most towards her goal was her desire to become a teacher so that she can continue to promote her language and culture. This was a significant “Driving” force that the researcher had not conceived of in her initial list.

**Attitudes Towards Non-native Speakers Teaching English**

Emma was very passionate about this point. She said she felt that the community would think it was okay for them to be teaching their own language (Malay) but not English:

> They would say “Allah Mak – oh my god, a Malay teaching English”.
> (Interview: August 2004).

This comment lead to a discussion between the researcher and Emma about Malaysian attitudes towards Malaysians teaching English which the researcher had not previously been aware of. Emma believed that many Malaysian parents would choose a European person to teach English over an Asian person. This, she thought, came from the old colonialist days when it was believed that white people were superior:

> We used to have to say Tuan [Mr] when we address them but not Asians we don’t do that anymore.
> (Field Force Task, August 2004).

Emma added that she felt that European teachers and parents would be very critical of the EAs teaching English:

> Because of pronunciation and different attitudes.
> (Field Force Task, August 2004).
Zaiton saw Malaysian attitudes towards Malays becoming teachers was both a “Driving” and “Restraining” force. When asked to explain, she said that many people in Malaysia and on Christmas Island held the view that:

*The best teachers of English were native speakers because they had the correct accent and grammar.*
(Field Force Task, September 2004).

Zaiton, however, did not hold this view (especially since her studies) and felt that second language English speakers could make just as good primary school teachers as anyone else. She felt that this attitude was a hang over from colonialist days when it was widely believed that Europeans were better at skilled jobs than Asians. These racist attitudes made Zaiton even more determined to work hard and do well:

*To show that Asian people could succeed as well as white people.*
(Field Force Task, September 2004).

Zaiton believed, however, that she would have got less support in the community if she were aiming to be a generalist primary school teacher rather than a Malay LOTE teacher. She felt that the community of Christmas Island still believed strongly in having a Malay teacher teach Malay but not necessarily a Malay teaching English. Zaiton hoped that through time this belief would change.

Zaiton said that while community attitudes had been something of a “Restraining” Force in the past, they improved in her second and third year of study:

*People were starting to acknowledge my achievements and be less negative.*
(Field Force Task, Sept. 2004).

In her final year of study, community attitudes increasingly had a “Driving” Force on Zaiton:

*As people became more accepting and showed support I felt further challenged to do well in my study and my job as a LOTE teacher.*
(Field Force Task, September 2004).

When Mei Zhu first came to Christmas Island from Malaysia she said that she too held the belief that native speakers of English would be better teachers, and if she had a...
choice for her children she would have chosen native speakers. However, since studying and working at the school in recent years, she now believes this is not true:

*Everyone is an individual and non-native speakers can make very good teachers of English.*
(Field Force Task, September 2004)

**Colonialist Attitudes and Practices**

Emma felt that there were: “some good and bad points about colonialism”.

*Colonialism was bad because of its hierarchical structure and attitudes that some people are better than others.*
(Field Force Task, August 2004)

Emma called these “Tuan” attitudes. Tuan was the title you had to use when addressing white people (similar to using Mr) but it was not used for Asian people. On the other hand:

*Colonialism was good because it had brought progress and economic development to Malaysia and then Christmas Island.*
(Field Force Task, August 2004)

This could be a “Driving” and a “Restraining” force. Mei Zhu says that:

*Colonialist attitudes that say that Europeans are better than Asians have made me want to prove that this is wrong.*
(Field Force Task, September 2004)

**Non-Standard English language**

Zaiton believes that her English language skills presented a barrier to her because they meant she took much longer than a first language speaker to read and write complex academic language. She estimates that it takes her twice as long as a first language speaker to do an assignment.

Mei Zhu believes that her English has improved over the course of her study. At first she says:

*It was very difficult and sometimes it depends on the text or the assignment. Sometimes it is hard to know how to express yourself in the appropriate way for an assignment.*
(Field Force Task, Sept. 2004)
3 The Relative Impact of Each Force

Once all of the participants had completed the Force Field Task which had resulted in a more comprehensive list of concepts being developed, the participants were asked again individually to conduct a Relative Impact Task. In this task they were asked to identify which of the forces had a high, medium or low impact on them. This task was conducted several weeks after the initial task and this extra time proved valuable for further reflection and refinement of ideas developed during the first task. During these few weeks both Zaiton and Mei Zhu visited the researcher to either add or clarify points they had made in the previous discussion. The researcher added these comments to the list she had generated during their discussions.

3.1 Summary of the Relative Impact Tables

All the EAs agreed that the role that the school and, in particular, the researcher played was crucial in enabling them to engage with the ITE program. Added to this were particular aspects of the HEI course including the availability of an alternative entry path, RPL, External Studies as an option and flexibility regarding their on-site School practicum.

Also, the support of the UCIW and the Federal Government in providing them a pay rise played an important role. Despite the HEI’s positive impact in these areas, in other respects they faced many challenges dealing with the Discourse of Academe. These included such things as learning how to write argumentative essays, an RPL submission, how to make notes and summarise. For Mei Zhu and Zaiton it was their mentors, and other teachers who tutored them, who provided them with the professional, academic and personal support they needed to be successful in the HEI course. Their mentors, in conjunction with the researcher in her varying roles and other staff, served to make the hidden explicit and thus enabled them to overcome some of the
subtle barriers that present themselves to non-mainstream students. For Emma this was not the case. Despite the efforts of her mentor and the researcher she could not meet the academic challenges of the course, in particular those required of her in the school practicum.

3.2 Relative Impact Matrix
The matrix below shows the combined results of the three Relative Impact Tasks completed by the EAs in this study. Colour coding is used to signal which of the forces all EAs identified as High, Medium or Low impact on their ability to achieve their goal of becoming teachers in their own right.

Legend

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Black</th>
<th>All participants</th>
<th>Red</th>
<th>Emma</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Orange</td>
<td>Zaiton and Mei Zhu</td>
<td>Green</td>
<td>Mei Zhu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pink</td>
<td>Emma and Mei Zhu</td>
<td>Blue</td>
<td>Zaiton</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Violet</td>
<td>Emma and Zaiton</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.3 Table 1 Summary of the Three Relative Impact Tables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>High +</th>
<th>Medium +</th>
<th>Low +</th>
<th>High -</th>
<th>Medium -</th>
<th>Low -</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HEI course</td>
<td>Pay Rise</td>
<td>Winning Equity and Diversity Award</td>
<td>Late arrival of course materials</td>
<td>English language ability</td>
<td>Attitudes of some non-teaching staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional</td>
<td>Community attitudes to participants studying</td>
<td>Buddhist beliefs and values</td>
<td>No funding to pay for extra ‘on island’ tutors</td>
<td>Some community attitudes to non-native English teachers</td>
<td>Limited access to PD as an EA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal</td>
<td>School Administration Support:</td>
<td>Mentoring and Tutoring</td>
<td>Personal support</td>
<td>Professional support</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To attend access course</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mentoring and Tutoring</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal support</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional support</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Community attitudes to participants studying</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Buddhist beliefs and values</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No funding to pay for extra ‘on island’ tutors</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Some community attitudes to non-native English teachers</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limited access to PD as an EA</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer cohort – enrolling as a group</td>
<td>School Practicum</td>
<td>Mentor Support:</td>
<td>Difficulty of course materials</td>
<td>Ineligible for ‘block study’ leave</td>
<td>Colonialism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Personal issues</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alternative entry program</td>
<td>Winning ‘Equity and Diversity’ Award</td>
<td>Personal health</td>
<td>Time and work pressures</td>
<td>Time and work pressures</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>External study option</td>
<td>HEI Tutors</td>
<td>Attitudes of some non-teaching staff</td>
<td>Mentor did not provide enough personal support</td>
<td>HEI tutors</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prior experience as an EA</td>
<td>Mentor Support:</td>
<td>Personal issues</td>
<td>Difficulty of course</td>
<td>Some community</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Personal issues</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

253
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Voluntary tutoring support from teachers</th>
<th>Confucianist beliefs and values</th>
<th>Limited access to PD as an EA</th>
<th>Difficulty of course materials</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Opportunity to access RPL</td>
<td>Option to defer HEI fees</td>
<td>Mentor did not provide enough support with HEI studies</td>
<td>Personal health.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School practicum – able to complete at CIDHS</td>
<td>Husband’s attitudes</td>
<td>Colonialist attitudes and practices</td>
<td>Being assigned a mentor you did not know</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District Office Support</td>
<td>HEI assessment practices</td>
<td>Husband’s attitudes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mentors Support:</td>
<td>Teacher attitudes</td>
<td>School Practicum</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Course work</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching skills</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional issues</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children’s attitudes</td>
<td>Mentor Support: Teaching skills</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Option to defer HEI fees</td>
<td>Children’ attitudes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Islamic Values</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Husband’s attitudes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pay Rise</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 4 Impact / Effort Matrix

The researcher used the data collected in the Relative Impact Task to develop an Impact/Effort Matrix. This matrix sought to establish the degree of effort that would be required to change the “Restraining” or “Driving” forces identified by the research. Decisions about the degree of effort were made through a reflective discussion between the researcher, Mei Zhu and Zaiton\(^9\). The decisions were, therefore, based on the grounded experiences that the researcher and the EAs had gained through their active participation and involvement in the CIDHS Trainee Teacher program. The discussion revolved around the amount of human and financial resources that had been required to either facilitate the “Driving” forces or to counter the impact of “Restraining” forces.

\(^9\) Emma was on extended leave and off the island at this time.
and whether the cost was or should be born by the EAs, school (or Department of Education and Training), the HEI or the regulatory authority (in this case the Federal Government). This discussion helped inform the recommendations in the following and final chapter. The following tables summarise the relative impact and effort required by the EAs and then the researcher and school.

### 4.1 Table 2  Impact / Effort Chart - For Education Assistants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Impact Level</th>
<th>Low Effort</th>
<th>Medium Effort</th>
<th>High Effort</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High + Impact</td>
<td>Studying as a group</td>
<td>Husband’s attitudes</td>
<td>Studying Externally</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Children’s attitudes</td>
<td>Alternative access course</td>
<td>Accessing RPL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium + Impact</td>
<td>Achieving a pay rise</td>
<td>Accessing HEI tutor support</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Attitudes of other EAs and teachers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low + Impact</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High - Impact</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium - Impact</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Difficulty of course materials</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low - Impact</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 4.2 Table 3  Impact / Effort Chart - For Researcher / School

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Impact Level</th>
<th>Low Effort</th>
<th>Medium Effort</th>
<th>High Effort</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High + Impact</td>
<td>Accessing alternative entry course</td>
<td>Managing School Practicums at CIDHS</td>
<td>Mentoring program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Gaining District Office support</td>
<td>Accessing RPL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Supporting a peer cohort</td>
<td>Negotiating a pay rise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Personal and professional support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium + Impact</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low + Impact</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High - Impact</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium - Impact</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Gaining Non-teaching staff support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Negotiating for block study leave</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low - Impact</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Over coming colonialist attitudes and practices</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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5 Conclusion

The Effort / Impact analysis enabled the researcher to draw together the factors that were of significance to the participants in this study, and then reflect upon how they might, in practise, be modified to better suit the needs of non-mainstream students. This is in keeping with the underlying theoretical approach in this study that proposes the fundamental purpose of research is to provide information to enable people to change the social world. As with all change, some factors that have impacted on this study are more complex and difficult to change than others. Some require major attitudinal shifts while others are more easily changed and often require simply a redirection of resources.

It is argued here that both sorts of change are critical and linked, but that practical and technical changes, without fundamental attitudinal change, will lead to improvements in non-mainstream access to ITE programs but will not lead to meaningful or long term change. As Goh and Gopinthan (2001, p. 2) point out with respect to recent changes to ITE in Singapore, many of these changes have been institutional and technical rather than transformative. These authors argue that what is needed is for students, schools and HEIs to reconceptualise their beliefs about teaching and learning in order for these changes to make a difference and for the Singapore ITE system to meet its stated objective of preparing a new breed of teachers who can meet the “new social realities of teaching” (Goh and Gopinthan, 2001, p. 2).

Similarly, in this study it has been discovered that there were a range of factors that could quite be easily changed to make engagement with the course easier for the women. The late arrival of course materials, for example, could be managed with institutional or structural changes. The attitudes of community to non-native speakers of English on the other hand would require longer term and complex solutions. Some factors would require a fundamental shift in the Discourse of Academe so that it...
becomes more inclusive and respectful of other ways of doing, thinking and acting in the world. At this level changes would be dependent upon the HEI having a commitment to reconceptualizing what real ‘teachers’ are like. ITE programs within this framework would not only accommodate but foster difference and diversity. The following chapter examines some of the international experiences of ITE program redevelopment. These experiences will add to those found here in order to develop a set of recommendations for action and intervention.
Chapter 9  

Literature Review

1  

Introduction

This case study explored factors that acted as “Restraining” or “Driving” forces on the ability of three non-mainstream students from a geographically isolated community to engage with an Initial Teacher Education (ITE) program at an Australian HEI. A grounded qualitative research methodology was used to determine the factors that were impacting on the participants in this study from their point of view. Hermeneutic principles allowed for the inclusion of the researcher’s insights and experiences in the data collection and analysis process.

The purpose of this literature review is to add a broader political dimension to the grounded findings of the case study. This is in keeping with its socio-cultural theoretical position. To accomplish this, the review examines some of the major theoretical issues concerning the engagement of non-mainstream students with mainstream Initial Teacher Education (ITE) programs in both an Australian and international context.

The analysis of the literature, coupled with the grounded research, will be of use to two groups. Firstly to those seeking to change ITE programs to better address the needs of non-mainstream students. The analysis will be useful for those with a more critical or emancipatory agenda who are dissatisfied with current ITE programs because they serve to perpetuate existing inequitable power relations in society and schools (Luke and Freebody, 1997). This will be achieved by exposing some of the underlying, and often hidden, values and social, political and historical forces that shape decisions about the nature, purposes and processes of ITE programs.

The literature review was deliberately undertaken at the end of the case study research in order to minimise the impact that outside influences had on the participants’
engagement with the course. A central aim of the research was to enable factors to emerge, as naturally as they could, within the context without being unduly tainted by the researcher’s worldview and academically acquired knowledge. In keeping with this approach the literature review sits at the end of this dissertation.

The interlacing of theory and practice is in keeping with the theoretical approach that informs this research. Within this framework, knowledge is gained through the interaction of theory and practice (praxis), and theory is modified on the basis of its use or practical application. As Marx put it:

The truth, i.e. the reality and power, of thought must be demonstrated in practice. The contest as to the reality or non reality of a thought which is isolated from practice, is a purely scholastic question… Philosophers have only interpreted the world in various ways, but the real task is to alter it. (Russell, 1961, p. 749).

The framework of Wang, Coleman, Coley and Phelps (2003) is used to aid in conceptualising the initial teacher education process. In this framework ITE is viewed as a pipeline along which policy makers place filters that can screen out certain people from the ITE program at different stages. These filters may be placed at the stage of entrance or in the middle or at the end. A filter may be in the form of ‘one off’ knowledge and skill examinations or may be more subtle, but no less powerful, mechanisms that serve to limit or exclude individuals or groups from successfully engaging with the ITE program. These mechanisms may include entrance requirements, flexibility in where and when ITE programs are available, and the type of curriculum offered, the degree of student support or financial impediments.

From a socio-cultural perspective the placement of these filters may be pragmatic from time to time but, for the most part, are ideological decisions shaped by beliefs about what skills, knowledge and personal attributes a ‘good teacher’ should have. They are, therefore, able to be, and should be, scrutinised for their underlying causes, purposes
and effects. Questions can, and should be, asked about where and why filters or barriers are placed along the ITE pipeline and who benefits from the way they are organised. Central to this question is, who has governance over these decisions and what regulatory controls exist for the development of ITE programs.

2 Governance of ITE programs

With the exception of Australia and the USA, all of the countries surveyed by Wang et al (2003, p. 5) including England, Hong Kong, Japan, Korea, the Netherlands, and Singapore have centralised systems of teacher education and certification which allows for tighter control over the system.

In England several national departments and agencies regulate various aspects of the teacher education ‘pipeline’ including accreditation of ITE programs, entry and exit requirements and initial certification. One of these agencies is the Teacher Training Agency (TTA) established by the Education Act 1994. Its core aims include the recruitment and retention of high quality people into the teaching profession and raising the standard and quality of ITT (Initial Teacher Training). A key feature of ITT in England is the use of a National ITT Curricula and a rigorous process of inspection of providers. Funding is closely linked to the results of these inspections. According to a four-year review of ITT, conducted by the national regulatory body The Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED), both the development of a national curricular and the inspection process have contributed to improving the quality and consistency of ITT (Bell, D., ND, para. 7.).

The USA has a decentralised system of teacher education and certification with each state responsible for its own initial credentialing of teachers according to local needs and resources. Whilst this allows for great variance in teacher education and certification systems, many ITE programs fit voluntarily within the professional
standards established by national accreditation bodies like the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher education (NCATE). Standards in ITE are also increasingly being given direction by the national government through policy, such as the No Child Left Behind Act which called for raised teacher professional standards, and funding allocations.

Like the USA, education in Australia is a state government responsibility. Increasingly professional standards in ITE are maintained through statutory teacher registration bodies in each state and territory. While these bodies do not carry out any extra forms of assessment for certification, only teachers who are registered are permitted to teach in the state. The Federal Government also has influence over ITE programs through legislative and financial mechanisms but as yet there is no national system of accreditation of pre-service teacher education programs. Quality control comes from the state registration bodies through which teachers must register to gain employment within state systems. The Federal Government is in the process of establishing a National Framework for Professional Standards for Teaching and is therefore likely to have a greater direct influence on ITE programs in the near future (Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs, 2003).

3 ITE Providers

The number of ITE providers in the countries surveyed by Wang Et al (2003, p. 4) varied significantly. All the countries surveyed offered ITE at the undergraduate and graduate levels at HEIs. In Singapore, the National Institute of Education’s Nanayang Technological University is the only ITE provider. In the Netherlands two programs are offered for secondary teachers, through universities or professional colleges, depending on whether teachers are preparing to teach vocational or university bound students. In the much more decentralised system in the USA there are over 1,500
providers. In England there has been a shift towards opening up the ITE provider market to include some initial teacher training through school-centred programs (Wang et al, 2003, p.17).

4 Agendas Shaping ITE Programs

One of the major assumptions of this research is that decisions about the nature of ITE programs are highly contextualised and linked to national and international economic, social and political agendas. These agendas need to be considered in order to gain a deeper understanding of the factors impacting on the development and structure of ITE programs and the effect these have on the engagement of non-mainstream students. Critical decisions about the structure and content of ITE programs such as entrance and exit requirements, course structures, pedagogical styles and the nature and role of school practicum are not neutral, value free, ‘given’ or ‘common sense’ but inherently political (Kincheloe, 1993, p198). These decisions are shaped by, and serve to perpetuate political, social and economic beliefs about the distribution of power and wealth in a society as well as understandings about the nature of knowledge, its creation and its ownership. In this respect the socio-economic and political context in which ITE programs are embedded is of major significance.

The current global socio-economic and political context can be characterised by increasing local cultural and linguistic diversity, the predominance of Information and Communication Technology (ICT), changing work patterns to meet the demands of a new era of global capitalism and shifting geo political boundaries (Muspratt, Luke and Freebody, 1997; Gee, Hull and Lankshear, 1996; Cope and Kalantzis, 2000). Added to this international context, and the accompanying need to meet the “new social realities of teaching” (Goh and Gopinthan, 2001), is a general shortage of teachers worldwide.
Together these factors have lead to calls for a revision or renewal of Initial Teacher Education in various countries.

### 4.1 The ITE Scenario in England

Teacher shortages, criticisms of ITE programs and associated professional standards, as well as the changing contexts of schools in the UK have led to modifications to ITE in recent years. As Bell, D. (ND, para. 1), in relation to ITE in England, puts it:

> The greatest single challenge facing the initial teacher training (ITT) sector over the next few years will be producing sufficient high quality teachers to meet the demands of schools. The age-profile of the teaching profession and the increasingly competitive job market, mean that meeting this challenge successfully will require a massive effort by all those with an interest in this enterprise – schools, higher education, LEAs, the TTA and, not least, the Government.

These have included the development of a national curricular for ITE overseen by a system for national inspections and the development of more school-based training. Some of these alternative approaches aim to overcome the decline in numbers of teachers and applicants for ITE programs by attempting to attract and retrain teachers from non-mainstream backgrounds by adapting programs to suit their specific needs.

A particular contribution of school-based teacher training providers is making training available, through SCITTs [School Centred Initial Teacher Training] and the Graduate Teacher Programme (GTP), at a very local level and in places that are not well-served by other ITT providers. This enables those, typically mature entrants, often with childcare or other personal circumstances that make it impossible to follow more traditional training routes, to train as teachers. There is no doubt that such provision can and does make a significant contribution to local teacher supply.

Bell, D. (ND, para. 3).

### 4.2 The ITE Scenario in the USA

A particular area of urgent need in the USA has been to attract and train sufficient numbers of suitably qualified teachers to accommodate their rapidly growing ethnic minorities and ‘difficult to staff” inner city schools. It has been estimated, for example, that over 50% of students will be from ethnic minorities in the USA by the year 2020
Despite the growing numbers of ethnic minorities in schools, ITE programs in the USA are not, according to the literature, attracting or retaining students from non-mainstream backgrounds. In some cases, the very nature of their programs and practices act to create seemingly impenetrable barriers to anybody who sits outside the dominant mainstream culture. As Becket (1998, Section 1, Para. 1) puts it:

As the student population becomes more diverse nationally, the teacher population remains mainly White and female…. Despite attempts to broaden opportunities for participation by non-traditional students, traditional programs graduate mainly White teachers.

In California, for example, where there is a high proportion of ethnic minority and bilingual school students, the severe shortage of appropriately qualified teachers in the late 1990s meant that over 30,000 teachers in K-3 were teaching on emergency credentials, that is without any teacher education or training (Leach and Moon, 2000, p.106). The disparity between the numbers of ‘students of colour’ and ‘teachers of colour’ was also highlighted by the work of Feistritzer and Chester (2000 in Zeichner and Schulte, 2001, p.7) that showed that the numbers of ‘teachers of colour’ was about 9% in 2000 despite most urban school districts in the USA having a majority of students of colour.

Gordon (1994 in Becket, 1998, Section 2, Para. 5) cites several compounding reasons for minority teacher shortages including: lack of adequate high school preparation for minority students making it difficult for them to enter colleges; negative experiences with the school system making teaching an unpopular profession; lack of teacher education program recruiting efforts and poor support during undergraduate years for minority students.

The shortage of non-mainstream, particularly bilingual, teachers has been exacerbated in the wake of the Proposition 227 (P-227) bill in the state of California. This bill
restricted bilingual education in public schools and replaced bilingual programs with short-term intensive English immersion programs for language minority students. First languages other than English were effectively banned in many schools in the state despite their having large numbers of second language learners. One of the effects of this Proposition bill has been to change staffing patterns within schools as many bilingual teachers were no longer required or reassigned to waiver schools (those exempt from the monolingual English First legislation). As a result, according to Kerper Mora (2000, Sect. 9 Para 2.) only 20% of second language learners in California are now taught by bi-lingual credentialed teachers and 80% by monolingual teachers. Despite a general shortage of teachers world wide and increasing numbers of students from diverse backgrounds within schools, non-mainstream teachers remain underrepresented in HEIs in general, and in teacher education in particular. The rest of this review examines specific aspects or filters along the ITE pipeline in various programs to see what impact they have on the engagement of non-mainstream students with teacher education courses. The purpose is to see how these filters may be adjusted to improve non-mainstream access and retention.

5 Access and Entry Requirements

For most countries the entry requirements and access opportunities for their ITE courses are the first ‘filter’ that ITE policy developers can use along the teacher education pipeline to screen candidates for the teaching profession. Decisions that are made at the point of entry have a significant impact on who can enter the teaching profession. While the entry requirements for the courses in the countries examined in this review varied, the majority of teacher education candidates enter via successful completion of a set of standardized tertiary entrance examinations following completion of a high school
certificate. This is in keeping with the findings of Wang et al (2003, p. 4) in the countries they surveyed.

The relative merits of narrowly based entry measures, such as high school certificates and standard examinations, for the selection of ITE candidates, particularly those from non-mainstream backgrounds, has been the subject of much debate in the literature. Arguments based on research conducted in the 1990s purported to demonstrate that standardized testing had a disproportionately negative impact on the ability of certain socio-cultural and economic groups to gain entry to tertiary institutions. Gillis (in Genzuc et al, 1994, p.5), for example, found that Latino tertiary entrance candidates in the USA had a lower than average pass rate on admissions tests for teacher education.

In support of these findings, Justiz (in Bjork, 1994 p. 289) claimed that:

A higher percentage of minority high school graduates compared to whites perform poorly on standardized college admission and placement tests.

For Justiz, this means that minorities, who are much more likely to fail standardized tests for admission than Whites, are “being screened out of teaching at alarmingly high rates”. As well as this, Gifford (in Bjork, 1994, p.289) claimed that:

Disproportionate failure rates of minorities on these tests can discourage minority youth from choosing teaching as a career.

Astin (in Bjork, 1994 p. xviii) also argued that continuing reliance on “reputational and resource conceptions of excellence” make it difficult for minorities to gain access to higher education.

According to Justiz and Kameen (in Bjork et al: 1994: 287) there was a sharp decline in the number of minority teaching candidates as a result of a new testing agenda occurring in the USA in the mid 1990s. Ironically, they claimed that this was occurring at a time when the numbers of minority students was increasing. Thus, according to Justiz (in Bjork, 1994, p.289) teacher competency testing has “exacerbated the shortages of minorities in teaching”.

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Another argument against the use of examinations makes the claim that they are not necessarily the best way to select suitable candidates for the teaching profession, regardless of their socio-cultural background (Justiz, in Bjork, 1994). This argument is based on the belief that such examinations are unable to take into account the range of personal attributes, values, knowledge and skills needed to be a successful teacher. In a similar vein, researchers like Madaus and Pullin and Spellman (in Bjork, 1994, p. 291) suggest that while teacher tests may measure knowledge and skills, no standardized test can accurately measure the full range of instructional skills and personal qualities necessary for effective teaching.

5.1 Intervention Strategies
Partly as a response to these debates there has been a growth in the development of alternative pathways and entry requirements in Australia, the USA, Great Britain and elsewhere over the past two decades. These have particularly been aimed at mature age students, equity groups and overseas students. Applicants in these cases may, for example: gain credit for previous post secondary study from a recognised HEI; they may sit a ‘mature age’ exam or a special tertiary admissions test; attend a specially designed bridging course; or submit a detailed personal resume of their occupational and personal experience which demonstrates their capacity for tertiary study.

The development of alternative pathways to HEIs and teachers’ colleges in the USA, Britain and Australia during the 1970s and 1980s was, in part, a response to calls for improved access opportunities in the name of equity and social justice. Accusations and evidence gathered about the social elitism of HEIs fuelled these moves. A review of research on the social composition of college and HEI student bodies conducted in the early 1990s by Anderson and Vervoorn (cited in Foley, 1991, p.6), for example, concluded that:
Higher education in general and universities in particular remain socially elite institutions. The over representation of students from high socio economic backgrounds has remained constant since 1950 when research began as has the under representation of those of lower socio economic background.

Linke’s research (Linke, 1987, cited in Foley, 1987, p. 23) also showed what he referred to as ‘a gross under representation’ in all forms of tertiary education, and particularly in high status HEI courses, in Australia at least, of working class women, southern Europeans and Aboriginal students.

Changes to access and entry criteria also emerged out of the rise of Competency Based Training movement which was part of a national economic restructuring agenda in many countries. This agenda called for greater cross-institutional accreditation and Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) as a way to coordinate, formalise and ultimately improve skill development, transfer and recognition within and across industries. In the wake of these dual demands for greater access and more flexible pathways to further study, some tertiary institutions began to establish mechanisms for accreditation of prior learning and bridging courses that could assist students from non-traditional backgrounds to first enter and then engage with the academic and social demands of HEI courses.

Among these alternative pathways emerged some specifically designed to build on what was recognised as a large and untapped population of potential teachers among Para-Educators in the USA. These people already had varying degrees of classroom experience and some had gained credit points towards degrees through their participation in professional development at their school sites. One such alternative pathway to teaching was the Latino and Navaho Para-Educator Career Ladder Program.

Despite extensive research demonstrating that the use of one off entrance examinations not only unfairly disadvantage students from non-mainstream backgrounds but are also not necessarily the best way to select suitable teacher education candidates, they are still
the most common form of entrance filter being used across the countries studied in this review and those surveyed by Wang et al (2003). In fact it is the case that in the USA, Britain and elsewhere that there has been a shift back to the use of examinations after a short period in which more diverse pathways were being used. Thus, at a time when there is an increasing diversity in schools, measures are being taken that have the potential to restrict access to non-mainstream students.

The literature strongly suggests that the use of one off exams and narrowly based entrance requirements unfairly disadvantages students from non-mainstream backgrounds and that alternative access options provide better opportunities for them to successfully engage with HEI courses. These conclusions support the findings of this study where the participants were unequivocal about the importance of the alternative access program in enabling them to both access the ITE course, overcome their feelings of ‘not belonging’ and learn some important aspects of the Discourse of Academe that they needed in their first years of mainstream studies.

6 Course Structure and Content

In keeping with the findings of this study also, researchers, such as de los Santos and Rigual (in Bjork, 1994 p. xx1), point out that the sort of alternative access and entry strategies and programs discussed in the previous section may not be enough. They argue that once the students pass though these more supportive and less threatening programs they are often left to fend for themselves in HEI courses that do not accommodate their specific educational, social and emotional needs. It is their contention that HEIs also need a range of on-going retention and graduation strategies to support minority achievement. These may include specially developed programs including modified course content, alternative pedagogical styles, flexible timetabling
arrangements, financial support, the provision of external study modes and student support services including advisors, mentors and peers.

Socio-cultural theorists like Mimmis (1994, pp. 352-53) and Gee would also argue that simply changing access requirements is not enough if, once the students gain entry, they are merely trained to take on the dominant Discourse of the HEI and school and become unreflective practitioners perpetuating a system that kept them out of the HEI in the first place. Whilst acknowledging the importance of alternative access programs, for these theorists it is the nature of the curriculum within the ITE program and the type of teacher this aims to produce that is of long-term significance.

Wang et al (2003, p.19) found that all the undergraduate ITE courses in the countries they studied consisted of a combination of subject content, educational theory and pedagogy, some specialist areas and a teacher practicum. They found, though, that the pedagogical paradigm used and promoted, and the relative emphasis on subject content, degree of theory versus practicum differed significantly. This emphasis can be linked to dominant educational philosophies, socio-cultural beliefs and national social and or economic goals. They are political decisions (whether consciously made or not) and are critical because they impact on, and in some cases absolutely determine, what ITE students come to know and learn about appropriate ways to teach and act as a result of their engagement with the course.

Kincheloe (1993, p.195) has identified four major paradigms that he argues have shaped and continue to shape teacher education courses in the late twentieth century: (1) behavioristic, (2) personalistic, (3) traditional craft and (4) inquiry oriented. The most dominant of these, according to Zeichner (in Kincheloe, 1993, p.195), has been the behaviourist perspective. In this perspective teachers learn a raft of knowledge, skills and competencies deemed relevant by expert definitions of ‘good teaching’ which are often based on behavioural psychology. Kincheloe (1993, p.195) contends that:
Behavioural teachers are... deliverers of content predetermined by empirical researchers who have identified links between certain strategies and increased test scores...Questions of the purpose or consequences of teaching are not important to advocates of behavioural teacher education, as they turn out unreflective functionaries who work in the interests of the state, who see their role as “neutral” upholders of the status quo.

While this paradigm lost some of its impetus with the whole language movement during the 1970s and 1980s, it appears to have made a come back in the 1990s driven, in large part, by human capital economic agendas that have promoted a shift back towards technical skills within schools as means to improve economic competitiveness. In the USA, for example, human capital agendas have emphasised the need for ITE programs to focus more on subject content knowledge in order to produce teachers skilled in subjects like Math and Science that have been deemed necessary to maintain USA global economic competitiveness.

The personalistic and the traditional craft paradigms identified by Kincheloe build on cognitive psychology and privilege teachers’ individual abilities to develop student knowledge and skills. Teacher education, therefore, focuses on tacit knowledge and personal growth of the teacher rather than the teaching of a battery of skills. In this paradigm, apprenticeship type experiences within schools are often thought to be best method of teacher education. These paradigms have, in common with the behaviourist approach, a lack of attention to social theory and the political and social context of education. While the latter paradigms give teachers more latitude to accommodate individual difference in students by developing a more holistic and caring approach, prospective teachers are still expected to work within the system as it is and not challenge or question its underlying power structures.

The fourth paradigm identified by Kincheloe (1993, p.195) is inquiry-oriented teacher education. Unlike the others, this paradigm “focuses on the political dimensions of
teaching” and the role that it plays in the distribution of knowledge and power in society.

Advocates of inquiry-oriented teacher education understand that teacher education is inherently political, as teachers always act in a manner that leads to either the maintenance or transformation of prevailing institutional arrangements of schooling and the social, economic, and political arrangements that accompany them.
(Kincheloe, 1993, p.196)

The aim of teacher education within this paradigm is a combination of both technical skills and critical enquiry:

From this vantage point teacher education becomes an attempt to produce professionals with teaching skills to teach and research skills to analyse what they are doing in relation to students, schools, and the society.
(Kinche loe, 1993, p.196).

Advocates of an inquiry–oriented or ‘post-formal’ model for teacher education argue for fundamental reforms to the content and structure of ITE curricular. These reforms include learning that is:

• Inquiry oriented / action research
• Socially contextualised
• Draws on critical constructivist pedagogic principles (i.e. knowledge is produced by dialogue between teachers and students)
• Improvised depending on situations and contexts
• Cultivates student participation
• Promotes self reflection
• Sensitive to pluralism
• Committed to promoting action
• Encourages emotional as well as intellectual reflection

At the heart of these reforms is a critical constructivist belief that ‘knowledge’ is not neutral and value free but is created in social contexts and is inherently political. This applies in schools as well as in teacher education courses where ‘post-formal’ educators
would argue that prospective teachers should not simply be taught a set of ‘skills’ on how to teach without being given the ability and the right to question and explore these skills in reflective practice.

6.1 Intervention Strategies
While inquiry oriented or post-formal programs may not be the most dominant paradigm in ITE, it would appear from the literature that they are growing in popularity. Many of the programs reviewed in this study that have focused on the successful engagement of non-mainstream students to become teachers have used this approach. Examples include the Coming Home Program, and the Northeast Nebraska Para-educator Career Ladder Project developed during the 1990s. The Northeast Nebraska Para-educator Career Ladder Project sought to increase the number of bilingual teachers to accommodate the expansion in the minority population (more than 100% in 10 years) (Lopez, p. 1217). The project focused on bilingual Para-educators who were already working in schools in the district and aimed to help those selected to earn Bachelor’s degrees from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln Teachers College. The Latino Teacher Project at the University of Southern California and the Navajo Nation Teacher Preparation Program in Fort Lewis College Colorado are also examples of teacher education programs designed to increase the number of minority teachers in Latino neighbourhood schools and on the Navajo reservation (Becket, 1998). The programs used as their cohort Education Assistants (Para-Educators) already working in minority schools.

In all these programs, the structure and content of the course was modified to support non-mainstream students. As an example, the students were able to gain credit for previously completed classes or other forms of professional development. As well, individualised degree programs were designed for each student and there was an emphasis on cooperative learning and the use of diverse teaching styles to accommodate
the different learning styles of the students. Language and culture classes were also integrated into the curriculum. In the Latino and Navaho programs the participants continue to work as Para-Educators while taking their university classes. They were encouraged to use the experiences already learned in the classrooms where they worked and from those of their mentor teachers and in their studies.

The Coming Home Program is another example of an ITE program in the USA which, according to Meyers and Smith (1999, p.77), was specifically designed to meet the needs of non-mainstream students. In this program the University of Vermont and the Middletown School District collaborated to develop an ITE program for the education of a specific cohort of minority teachers. The curriculum included courses that were designed to encourage independent study and individual interest (Meyers and Smith, 1999, p.82). Whilst certain assignments were set, such as an introduction to Netscape or interviews with career advisors, each provided the opportunity for the student to address personal interests. Students could also undertake independent study projects for variable credit.

The shift toward inquiry-oriented pedagogy has also occurred to some extent in Singapore and Malaysia. Within the South East Asian context, though, it has not been without its sceptics. Minnis, J. R. (1999, p. 172), for example, has questioned whether such western concepts as ‘reflective practice’, ‘critical thinking’ or ‘action research’ which are features of the currently dominant ‘constructivist paradigm’ in teacher education in the west, are compatible with Malay-Islamic or even more broadly Asian ‘shared values’. In raising this issue, Minnis (1999, p. 172) questions the degree to which western teacher education pedagogy is culturally sensitive and to what extent certain other cultural values held by students from marginal cultures may pose obstacles or challenges to its adoption as a way of behaving. As an example, Minnis (1999, p. 172) juxtaposes some of the essential features of the ‘constructivist discourse’, such as -
the self as an ‘active maker of meaning’ and that individual teachers can and should deal critically with what exists in society, with the ‘shared values’ associated with many South East Asian countries. These shared values include: the idea of equilibrium and moderation; an emphasis on an individual’s duties and responsibilities (as opposed to ‘rights’) to the family and community; ‘communitarianism’ – where family responsibilities have a priority over the rights of the individual; a preference for consultation and consensus; indecision is preferred to contention, debate and litigation; a deference to authority; collective goals over personal goals; knowing one’s place – a prerequisite for social order; an individual is defined by his or her relationships with others; and those in authority are never publicly criticised nor are their ideas.

Minnis (1999, p. 172) argues that it is incumbent upon HEIs to acknowledge the value-laden nature of such pedagogy and recognize that it is a discourse that may not sit so comfortably with students from different cultural backgrounds. In doing so Minnis raises an important issue for all teacher educators and programs developers to consider and that is the extent to which their own cultural values and understandings fit with those of the students they teach. The most significant point raised is that no values are neutral; all assumptions must be open to question and challenge.

Choice of curriculum content and style is considered in this study to be a political choice which reflects the educational administrators’ and programmers’ beliefs about the type of knowledge, skills and attitudes prospective teachers need to develop in order to work effectively in the school system. These skills are ultimately dependent upon the underlying values and goals the programmers have for schools and students.

Teacher educators working within a constructivist framework advocate an inquiry-oriented approach with an emphasis on reflective practice and the creation of knowledge through theory and practice. Constructivists also focus very strongly on the need for educational theory as the basis for all practice. Without this, they argue,
teachers become unquestioning purveyors of the status quo rather than participators in the creation of knowledge and the active change in society. There is a focus, in this paradigm, on acknowledging the diversity that students bring to the learning environment and building on this diversity to create knowledge and question existing power structures in society. The ultimate goal is the empowerment of students.

A review of the literature shows that both behaviourist and inquiry oriented approaches continue to coexist in ITE programs across the world and that like a pendulum they swing back and forth, often dependent upon the dominant paradigms in the economy and education at the time. It would appear in the literature, though, that the inquiry-focused paradigm has the potential to better accommodate the needs non-mainstream students. This is because it is more flexible and because inherent in its approach is the belief that knowledge is not a given thing developed by experts but is pluralistic and created in context. If the inquiry paradigm practices what it preaches, bearing in mind the comments of Minnis, then it will not just accommodate diversity in a superficial way but also actively encourage students in a culturally sensitive way to engage in research and debate about knowledge and its creation, power and society.

In this study the EAs were exposed to a range of pedagogical paradigms within the units they studied. Some were more behaviourist-oriented, others fit more closely within the personalistic and traditional craft approach and yet others were inquiry-oriented with an emphasis on encouraging the EAs to reflect on different approaches to teaching and learning, building on the knowledge they brought with them to the course and enabling them to reflect on their learning through practice.

The balance between theory and practice was very much weighted on the side of theory, as out of what would normally be a 4-year FTE course, less than 20 weeks would have been devoted to in school practicums. The EAs were, however, given the opportunity to gain RPL for the skills and experience they had already learned working in the school as
EAs and subsequently team teaching. As a result of their participation in the Trainee Teacher program they were also able to gain a great deal more experience in a real and contextualised-learning environment as they increasingly took on the role of Trainee Teacher. In this way the program they undertook was more in line with programs like the Latino Teacher Project at the University of Southern California, the Navajo Nation Teacher Preparation Program in Fort Lewis College Colorado and the Coming Home Program. Like these programs the CIDHS Trainee Teacher Program implemented a range of intervention strategies aimed at enabling the EAs to engage successfully with the ITE program through building on their knowledge and skills, providing them mentoring support and enabling them to engage in reflective practice as they balanced their theory with practice in the school environment.

7 School Practicum

There is extensive debate in the ITE literature over the extent to which teachers can or should develop their skills through theory or practice. Some argue for a greater emphasis on teacher training, through more extended time in schools, learning their craft from skilled practitioners in a similar way to apprentices or interns. Others argue that in order for teachers to be transformative and to play a role in the critical development of education, they need a deeper theoretical understanding of pedagogy and the role of education in society. This understanding is best learned through theoretical studies most often within HEIs. In most cases teacher education involves a combination of both practice and theory with some programs placing greater or lesser emphasis on the school practicum component and varying the way and by whom it is delivered and assessed.

While all those countries surveyed by Wang et al (2003) and in this literature review include a component of practical experience in schools, the school practicum varied in
terms of their length, when they occur, who supervises them, where they occur, what is expected in them and what criteria are used for assessment. According to the review of ITE programs by Zeichner and Schulte (2001, p.5), for example, the staffing of school experience supervision and mentoring of the ITE programs varies with some programs being staffed largely by school based employees, whereas in other programs this is largely done by HEI academics and other programs use a combination of both school based and HEI staff.

According to Berrie et al (2002, p. 68) and others such as Deng and Gopinthan (2001, p. 2) however, there has been a growing trend toward increasing the length and significance of school practicum and greater devolution of responsibility for supervision towards the school. Berrie et al (2002, p.68) claim that this shift in focus has been the result of recent criticism of teacher education in the USA and Britain which has lead to an increase in the amount of time student teachers spend in schools and an expansion of the role of mentor teachers as teacher educators through the creation of professional development schools. According to their review of the literature, for student teachers and teachers alike, teacher education is thought of being synonymous with time spent in the field. This notion of the value of school experience is, however, according to Johnston (1994) in Berrie et al (2002, p 68), “accepted almost on blind faith”.

Despite evidence that not all school experience is worthwhile, Zeichner, 1990 (in Berrie et al, 2002, p. 68) claim there has been little research into the various models for school experience which are all too often, “developed out of convenience or tradition” (Berrie et al, 2002, p. 68). In particular Berrie et al (2002) have questioned one of the features of traditional models for teacher education – the practice of “soloing” in student teaching which, according to Goodlad (1994) in Berrie et al (2002, p. 68) is characteristic of most teacher education programs.
Another variation amongst the school practicum component of ITE programs is the selection of schools to participate in school practicum programs. Some programs have made the selection of appropriate partnership schools with whom close links between the HEI and the school could be developed a major priority, as was the case in the UCD renewed ITE program called Teacher Leaders for Tomorrow’s Schools (Rhodes and Bellamy, 1999 p. 17). It was hoped that in doing so, these schools would become models of instructional and learning excellence. All teacher candidates in this program were required to do all their clinical (school practicum) experiences in a partner school. Previously students had simply been placed in individual classrooms with volunteer teachers across the metropolitan area. In making this choice, program developers were, according to (Rhodes and Bellamy, 1999, p. 17), influenced by Goodlad’s writings (1994) about the functions and benefits of partner schools. In the process of selecting appropriate partner schools, the UCD was conscious to include schools with diverse student populations (low socio economic and/or ethnically diverse) so that student teachers could gain experience in these environments.

The UCD ITE program (in Rhodes and Bellamy, 1999, p.17) found that real partnerships with schools required the significant presence of a faculty member in the school on a regular basis. Importantly, this required an extra financial commitment as previously the HEI had only allowed for:

A miniscule budget that had been used to pay former student teacher supervisors who had come from the ranks of retired principals and schools (Rhodes and Bellamy, 1999, p. 17).

The UCD ITE project also sought to create a new “Culture for Learning to Teach” within the partner schools (Rhodes and Bellamy, 1999, p. 17). The course designers wanted to ensure that the curriculum coherence and values they had built into the academic side of the program were being maintained in the school experiences.
Conscious that teachers often carry traditional models of teacher preparation from their own experiences as pre service teachers, the designers sought to build a new language to communicate their key program features and to signal very clearly their new way of doing things. Feedback from the program suggests that:

- Co-teaching provides K-12 students with far more adult attention, teacher candidates with excellent preparation, and parents with satisfaction about their child’s learning (Rhodes and Bellamy, 1999, p. 17).

In Britain there was a steady growth in the number of school-centred Initial Teacher Training (SCITT) consortia and in the number of teachers trained in SCITT in the period 1998-2002 (Bell, ND, para 10). According to an Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED) review of ITT providers SCITTs have not performed as well as more traditional higher education-based ITT partnerships. Bell gives a numbers of reasons for this:

- Many are new providers and are yet to develop the necessary skills and expertise in teacher training.
- School-based personnel find it difficult to allocate sufficient time to ITT among other school priorities.
- Weaknesses in aspects of Initial Teacher Training such as student assessment, use of ICT in classrooms often reflect weaknesses in the partnership schools. These weaknesses are not able to be counter balanced by units offered from the centre.
- Small student numbers means less subject specific components and a more generalist approach is taken.

Another Initial Teacher Training model surveyed by OFSTED in 2000/01 in Britain was the Graduate Teacher Program (GTP). According to Bell this is an employment-based route into teaching in which the trainee is virtually full time in school and is trained ‘on
the job’. These programs are targeted toward mature age entrants and career changers and are now a major alternative route into teaching. In its review OFSTED found some weaknesses in this training model:

- Many of the training plans developed were too general and did not take into sufficient consideration individual student needs.
- School-based trainers were not adequately prepared for implementing a wide-ranging training program. They did not recognise that their role was more complex and broader than in traditional school practicums. As an example it was often necessary to develop the students’ subject knowledge which was traditionally a role of a HEI.
- Monitoring and evaluation of student progress was not always carried out at a very high standard.

As a response to these findings the GTP scheme was relaunched with the establishment of new Designated Recommending Bodies to quality assure the program.

The overall finding of the OFSTED review of ITT providers in Britain was that:

One of the things that emerges from all of our inspection of ITT is that very few schools have the expertise and resources to ‘go it alone’ and provide high quality training. Almost all of the best provision is found where schools work collaboratively with an outside partner - usually an HE institution but sometimes an LEA or other body. This is true whether the initiative for the partnership comes from the schools or from the HEI/LEA. Creative forms of collaboration are likely to be much more productive than competition and parallel development. (Bell, ND, para. 18).

Notably one of the key obstacles to high quality ITT according to the inspection reports was the shortage of sufficiently good partner schools and of high quality competent teachers prepared to take on the challenge of ITT. As a means to overcome this future school inspections will include reference to their expectation that involvement in ITT is one of the features of well-managed and well-led schools.
As part of a recent restructure of Teacher Education in Singapore changes were made to the length of school practicum which posed certain pragmatic problems for the National Institute of Education (NIE) in Singapore. The increased student enrolment numbers and increased duration of school practicum, which were traditionally supervised by HEI staff, added extra financial and human resource costs to the Institute. To overcome this problem the Singapore Ministry of Education developed a ‘University-School Partnership’ system for the provision of school practicum (Goh and Gopinathan, 2001, p. 10). This system gave greater responsibility for school practicum supervision and assessment to school principals and staff. According to Goh and Gopinthan (2001, p. 10) the new model was effective in reducing HEI costs but also proved “effective in ensuring the desired outcomes of the [ITE] program” and has received positive feedback from schools and students.

The trend toward increasing the duration and significance of school practicum and the greater devolution of responsibility for school practicum has, however, been met cautiously by Deng and Gopinthan (2001, p. 2). They argue that it can be viewed as the continuing predominance of technical and practical orientations in ITE and continued strong support for the ‘training model’ of teacher preparation despite the government rhetoric heralding change. The authors believe that the current technical and practical model is fundamentally incompatible with current trends in education and that there needs to be a shift toward more theoretical foundation units linked to practice so that teachers can reflect on teaching and practice. They also believe students need to have the opportunity to reflect on their own school experiences if they are to be able to reconceptualise them to suit differing educational philosophies and practices.

In the Australian context, a survey conducted by Curtin University in Western Australia on aspects of their field experience program and the supervision of teachers, most teachers supported the need for university supervision on a regular basis (Hebiton, S.
Yukich, J. and Keegan, L., 2002). While cooperating teachers were seen as mentors, role models and advisors who could guide and monitor the student teacher respondents believed that three way reporting between the student, classroom teacher and HEI staff was advisable. Teachers supported the need for HEI supervisors to assist both the student teacher and the cooperating teacher. Most suggested longer practicum or more of them and supervisors needed to be more accessible and visit students more often.

The findings also indicated that schools would like continued and increased communication with HEI staff.

Edith Cowan University in Western Australia has recently developed a new approach to Initial Teacher Education which has focused on developing closer partnerships between schools and HEIs. The new practicum arrangements included sending more student teachers into the same school, appointing a HEI liaison member to each school and mentor teachers assuming responsibility for assessing the student teacher. The central idea according to the HEI was a shift in thinking within the school about the role of the student teacher.

Partner schools are encouraged to see the student teachers as competent, contributing and active members of the school community who can contribute to wider school initiatives and priorities i.e. as an extra resource, rather than just an added responsibility (West Coast District Newsletter).

HEI staff in the program were given responsibility for a small number of schools with student teachers. Their role was to act as mentor to student and teacher rather than assessor. Responsibility for assessment lay with the classroom teacher who is given guidance and collegiate support by the academic staff member.

Whilst there is some support for the greater localisation of support for students on school practicum within schools, it is significant to note that this does place an extra financial, physical and human resource burden on schools. There are also widespread
concerns in the literature about the selection, training and payment of suitable teachers to take on this extra and very important responsibility.

7.1 Intervention Strategies
The National Institute for Quality Teaching and School Leadership (NIQTS, 2005) has recently been developing a set of draft guidelines for school practicum in Australia. These draft guidelines sought to establish the desired characteristics of quality school practicum based on extensive consultation with various sectors of the profession. In summary the guidelines advocate a school practicum model that closely integrates theory and practice through partnerships between Teacher Education Institutions (TEIs), schools, school systems and relevant professional bodies. Importantly they advocate that TEI staff must be well-qualified and capable professionals who can work across campus and school settings and that selected teachers within quality schools must have:

The knowledge, skills, dispositions and time to work in collaboration with their TEI colleagues, and together they support, mentor and evaluate the activities of the TEI students through progressive stages toward their goal of gaining an initial qualification as a teacher. (NIQTS, 2005, p.2).

As well as this the guidelines support the need for extended in-school activities over long enough periods of time and a range of contexts to ensure the experiences are meaningful and relevant to contemporary school culture and the working lives of teachers. The theoretical components of the course and their related in-school experiences should be:

Planned, timetabled and staffed in ways in which they maximise their interconnectedness and mutual relevance. (NIQTS, 2005, p.5.)

The guidelines also recognise the additional skills and workload required of mentor teachers and administrators within schools and school systems and staff within HEIs as a result of the clinical nature of school practicums.
Of particular relevance to this study also is that the guidelines advocate program flexibility to allow for innovative practices including:

A merging of on-campus and in-school roles and activities, both in terms of locales and staff functions; special arrangements to meet the needs of particular groups within the diversity of school populations – such as those for indigenous students; and so on.
(NIQTS, 2005, p.5.)

In a recent submission to a Federal Government enquiry into teacher education Dr David Tripp, outlined his concerns about current trends in HEI funding models, which have lead to among other things, a lack of supervision of school practicum in Australia.

University Schools of Education are coy about this, but financial constraints have rendered them no longer able to supervise and assess their students’ school experiences in the ways they used to, and my understanding is that many of them do not supervise their students in the schools at all, and some don’t even assess them.
(Tripp, D., 2005, p.1).

Whilst acknowledging the dedication of staff in HEIs and many teachers and administrators in supporting the professional learning of students on school practicum, Tripp is adamant that the complexities of learning to teach require both extensive practical experience and intellectual understanding.

It is a serious misjudgement to blame universities for the difficulties faced by beginning teachers when they are denied the resources necessary to meet the high standards demanded. Rather, the fact that in only 264 hours class time, universities manage to prepare students to survive their first year of teaching and enable them to go on to become proficient professionals, is a considerable feat that should be acknowledged and rewarded.
(Tripp, 2005, p. 4).

He further argues that the making of expert judgements is a key characteristic of any profession. With respect to the teaching profession these judgements are extremely complex and make a significant difference to student outcomes.

To make and improve their professional judgements, teachers need both extensive practical experience and sound intellectual understanding; each may have to be taught and learned differently, but they must both be taught and learned in the same workplace-based context, and combine in an on-going career-long professional development process that must start in the undergraduate years.
(Tripp, 2005, p.5).
Tripp makes recommendations that have the potential to impact on the direction of school practicum. Included in these are:

- An improvement in funding so that staff-student ratios in ITE programs are sufficient to enable staff to mentor students individually and in small groups in partnership with teacher-mentors.

- Students should be based in groups in schools, and present in schools throughout the school year; be released for training and study 2–3 days/week throughout the school year; be paid as assistant teachers for the days when not on study/training release and work in at least 2 different schools.

- Teacher-mentors should be taking or have completed a Masters degree in teacher-mentoring; be released from their regular teaching to mentor trainees, beginning, and in-service teachers; help their students to prepare, implement and evaluate their teaching, and facilitate an action learning circle for their mentees; contribute to the on-campus teaching of student and in-service teachers.

- University academics should be qualified and experienced school teachers; spend at least 30 days/year in schools; work in partnerships with teacher-mentors to document, analyse and explain the teaching and learning processes and outcomes of the teaching of both the mentees and mentors; take responsibility for information management processes to disseminate the knowledge gained.

- The first year of teaching should be a mentored internship with at least 1/5 release for further study based on the internees duties and experiences in their schools.
It appears from the literature that there are many varied approaches to school practicum. These strategies have the potential to improve the outcomes of practical experiences for both mainstream and non-mainstream teachers. Some innovative alternatives include:

- The careful selection of partner schools.
- Adequate selection and skills development for mentor staff and administrators within schools.
- Adequate funding and staffing formulas for both HEI’s and schools.
- Closer links between HEI and schools to ensure an integrated approach to theory and practicum.
- The possibility of partner/peer cohort practicums.
- Flexibility in program design to meet the needs of specific groups.

The model for gaining school experience found in this study had elements of these findings but was also quite unique. In the first years of their study the participants continued to work as EAs with a small component of the timetable dedicated to team teaching LOTE with their mentors. As they progressed through the course they spent more time team teaching and were given extra time for study and mentoring support. Their school practicum was linked to curriculum units which enabled them to trial different strategies and reflect on various aspects of teaching.

They were supervised by the researcher who, as a Doctoral student at the HEI, was given permission by the Program Chair to take on this role. This enabled the EAs to undertake their school practicum in the remote location where they lived. The supervisor’s role was clearly documented in the School Practicum guidelines produced by the HEI. This role included providing support to the classroom teacher and the student, assessing the student in collaboration with the classroom teacher, mediating if
necessary and encouraging the student to link theory with practice through reflection on their school experiences.

As the researcher was also Deputy Principal and therefore based in the school she had plenty of opportunities to observe the EAs both in classrooms and in the various other professional roles of a teacher. As a result she was able to give them on-going feedback and support. The model for school practicum used in this study was similar to an Internship program because the EAs spent a significant amount of time within the school team teaching with experienced teachers. This extensive practical experience was balanced and supported by theoretical units they completed for their Bachelor of Education.

8 Distance Education

The EAs in this case study undertook most of their ITE program course work via distance education in a mode which can probably best be described as being towards the low technological end of the electronic learning spectrum. Their course materials were in print form and were posted to them using traditional air or sea mail system. Contact with their ‘on campus’ tutor, who was responsible for assessments and assisting them with their studies, was either by telephone, fax or email.

A review of the international literature reveals that distance education is a broad concept that encompasses various modes of delivery ranging from ‘high tech’, interactive, on-line learning to community radio programs and traditional ‘paper and pen’ correspondence courses. A comprehensive UNESCO report on teacher training in sub Saharan Africa (2002 p. 33), for example, has acknowledged the great potential of distance learning in this regard:

Distance learning appears as a hope everywhere and should contribute to resolving the shortage situation of teachers, not as a stopgap but as a viable solution for continuing education.
The expansion of distance education in ‘developing’ countries is perhaps not surprising given that it has been widely promoted by organizations such as the World Bank and UNESCO who have advised them that investment in distance education is a practical and cost effective way to increase access to education (Dodds and Youngman, 1994, p.1). The fiscal efficacy of distance education lead the World Bank to promote it as an “appropriate policy” choice for developing countries during the 1990s, according to Dodds and Youngman (1994, p. 2). Other international organisations also pointed to the possible effectiveness of the expansion of distance education in developing countries as a means to expand access to education within a context of limited financial resources and often remote and dispersed communities. In 1990, for example, UNESCO initiated a Regional Program for the Development of Distance Education in Africa (Dodds and Youngman, 1994, p.2).

OECD countries, like Britain, have also looked to Distance Education as a means to widen access to teaching for those who require part time flexible course provision. This occurred in the context of teacher shortages in the 1990s as school student numbers increased and the teaching population declined, particularly in certain subject areas. Its Open University Post Graduate Certificate of Education (OU PGCE) program is one of Europe’s largest open and distance programme for pre-service teacher education.

The option of distance education as a possible solution to teacher shortages was supported by research carried out by the Open University and national government departments in the late 1980s and 1990s. This research had found that there was a significant level of interest from groups of people not normally attracted to the conventional full time internal study model for teacher education. These groups included people in mid career; people interested in teaching secondary mathematics and science; women; and people from ethnic minority communities. All these characteristics were those being actively sought in national plans for expanding and
developing the quality of the teaching profession to meet national political agendas (Leach and Moon, 2000, p. 108). According to the Open University’s subsequent recruitment profiles, this pre-program research has been substantiated with the average age of students enrolling in the part time distance mode being 34; 75.4% women; and 5.4% from ethnic minority groups. This demonstrated the potential for distance learning to attract people from non-mainstream backgrounds, in Great Britain at least.

As well as attracting a more diverse clientele, the Open-University program has a number of features which aim to facilitate the successful engagement of these students, and to ensure it is comparable with internal modes and meets national standards. This is controlled by an extensive quality Assurance Framework which aims to ensure the program meets prescribed government standards. Leach and Moon (2000, p. 113) identify four characteristics of the program that are of particular note: its design, the integral part the school plays, quality assurance and interactive technologies. All enrolled students, for example, are provided with a computer for the duration of the course to enable the development of ICT skills, communication from student to student, between student and tutor, and access to a range of electronic resources including conferences. A team of experienced teachers and specialists write the course with a particular focus in the course design on the ‘school as a site for learning’. The course materials directly relate to school practice with the link made explicit through a curriculum of school experiences that sets out what must be done whilst on teaching practicals.

8.1 Intervention Strategies

The literature suggests that while distance education is increasingly being used in many countries and in particular in so called ‘developing’ countries as a cost effective and expedient means of delivering ITE programs to a larger and more diverse population, it is not without its shortcomings.
One of the major challenges for the Open University PGCE program was to develop the ICT competencies of its students, many of whom may have had little previous experience with such technologies (Leach and Moon, 2000 p. 116). Access to a computer, printer, relevant software and modem for the duration of the course enables students to use a personal mailbox, bulletin boards, on-line conferencing, chat rooms and document delivery services. The purpose is to create a ‘virtual community’ among students and staff who meet face to face only occasionally during the course. On-line conferences supplement the support provided by school-based mentors.

These conferences, moderated by course writers, provide updates on new developments in the field as well as specialist subject discussions and the use of ‘guest lecturers’ (Leach and Moon, 2000 p 116). During these sessions students have the opportunity to reflect on their own teaching experiences and explore theoretical issues raised in their course materials. Purposes included: support with the course content (for example, clarifying issues, discussing readings, exploring new concepts); exchange of teaching resources for school experience; study support; discussion of school experiences; direct teaching and personal support (moral support, humour, ‘chat’). (Leach and Moon, 2000 p. 116).

The course has three stages, each including a period of full time teaching experience. The latter being referred to by one commentator cited in Leach and Moon (2000, p. 107) as the “Achilles heel” of most ODL teacher education course models. The Open University enters into a contractual relationship with a school of the student’s choice to provide the practical component of the course. Within the school, each student is assigned a personal mentor and is further supported by a senior member of staff, the ‘school coordinator’. Teaching practice is, therefore, primarily supervised and assessed by experienced teachers in schools who are provided with a training program.
The OU PGCE program has opened up teacher training to individuals with important qualities and qualifications who might not normally enter the profession (one of its most significant success criteria). The innovative program is based on the development of schools as a site of learning and the use of interactive technology to facilitate the theoretical component. In part, according to Leach and Moon (2000, p. 106), distance learning is the inevitable solution to be derived from the inability of traditional ‘brick and mortar’ institutions to cope with the scale of demand for teacher education. They maintain that existing institutions will play a role, but it will be transformed so that it builds on traditional strengths and uses new modes of working. These will reflect the global trend towards merging face-to-face instruction and ‘open’ and ‘distance’ modes of instruction, facilitated by new forms of communication technology.

Like any other aspect of ITE, distance education is one of a number of options that policy makers may choose from. Choices made depend upon the policy makers’ values and goals. Dodds and Youngman (1994, p.3) raise a number of valid issues that they believe need to be considered when policy makers appraise the option of distance education. These include:

- The rationale for the development of distance education and its priority in relation to other options.
- The perceived need for distance education and the appropriate level of provision required.
- The direct costs and opportunity costs of investing in distance education provision and the potential cost-benefits.
- The appropriate institutional arrangements and the capacity for developing and maintaining a cost effective distance education system in terms of recurrent resources, management capability, trained staff, materials production, student support and communications infrastructure.
• The status of distance education and the acceptability of its qualifications within the national credential system.

• The possibility of international cooperation in developing and sustaining a distance education program.

The option to study via distance education was considered by the participants in this study to be critical to their engagement with the ITE program. As a result of their geographical isolation and their family and work commitments they would not have entered the program without this option. At the time of this study the distance education course offered by the HEI did not use contemporary Information and Communication Technology (ICT) to any great extent and certainly not to the extent being used by the Open University described in this chapter. Most unit course readers and guides were posted to the EAs using an irregular postal service and contact with tutors was either by phone or email. Late arrival of unit materials and difficulty contacting tutors presented the EAs with some difficulties, as did the heavy reliance on written texts without the support of discussion groups and face to face lectures which distance education involved. Many of these problems were overcome through the support of mentors however more interactive technologies would have been beneficial. The ability to access tutorial groups and lectures via web cam and other multimedia devices for example would have improved the ability of the EAs to engage with the course materials.

9 Mentoring

The EAs in this case study were provided ongoing mentoring support by the school throughout the course of their studies. In its initial stages this support was informal and ad hoc, but it became more structured and formalised as the program developed. While a set of guidelines was developed during the course of the program, these were
deliberately flexible to accommodate the differing needs and personalities of the mentoring couples. In their analysis of the program, the EAs emphasised that the personal, professional and academic support they received from their mentors was critical to their ability to engage with the program. Despite this common view, each of the EAs had a different experience of the mentoring relationship and valued it in different ways. Zaiton’s relationship with Greta, for example, was a very close and personal one, Mei Zhu and Jen had a more formal and professionally based relationship while Emma and Eileen were not able to establish or maintain an ongoing personal or professional relationship. Their experiences and those of the program coordinator reflect many of the issues raised in the international literature on mentoring.

The literature shows that mentoring has been increasingly used as a professional development tool, both within education and other professions, in the government and non-government sectors. It has, for example, been widely used within the Australian public sector as a strategy for achieving greater equity and diversity in the workplace. For example, the Director of Equal Opportunities in Public Employment (PSSC, 1996) has identified mentoring as a key strategy in this respect and mentoring forms a central part of the Western Australian Department of Education and Training’s Equity and Diversity and Aboriginal Employment and Career Action Plans.

As was outlined in Chapter 6, mentoring has been a favoured policy option in recent years for governments and the private sector, particularly within a climate of post 1980s economic restructuring. This has lead, in many cases, to the devolution of responsibility, for such things as education and training, away from the centre and towards the local level. The international literature on mentoring also suggests, though, that while mentoring has been widely and increasingly used as a means of professional development and with evidence of some success, there are particular implementation
issues that need to be considered or addressed if it is to be an effective and equitable policy tool. Several key features have been identified in the literature that need to be considered if mentoring is to be successfully introduced at an organisational level:

- An acknowledgement that mentoring is a complex, multifaceted and often evolving process that can be influenced by the personalities and skills of the mentors and mentees.
- Despite its fluidity mentoring relationships benefit when roles are established and transparent. It is preferable that the role of mentor and line managers or assessors be separated.
- A training program can be constructive in supporting both the mentor and mentee.
- The organization would benefit if personnel are informed about the establishment of a mentoring program.
- Mentors should be carefully selected and the program regularly evaluated.
- Mentoring is particularly useful for non-mainstream students.
- Remuneration is an important factor for consideration.

The exact nature and purpose of mentoring is illusive in the literature despite its current popularity as a policy option. Mentoring has been described in various ways as role modelling, counselling, sponsorship, friendship and coaching. Genzuk (in Becket, 1993, p. 27), for example, describes the role of the mentors in the programs he studied as:

Catalysts, cheerleaders, trainers and problem solvers and (they) are expected to deal with extremely personal concerns, as well as a wide diversity of educational issues and problems that may surface in their work…

Meyers and Smith (1999, p. 76) argued that the mentoring program they investigated in the ‘Coming Home Program’ for new teachers aimed to address both the psychosocial
and vocational needs of the students, with a focus on empowering them through meeting their need for personal development, role construction, professional competency and systems awareness. Mentors in this program also taught students to utilize critical analysis, self-assessment, and knowledge of institutional systems and cultural systems to become independent and self-reflective learners. They also provided important role models of reflective behaviours and assisted students to better understand the social forces at work in their workplaces. Mentors help student to “self-construct self”. Meyers and Smith (1999, p. 81) point out that:

These advocates (mentors) within the system give some measure of security, as well as encouragement, to members of the network (‘Coming Home’ students) who may not fit especially well within the present organization.

According to Meyers and Smith (1999), mentors also help students to develop political competency or the ability to understand and utilize power structures in society, and they challenge students to articulate their ideas and critically analyse the political nature of the educational system.

In a similar vein, Vardi and Vardi (1995) note that there are four important types of mentoring behaviour. These are leading, inspiring, providing support and providing feedback. Vardi and Vardi (1995, p. 3) also make note of what they see as the significant difference between mentoring and coaching. For them mentoring is a dyadic and reciprocal interrelationship, where one person shares their educational and pedagogical vision with another. This differs from the more coaching aspect, where traditionally more senior staff unilaterally coaches their mentees in specific job related training.

Similarly, Kram and her associates (in Dreyer and Ash, 1990) found that mentors provide multiple forms of career and psychological support. Career functions included coaching, protection, challenges, exposure, visibility and sponsorship. Psychosocial functions included acting as role model, friend, councillor and providing positive regard
and support. They also note that mentoring provides a special form of entry into important social networks, which are repositories of valuable information that is not always available through formal communication channels. Mentoring also helps mentees become more visible to management.

As well as being a necessarily broad and encompassing role that goes beyond coaching or tutoring, research on mentoring has also emphasised the importance of ‘personality’ and the development of a positive relationships in making the mentoring affiliation work effectively. Based on her research, for example, Hawkey (1997, p. 325) emphasised that it is the establishment of a strong and multifaceted mentoring relationship that is crucial to an effective program.

The relationship established between mentors and student teachers is the avenue through which all mentoring processes, complete with the interplay of cognitive, affective and interpersonal factors are mediated.

For Vardi and Vardi (1995, p.3), a successful transformational mentor can also be characterised as having certain personality traits and attitudes. These include having an open-mind and being tolerant, having a vision to which they are committed and being enthusiastic about sharing their vision with others. They argue too that mentors are not necessarily charismatic but can inspire others to become effective learners. The learning and teaching styles of transformational mentors are also important according to Vardi and Vardi, as is the way that they interact with their mentees. Mentors need good communication skills, should be able to articulate their messages and provide feedback in a non-judgemental way but in a way that encourages risk taking and learning.

The beliefs that mentors hold about their role is also considered to be a significant force mediating any externally prescribed agenda according to some research. McNally and Martin (1997) in Hawkey (1997, p. 325) have suggested three typologies of mentors: those that see the role primarily as a nurturing one, those that see it as one to provide
high support and high challenge and those that see themselves as primarily experts and authority figures. These orientations are, according to their findings, powerful influences on teacher professional development. Also:

The emerging picture of mentoring is extremely complex, one in which enormous variation in practice persists.
(Hawkey, 1997, para. 30.)

While there is research to suggest that the personality and interpersonal skills of the mentor are important in a successful mentoring partnership, other research also suggests that it is possible to develop mentor-like behaviour through appropriate training (Kajs, 2001). Part of the training process should be the development of an understanding of principles of adult education (such as experiences that are self directed, problem centred, experiential and role related), which some mentors may not be familiar with. Kajs (2001) also believes that mentors should be given a list of required knowledge and skills to assist them to carry out their roles. They also suggest that mentors would benefit from a support team, as it can be a difficult role.

The Australian Public Sector strategy for implementing a mentoring scheme includes firstly the need to evaluate organisational culture (PSSC, 1996, p. 6). This means looking for power circles, organisational hierarchy and employee attitudes. Prior to its introduction the implementation strategy asserts that the scheme should be explained to the staff. In line with this, the NSW Ministry for the Status of Women suggests that:

Openly communicating the objectives and processes of the program…. can avoid perceptions that those in the scheme are the elite. All employees need to know that it is equitable. (PSSC, 1996, p. 7).

Cline and Necochea (1997) in Kajs (2001) advocate a selection panel to choose mentors made up of individuals such as the school principal, experienced mentors and university faculty staff who are familiar with the backgrounds of prospective mentees to determine a perceived match of management styles and social interactions. They also propose that
program organisers should also consider a natural selection approach in which the novice teacher and experienced teacher spontaneously begin working together. Vardi and Vardi (1995, p. 24) findings also support claims that unsuccessful matching between mentors and mentees may lead to negative consequences for both individuals.

The WA Public Service also advocates that mentoring selection be done very carefully. According to them, it is preferable for mentees to choose their mentor, someone they feel comfortable with, prepared to accept criticism from and to face persistent personal and professional challenges with. The selection process should be equitable and open to all and should include effective performance appraisal, assessments of competencies, future training needs and career aspirations. And finally they state that it is crucial that the mentors have no direct line authority to the mentee.

In Genzuk’s studies (Becket, 1993, p.27), mentors are chosen via a rigorous selection process involving recommendations from teachers, coordinators, counsellors and administrators in the Para-educator’s home schools. The selection process involves an application, two professional referees and evaluation by a school site committee made up of teachers, coordinators, administrators, Para-educators and parents. The committee, also regularly monitors mentors in the program.

The Coming Home program (Meyers and Smith, 1999, p. 76) acknowledged the importance of mentoring in supporting minority teachers in training. They maintain that mentoring is important for teachers of colour because they are often isolated among faculties who are mainly White, middle class and themselves isolated from their communities:

May be the missing link in the chain of professional preparation that is often broken by isolation and the lure of better paying jobs.

In the Western Australian education system mentoring has been used as a key strategy for the retraining of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Workers to become
teachers. As well, the Nebraska Career Ladder Project extensively and successfully used mentoring as a strategy to support the professional development of Para-educators (Lopez, 1217).

Several ITE programs have included remuneration for mentoring as an important part of their budgets. In the Coming Home Program, for example, the university paid for the salary and tuition cost of Doctoral students who acted as mentors for minority students (Meyers and Smith, 1999, p. 78). Similarly a critical component of the Nebraska Para-educator Career Ladder Program was student support (Lopez, 1217). Each participant was paired with an in-service teacher/mentor and importantly mentors were to be paid $250 per semester (3 terms/year including summer). Funding was also made available for program coordinators and community liaison staff to travel to each site every other week to meet with participants in the project (Para-educators and mentors) to provide support, encouragement, and an avenue for addressing any concerns ranging from technical difficulties, academic problems, personal problems, etc. It was considered in this project that:

   Active, engaged support is critical for the success of the participants in this project.

While mentoring has been extensively used as a form of support for novice workers in various fields, it is not without its problems. The NSW Ministry for the Status of Women (1994) identified several potential problems with mentoring relationships. These included incompatibility, fear of disappointing others, misunderstanding of roles, time constraints, dependency and the balancing of personal and professional aspects of mentoring. They also argued that mentors need support, guidance and training, as the role is a demanding one. Other challenges identified in the literature that have been created by the introduction of mentoring schemes in organizations include: perceptions of elitism or feelings of jealousy among staff; that they can lead to abuse of
organisational power if mentors are line managers and the scheme may create clones if mentors do not encourage and support innovation in mentees.

9.1 Intervention Strategies
According to James Rowley (1999), who has helped school districts in the US design mentoring programs for the past decade, there are six basic but essential qualities of a good mentor. These features correspond in many ways to the finding of this case study.

The first of these is that a good mentor needs to be highly committed to the role. This commitment can be developed through specific training and having their roles and responsibilities clearly defined. Secondly, good mentors need to keep accurate records such as logs or journals that document conferences. Also, according to Rowley, programs that provide mentors with a stipend or additional release time make important statements about the value of their work and its importance to the school and community.

Thirdly, good mentors are accepting of the beginning teacher. They are able to temporarily set aside personal beliefs and values and accept the beginning teacher’s traits as part of their developing professionalism. Mentor training can help prospective mentors to understand the qualities of effective helpers and the problems and concerns of beginning teachers by reflecting on their own first years of teaching. Mentors should be skilled at providing instructional support, which can best be done by allowing the beginning teacher to observe skilled practitioners or through team teaching. These opportunities can then form the basis of collegial dialogue based on shared experiences.

Good mentors are effective in different interpersonal contexts and must be able to adjust their mentoring style to suit the individual mentees. Training programs can help mentors reflect on their own interpersonal skills and how these can be adapted. Good mentors are models of continuous learners and demonstrate this by their openness to learn from the mentee and to experiment with new practices. Mentor programs should
allow time and resources to enable mentors to engage in their own forms of professional
development to improve their mentoring skills or instructional skills.

Good mentors communicate hope and optimism or what Lasley (1996 in Rowley, p. 1999) describes as the ability to communicate their belief that a person is capable of transcending present challenges and of accomplishing great things in the future. They do this formally and informally in private and public contexts. The selection of mentors needs to ensure only those people with a positive and optimistic outlook are chosen.

Mentoring was a crucial component of the CIDHS Trainee Teacher Program and was identified by the EAs in this study as one of the most important contributing factors to their successful engagement with the ITE program. Specific features of the mentoring program at CIDHS that made it effective included the self-selection of mentors by the EAs, the flexibility of the program which enabled the mentors to offer both personal and professional support as needs arose and the inclusion of mentoring time in the school timetable. During this time mentors were able to offer the EAs support in their course work, development of, and reflection on, teaching practice and personal and professional support in negotiating the various competing and sometimes oppositional Discourses they encountered as they shifted from the socially situated identity of EA to that of teacher. A set of guidelines developed by the researcher for the Trainee Teacher program was useful in helping to overcome some of the uncertainties about the role of mentors that emerged during the early stages of the program.

10 Fiscal Issues

One issue that emerges in the literature regarding Initial Teacher Education is the financial costs associated with teacher training and returning to study. People outside the ‘mainstream’, such as second language speakers or women, do not, on the whole, have the financial resources to attend full time on campus study for the four years
expected in Australia or the USA, or even the two years required in Zambia as an example.

Sara Melendez (in Bjork, 1994 p. xix) examined the effectiveness of financial aid programs in the 1960s on minority enrolment in the USA. These policies had a positive impact in contrast to changes to financial aid policies enacted in the 1970s and 1980s – which had a disproportionate impact on minorities (especially those on low incomes) and reversed earlier gains. She argues that such “race blind” policies will have an increasingly negative impact in the future.

Frank Newman (in Bjork, 1994, p. 347) argues that vast increases in Federal aid to students in the USA from the 50s to the 80s “has been an agent of tremendous social change”. He is therefore optimistic that targeted federal policies can make a difference to minority access and retention. He is concerned about the nature of that aid though, not just the amount. He argues that the US government needs to reverse the current trend in its aid policy direction to de-emphasise loans, re-emphasise grants, reignite enthusiasm for work study arrangements and linking aid to community service.

Newman argues that loans impose particular hardship on minority students and that the poorer the family, the greater reluctance to borrow large amounts of money for education. In many cases, the cost of a year’s fees at an expensive private college can be greater than the annual income of many poor families.

Because minority students come disproportionately from poor families, they are disproportionately affected by this aspect of the loans programs. (Bjork, 1994, p. 354).

Genzuc et al (1994, p. 3) also argue that a range of financial barriers were potential obstacles to Para-educators (Education Assistants) retraining to become teachers. Para-educators are relatively low paid with wage rates estimated to be only slightly higher than cafeteria workers and less than bus drivers (cited in Genzuc, from Pickett, 1989).
They conclude that Para-Educators, therefore, need some form of financial aid to assist with their HEI fees. This problem is being compounded, in the USA especially, with the current policy shifts from grants to loans. Genzuc argues that low paid workers are less likely to take on large debts, some of which may exceed their annual incomes, to pay for education.

In Australia, there was a brief period in the late 1970s where a Labor government abolished tertiary fees. But with the re-election of a conservative government the end of the 70s, they were reintroduced. The recent trends towards ‘privatisation’ of Higher Education in Australia have significant implications for the Australian community, the HEI sector and in particular for access and equity programs and policies. According to the National Tertiary Education Union (NTEU, 1997, p. 3) the decline in public investment in Higher Education and greater exposure to privatisation and unregulated competition has the potential to decrease educational opportunities for significant sections of the population particularly low socio-economic groups, indigenous Australians and other equity groups.

The deregulation of fee-paying provisions through current privatisation measures means HEIs can charge any amount for courses and can enrol unlimited numbers of full fee paying students. Evidence from Australia and elsewhere suggests that this is in fact the case (NTEU, 1997, p. 6). Market systems and privatisation do not necessarily act to keep costs low within a HEI context. Within the HEI system prestige and the ability to attract more fee paying students is linked to reducing access rather than increasing it. High costs for HEI courses have the potential to severely limit access for socio-economically disadvantaged groups and others like mature age students for whom the economic cost is a great disincentive.

Financial constraints placed upon Higher Education Institutions in general impact negatively on ITE programs. Initial Teacher Education in Australia is, according to
Tripp (2005) currently under-funded and this has resulted in a diminished teacher education service which cannot be blamed on HEIs. Cutbacks in funding have meant dramatic and untenable increases in staff student ratios (in some cases for 1:12 to 1:30). One result has been that Schools of Education are no longer able to supervise school practicum to the extent they have in the past. This has lead some HEIs to either increase the supervisor: practicum student ratio, contract supervision out to casual staff or devolve responsibility for practicum supervision to schools. Cut backs in funding and privatisation have also impacted on university staff employment conditions leading to an increase in casual and contract employment (NTEU, 1997, p. 7). The possibility of attracting and maintaining a highly motivated and effectively trained staff is limited by these measures.

Another shift in Australian government policy has been toward the introduction of a deferred payment scheme to cover costs (HECS). While this scheme can be said to soften the blow of fees by enabling students to defer payment until they reach a threshold income level they do not eliminate the deterrent factor created by fees particularly for low-income student, indigenous students and mature age students for whom the burden falls most heavily. DEETYA in 1997 noted a decline in applications for HEI places of 10% among ‘mature age’ applicants following the introduction of HECS in Australia (NTEU, 1997, p. 6). Similar impacts occurred in Great Britain following the introduction of a one thousand pound fee. The high costs associated with higher education in a privatised system act as further barriers to the participation of non-mainstream students. While the market may bring about ‘efficiencies’ it may not guarantee equity.

The EAs in this study all chose to defer the HEI fees through the Higher Education Scheme, which meant they could repay this debt, once their incomes reached a threshold level. Whilst the imposition of fees did not act as a deterrent to the EAs
studying it did make them feel guilty about spending family money on themselves. The EAs were all adamant that it would have been highly unlikely that they would have enrolled in the ITE program had they been required to pay up front fees.

11 Conclusion

The national and international literature suggests that while there is an increasing number of students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds in schools across the world, there has not been a corresponding increase in the number of non-mainstream teachers ready and able to teach them. This is despite the fact that studies have shown there are significant benefits to having teachers with similar cultural and linguistic backgrounds to students, and schools in general benefit from a culturally diverse workforce and the use of culturally responsive pedagogical practices (Ogbu, 1978; Cummins, 1986; Ogbu and Matute-Bianchi, 1986, August & Hakuta, 1997; Becket, 1998, Section 2, Para. 3; Cummins, 1989).

The evidence also suggest that many ITE programs have not been successful in meeting the needs of students from non-mainstream backgrounds and in many cases their structures and practices have served as barriers to their participation in these programs. These barriers have included narrow and rigid entrance and assessment practices (in particular the use of one off examinations), curriculum and content that do not value or engage non-mainstream students’ beliefs and knowledge, institutional cultures which are alienating, inflexible course structures that act against people with other family, work and community responsibilities, and the impositions of fees and loans which restrict access and act as a deterrent to low socio-economic groups.

Some ITE programs have, on the other hand, been more successful in attracting and retaining students from non-mainstream backgrounds. These programs have featured alternative access pathways, a curriculum and style of pedagogy that builds on diversity,
alternative views of knowledge creation and encourages active reflection, flexible
timetabling, more opportunity for reflective and managed school practicum, access to
external delivery modes, alternative fee structures and perhaps quite often mentoring
support. These interventions featured in the CIDHS Trainee Teacher Program and
contributed to the participants’ successful engagement with the ITE course.
The next chapter presents recommendations for action in the development of ITE
programs. These recommendations build on the findings of both the grounded research
of this case study and the experiences gained from the international literature. Programs
developed in accord with these recommendations will be better able to meet the needs
of non-mainstream students, lead to a greater diversity in the teaching force and better
outcomes for all students.
Chapter 10   Recommendations

This chapter makes recommendations for educational jurisdictions, the Higher Education sector\(^{10}\), and schools in relation to the engagement of non-mainstream students in Initial Teacher Education (ITE) courses. These recommendations are informed by the findings of case study research conducted between 1999 and 2004 and a review of the relevant literature. The participants in this study were ‘mature age’ women who had disrupted educational backgrounds, English as a second language, low socio-economic status and lived in a remote location. The participants in this study were all employed as Education Assistants during the course of their studies. Their insights provide useful and valid information for the development or modification of ITE programs to address the needs of non-mainstream students.

1   Recommendations for Educational Jurisdictions

The extent to which HEIs can enact policies and practices that facilitate access and equity goals is largely determined by the financial and legislative regulatory frameworks within which they exist. These frameworks impact on the amount of funding available and how this funding is obtained and distributed. The responsibility for ensuring access and equity in HEI therefore ultimately rests with educational jurisdictions that have control over public resource allocation. In the context of Australia this is the Federal Government.

According to the findings of this research recent Federal government policy shifts towards privatisation and a market driven Higher Education system in Australia will have a detrimental effect on non-mainstream participation and retention in Initial Teacher Education programs. As was highlighted in the Literature Review (Chapter 9),

\(^{10}\) In Australia the tertiary education sector comprises higher (university) education and vocational education and training. Initial teacher education falls within the jurisdiction of the higher education sector.
market driven funding structures do not necessarily guarantee social equity in the HEI sector. Unregulated up-front tuition fees, for example, pose an inequitable economic burden upon low socio-economic students and others from non-mainstream backgrounds for whom such financial costs act as yet another barrier to participation. Similarly privatisation and deregulated financial structures limit the extent to which regulatory bodies such as the Federal government are able to ensure quality and guarantee access and equity. Under a regulated system institutional policies and practices that support non-mainstream participation can be promoted, monitored and enforced through conditions set out in funding guidelines and relevant legislation.

**Recommendations:**

1. Funding levels within ITE departments must allow for adequate student-staff ratios to account for both the theoretical and clinical components of ITE programs.

2. ITE providers should be subject to regulatory controls that ensure quality and provision of access and equity measures. Public funding should be linked to equity places and innovative practices designed to attract and retain non-mainstream students. Such practices include the provision of alternative access programs, staff professional learning, staff equity profiles, student support services and the provision of distance learning opportunities. These can be monitored through HEI profiles demonstrating their access and equity outcomes.

3. Regulatory bodies should invest in HEI staff to ensure they are adequately trained and remunerated to deliver high quality teaching and research within the ITE sector and to meet the divergent needs of non-mainstream students.

4. Where student fees are imposed a deferment scheme needs to be implemented so that non-mainstream students are not deterred from accessing HEI. The amount
of debt incurred needs to be monitored and regulated to protect against escalating fee costs in a deregulated system.

2 Recommendations for Higher Education Institutions

2.1 Access and Entry Requirements
The findings of this case study confirm that the provision of alternative pathways is a significant factor in the provision of access for non-mainstream students. As well as improving access opportunities, this study found that such programs also provide participants with critical academic skills required for degree courses. In this study, these skills included essay writing techniques, presenting points of view, small group presentations, using information communication technology and library research skills. Significantly too, alternative access programs assist in breaking down preconceived and stereotyped notions that Higher Education Institutions are “not for people like us”. The literature suggests that these attitudes and beliefs, often held by many non-mainstream students as a result of their perceptions of Higher Education and their previous life experiences, present significant barriers to their participation in the Higher Education sector (Bufton, S. 2003; Stevenson, S. et al, (nd)).

Recommendations:

5. Alternative access programs are expanded to increase access opportunities for non-mainstream students in Higher Education.

6. Alternative access programs should introduce students to a range of relevant skills and experiences required in the first years of mainstream courses.

7. Alternative access programs should be monitored to ensure that the programs adequately prepare students for changing requirements of mainstream courses.

8. Alternative access programs include a component of on-going supervision and support.
2.2 Theory and Practice
Teaching is a highly complex task. It requires extensive content knowledge and an understanding of human learning and language development. As well as this teaching requires the ability to make highly analytical professional judgements across a range of learning situations and contexts. As with other professions it is through theory and practice in contextualised settings that prospective teachers are able to develop both an understanding of, and practise in, dealing with the complex academic, personal and professional dimensions of teaching.

School practicum is a decisive component of all ITE programs because it provides students the opportunity to practise, trial and reflect upon pedagogical theories and strategies within a real but supported context. In order to maximise this learning experience, however, students need a well-structured school practicum through which they are exposed to a diverse range of contemporary contexts and provided opportunities to analyse and critically reflect on this situated learning with highly skilled and experienced practitioners.

As well as practical experience students also need the opportunity to develop relevant content knowledge, understanding of the complexities of the learning process, familiarity with professional issues associated with teaching, and a range of pedagogical strategies. Whilst some of these skills and understandings can be learned through daily experience within a school context, others require higher order thinking and reflection and exposure to various paradigms and viewpoints. This can best be done through the HEI program which can enable students to link situated knowledge and experience with theory and assist them to develop both analytical skills and reflective practice.

In this case study contradictions between pedagogy being advocated through the methodology units and those being practiced in some of the theoretical units were identified. These contradictory messages lead to a degree of confusion and cynicism
and had the potential to undermine the validity of aspects of both theory and practicum components of the ITE program. HEIs need to work in close partnership with schools to ensure that both aspects of the ITE program are complimentary.

**Recommendations:**

9. HEIs develop partnerships with schools through school systems to deliver an integrated and consistent approach to pedagogy in the theory and practicum components of the course.

10. Responsibility for overall programming lies with the HEI senior staff in consultation with schools and school systems.

11. Staffing formula within the HEI reflect the unique clinical nature of the school practicum component to ensure high standards are maintained.

12. Units should include theory and practice relevant to contemporary issues in classrooms and enable students to reflect on particular strategies through their practicum.

13. School practicum ideally takes place in a variety of contexts but flexibility is built into this system to accommodate the needs of special groups such as indigenous students or students from remote locations.

14. Students to spend more time in schools through a trainee / internship style arrangement supervised by specially qualified teachers and HEI academics or qualified supervisors. ITE students act as Assistant Teachers where they learn to take on full responsibilities of a teacher.

**2.3 Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)**

The ability to access Recognition of Prior Learning was a critical component of the Teacher Trainee program in this study. At the time that the participants applied for RPL the program was in its infancy as a process at the HEI in this study. The participants were given assistance with the application process by the school as part of its mentoring
program. Selection of the units in this case was made on recommendations from the Programme Chair in consultation with the Trainee Teacher program coordinator. Choice of units students may gain credit for is a critical issue and must be made carefully to ensure not only that the students gain credit for skills and knowledge they have but also that they are given the opportunity to engage with a range of pedagogical paradigms, theories and practices that may challenge ideas they have gained elsewhere.

**Recommendations:**

15. Guidelines should be developed to assist students to apply for RPL. Guidelines should include the types of skills and knowledge needed to be demonstrated and ways to demonstrate them.

16. Various alternative ways to demonstrate RPL should be incorporated.

17. The exemption process needs to be rigorous to ensure high standards are maintained but flexible enough to enable students to demonstrate knowledge and skills in a variety of ways (eg written submission, portfolio, interview, work resume, cross institutional credit etc).

2.4 **Distance Education**

The availability of a distance study option was critical for the students in this study to engage with the ITE program. This mode of delivery offered them the possibility of studying without leaving their work, families and communities. The distance education program featured in this study can be described as being on the ‘low tech’ end of the technology spectrum. This created a range of problems for the EAs including the late arrival of course materials, limited opportunities for student/student or student/tutor communication and an almost total reliance on print texts. The use of more advanced forms of information and communication technology (ICT) would overcome many of these problems. This would require some initial capital expenditure on equipment and
resources for module development and staff professional learning but this would be offset in the long term by lower per capita student costs.

For remote communities, like the one in this case study, a big factor for distance education is the availability of adequate bandwidth to transfer data quickly and efficiently. A web-based set-up (i.e. one in which the student goes to a web-site, logs on and everything is available) is recommended as this gives students ability to connect to the ITE course from anywhere (eg home, work, learning centre). E-Mail should be made accessible for regular correspondence between students and tutors. Web-based technology is less problematic for remote and ‘less developed’ regions because there is less reliance on hardware. Forums/chatrooms are also useful in enabling students and staff to communicate on a regular basis. Where possible this can be enhanced by the use of Web Cameras and Video over Internet Protocol (VOIP) technology\(^{11}\).

Another important factor to consider in the establishment of quality distance education programs is the development of well written, user friendly multi media based course materials. These could be developed centrally through a purpose designed multimedia centre. It is also recommended that links be made with other international ITE providers to share in the development and use of distance education course materials.

As well as providing quality course materials it is vital that students studying via distance education be provided adequate technical and academic support services. Learner centres established in regional centres for whole community use can minimise costs and distribute resources while providing support for students studying via distance education. Through these centres students can access technology, tutor support and workshops.

\(^{11}\) During the period of time that the participants in this case study completed their degree the university began to make significant changes to its Distance Education program including the use of more contemporary forms of ICT.
Learning via distance education requires different skills and attitudes than more institutionalised face-to-face modes. Students need to be more self motivated, self reliant and organised especially when balancing study with other work and community or family commitments. Assistance can be provided to students through the provision of specifically designed distance study skills modules and planners. Staff working in distance education also need training to assist them to work effectively within this mode.

Finally, despite its growing popularity and obvious benefits for non-mainstream, working or remote students, distance education still remains marginalised when compared to face-to-face delivery modes. In order to overcome this distance education providers need to ensure programs are of an equally high standard to their ‘on campus’ counterparts. For this to happen adequate resources and planning need to be devoted to the mode. This will be of benefit to non-mainstream students and in the long run will be cost effective to the HEI.

**Recommendations:**

18. Adequate resources and funding for distance education are required to ensure it is not a second rate option.

19. High standard distance education modules using multimedia should be developed to support student learning.

20. HEIs should collaborate with other national and international agencies in the production and use of these resources so that they can be shared with other international organizations.

21. Web based technology (web cam, voice over Internet protocol, email, chat rooms etc) is faster and more efficient than other forms of ICT and should be utilised within HEIs to facilitate student/student and student /teacher communication.
22. Staff need to be trained in the use of ICT and in facilitating learning via distance education.

23. Students should be provided adequate ICT training.

24. Staff and students require adequate and on-going technical support.

25. The establishment of learning centres shared with other agencies in remote and urban centres can facilitate student learning.

3 Recommendations for Schools and the School Sector

In order to assist non-mainstream participants to successfully engage with an ITE program the school in this study established a Trainee Teacher program. A key feature of this program was the provision of mentoring time for selected classroom teachers within the school’s timetable. The mentors provided support for the EAs in their academic studies, their school practicum and a range of other critical professional issues. As well as this, coordination of the program became an area of responsibility for one of the school’s administration team. Through this role, the Deputy Principal was able to manage the mentoring program, supervise the school practicum experience and liaise with the HEI on issues associated with both the theory and practical components of the Trainee Teacher program. As a result of the human resources allocated by the school, and the partnership established between the school and the HEI, a large degree of flexibility and support for the EAs was built into the ITE program. This had significant benefits for the participants in this study and was crucial to their successful engagement with the ITE program. The following recommendations are made for schools and school systems wishing to develop a similar program in partnership with HEIs for the delivery of ITE programs to non-mainstream students.
3.1 Providing Mentoring Support
As part of the CIDHS Trainee Teacher Program the EAs in this study were provided mentoring support to assist them with their ITE program. Each EA was assigned a mentor by the administration team from among the teaching staff. These mentors had been initially self-selected by the participants and had already developed an informal close personal and working relationship. They were considered by the administration team to be highly competent teachers and importantly were willing to take on this extra responsibility. The mentors were given time within their timetables to provide this mentoring support. They were given broad guidelines within which to provide support but there was significant scope within these parameters for the mentors to assist the EAs according to their specific needs.

This research found that flexibility in the mentoring arrangements was critical. Flexibility also allowed the mentoring relationship to include professional, academic and personal issues as they emerged and evolved within the school context, as well as to take into consideration family and work commitments that impinged on the EAs academic studies.

The mentoring program proved effective and critical for the participants in the study however it did incur significant human resource costs for the school. These costs were met within the school’s budget and were justified in terms of the achievement of school development objectives. These included improved outcomes for non-mainstream students and improved diversity in the workplace. To a large extent the program relied upon the personal commitment of staff who willingly gave up their time to support the participants. While such dedication is common among members of the teaching profession, (who are often motivated by commitment to teaching and education rather than remuneration), in order to ensure the sustainability of such programs teachers and schools require and deserve both financial support and due recognition.
3.2 School Practicum
There are various models for school practicum cited in the literature ranging from those administered entirely by the HEI to ones that increasingly see a partnership between schools and HEIs in the delivery of school practicum opportunities. In this study a partnership arrangement proved very effective particularly given the remote location of the participants. It did, however, incur human resource costs for the school. In the model used in this study the school practicum was supervised by the Deputy Principal who was also a Doctoral student from the HEI. This provided vital links between the theory and practice components of the program. Guidelines supplied by the HEI assisted her to make consistent judgements regarding the school practicum.

Within a normal school environment this may not be the case and while most teachers and administrators take their practicum students’ learning very seriously they may not have the time, experience or resources to maximise the effectiveness of this important role. Selection of classroom teachers to work with ITE students either as part of their school practicum or as mentors for their academic studies is critical. Classroom teachers and administrators overseeing the process need to have knowledge and understanding of principles of adult education, the HEIs approach or approaches to teaching, and a willingness to enable the student to trial different approaches and engage in reflection about their practicum. Classroom teachers and administrators involved in school practicum and mentoring support for ITE students therefore need professional learning and recognition and/or remuneration for the vital role they play. This can be achieved through the development of career structures that include these activities as a recognised and rewarded skill for classroom teachers. Classroom teachers and administrators involved in school practicum also need time to effectively mentor and engage in reflective discussion with ITE students.
Recommendations:

26. The selection of suitable mentors is a critical component of any mentoring program. Successful mentoring requires a comprehensive range of both interpersonal and professional skills. This is particularly the case in an intercultural environment. Teacher mentors in an ITE program need to be exemplary in their knowledge of current educational theory and use of teaching strategies and techniques. They need to be able to engage in critical reflection about pedagogy with their mentees. They also need a sound understanding of the principles of adult learning particularly in the way that it may differ from school student learning\textsuperscript{12}.

27. A mentoring program requires a coordinator for quality assurance, administration and mediation. The coordinator acts as a vital link between the HEI and the school ensuring that the practical and theoretical aspects of the learning experience are consistent and equally valued.

28. While the mentoring program needs flexibility to suit individual needs, it is recommended that a set of clearly established guidelines is developed to ensure mentors and mentees are certain about their roles and responsibilities.

29. Participating in the school practicum program as a peer cohort proved beneficial to the ITE students in this study. It enabled them to share ideas, strategies and experiences with their peers. It also meant that any extra tuition or support that was required could be offered to the group rather than on a one-on-one basis. School practicum through a peer cohort rather than soloing is therefore recommended.

30. Adequate human and physical resource allocations need to be directed towards the Trainee Teacher program to cover mentoring and coordination time.

\textsuperscript{12} As an example mentor teachers would fit within the Phase 3 category of the WA Competency Framework for Teachers.
31. Information about the Trainee Teacher program should be provided to all members of the school community including school support staff, teachers, students, parents and the wider community prior to its commencement. This would help to overcome any concerns and potential misunderstandings about the program.

32. Taking on shared responsibility for school practicum requires a significant human resource commitment for schools and/or school sectors. To ensure that ITE students are given adequate opportunities to develop teaching skills and reflect on their practice in context and with expert guidance, extra time needs to be made available for supervisors, cooperating teachers and students to engage in ongoing discussion and reflection. This needs to be built into staffing formulas for schools taking on school practicum students.

4 Conclusion

The Trainee Teacher Program developed at Christmas Island District High School proved effective in enabling Education Assistants from non-mainstream backgrounds and living in a remote community to successfully engage with an Initial Teacher Education program at a mainland Australian HEI. Key features of the program included:

- The ability of the EAs to access the ITE program via and alternative entrance program
- The opportunity to study via external mode
- The opportunity to gain recognition for prior learning
- The provision of extensive mentoring support
- The willingness of the HEI to be flexible in aspects of the course particularly the school practicum component
In many crucial ways the Trainee Teacher Program proved to be an effective and exemplary partnership model between an HEI and a school. A great deal of the success of the program, however, was dependent upon the goodwill of the participants, the flexibility of the HEI and the willingness of the school to devote essential resources towards the program. In order to make the program viable in other contexts, however, funding for financial and human resources would need to be made available for the program. Such funding is essentially the responsibility of regulatory bodies if the goals of workplace diversity and access and equity in education are to become more than rhetoric.
Post Script

In July 2004, Zaiton applied for and won a ‘merit selected’ position as a permanent primary school teacher within the Department of Education and Training (DET) at Christmas Island DHS. It had taken Zaiton four years to complete her degree despite being a part time student, working fulltime and maintaining her extensive family and community commitments. In the middle of 2005 Mei Zhu had only one unit to complete and was in the process of applying for a fulltime permanent position at CIDHS for the following year. Emma transferred from a Bachelor of Education to a Community Services degree in 2003 but withdrew from the course in late 2004 due to a serious illness. She was on leave without pay for the first half of 2005.

When I began this research in late 1999, I was a secondary Society and Environment teacher. By the end of it I was an experienced Deputy Principal and coming very close to being a Doctor of Education. Along the way I have developed a very comprehensive knowledge of, and passion for, the complexities of teacher education from both a very unique local perspective as well as a broad international one. I had not, in the first instance, set out to develop a Trainee Teacher program that would “better accommodate the needs of non-mainstream students”. I had merely set out to map the progress of the Education Assistants in this study as they engaged with the ITE program. My personal and political commitment to equity and social justice and my ‘privileged position’ as an administrator and post-graduate student, however, enabled me to play an active and critical role in the process. A process which involved not only their engagement with an ITE course but more critically and powerfully a shift from a marginalised Discourse of Education Assistant to the much more dominant Discourse of ‘Teacher’ with all of the “other stuff”, the accompanying ways of being and acting and the Big C Conversations this conveys.
At almost every point in this research theory merged with practice. As I increasingly became aware, (through my studies and investigations), of opportunities and avenues that could support the EAs I worked to have them implemented. This was the case with the alternative access program, RPL and the mentoring program.

The journey wasn’t always easy either for myself or for the Education Assistants. We were all mothers working fulltime and studying. It took a lot of commitment and there were times when we all felt it would never happen. I was often surprised by criticisms of the program particularly from those that I thought would be most supportive. The most significant awakening for me was a greater understanding of the pervasiveness of colonialist thinking, not from those I most expected, but from among some elements of the Chinese and Malay community. Through the program I confronted my own limited understandings of the pervasiveness of such views.

Various accolades for the CIDHS Trainee Teacher program followed in the wake of Zaiton and Mei Zhu’s success. Zaiton’s appointment, as the first local Christmas Islander to become a teacher, featured on the front page of the Christmas Island Shire newspaper ‘The Islander’ in an article entitled “From Education Assistant to Teacher – a Local Success Story” and in the DET’s state wide monthly newspaper. As well as this the Federal Minister for Local Government and Territories personally congratulated Zaiton on her achievements in a letter to the Islander in November 2004. In this letter he noted that:

It was very pleasing to see such a positive outcome and I am very proud that the Australian government has been able to assist in these achievements. (Islander, Issue No 319).

The Joint Standing Committee on External Territories also noted the school’s achievement in its 2004 report and recommended that other government organizations on island investigate similar programs.
More importantly there were a number of more tangible positive outcomes as a result of the program. In 2005, for example, the Indian Ocean Territories Health Service (IOTHS) management actively supported the retraining of two Chinese Enrolled Nurses to become Registered Nurses through a university distance education program. These nurses had been working at the hospital for 25 years. Their decision to enrol in the course and the management’s commitment to support them was a direct result of the success that had resulted from the Christmas Island Trainee Teacher Program. The women involved in the program had been inspired by Zaiton’s success and the management sought ways to model their program on that of the CIDHS Trainee Teacher Program. This support included providing them with opportunities to study during working hours and funding a self selected tutor/mentor to support them in their studies.

The CIDHS Teacher Trainee Program also created significant interest on the neighbouring Cocos (Keeling) Islands where the school’s administration team investigated ways to develop the skills of their Education Assistants during 2005. As a first step, several of the Cocos Malay EAs visited Christmas Island as part of their Professional Learning and met with Zaiton and the researcher. At these meetings both the ITE program and alternative career ladder programs through Technical and Further Education were discussed. The researcher in her role as Deputy Principal also met with the Cocos (Keeling) administration to explain how the CIDHS Program had operated.

Zaiton’s success and the CIDHS Trainee Teacher program had a significant impact on the Christmas Island community. This is encapsulated in the belief that now exists in the community - that if Zaiton can, so can we. This change of attitude is a fundamental step towards Christmas Islanders developing their own sense of self determination with which they may be able to challenge the neo-colonialist attitudes and practices that continue to deny them a rightful say in the future of the island.
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Training Quality Teachers (in Zambia) at http://www.multinset.netfirms.com/favorite.htm

Udenrigsministeriet at http://www.um.dk


UNICEF paper at http://www.unicef.org/pon97/edu1a.htm


Appendices

1. Sample Interview Questions
2. Soloing on Tape
3. Sample Questions for Participants’ Reflective Journals
4. Guidelines for Mentoring
5. Extracts from Researchers Reflective Journal
Appendix 1  Sample Interview Questions

1.1  Interview Questions for Zaiton

Can you tell me about the unit you have just completed?
Can you describe the sort of support you have received in this unit?
Can you describe the tutorial sessions with Bob:
  • What happens in the tutorials?
  • How useful do you find them?

If you could have some more assistance what would you like?
Do you have any other comments or concerns about your studies so far and in the future?

1.2  Interview Questions for Mei Zhu

Can you describe the intensive unit you have just completed on campus?
What were the differences between studying on campus and externally?
What were the most important things you learned in this course?
How do you think you went in this unit?
What sorts of assessment were used?
How did you feel about the assessments?
How did you feel being on campus this time compared to during your entrance program?
Appendix 2  Soloing on Tape

2.1  Interview questions for Zaiton’s Husband

I gave these questions to Zaiton to take home as with other questions as she felt he
would feel more relaxed speaking to her at home. (NB there was lots of recorded
laughter in this interview as well as interjections from Zaiton – these are in italics).

**Where and when were you born?**
Hospital lah!!!  *(come on be serious with me, when and where?)* Ok be serious, serious.
I was born on Christmas Island on 9th November 1958.  *(Ok, you remember that Anne
for his birthday present.)*

**Where did you go to school?**
I went to school on the island at Drumsite school for the primary education and for the
secondary school we went I went to the George Fam school which is now Shire office.

**When did you leave school and what sort of work did you do after leaving school?**
I left school um in year 10 and then I got a scholarship to go to Perth to do vocational
study yeah at tech as a draftsman so after I qualified as a draftsman I came back to do a
drafting job for the BPC at that time it was the BPC company, mining company.  I
worked as a draftsman for the BPC after I left school.  Until the mine closed and when
the mine reopened again I was employed first as a draftsman and then the mine did not
require a draftsman so I was looking after human resources for a while.

**What is your current job?**
Now my current job is looking after mine planning which is looking after where areas
is going to be mined, is it is going to be mined and what resources are in the ground,
areas to be drilled area to be cleared before mining.

**Do you hold any other positions on the island?**
I am currently vice president to Islamic Council. I used to be active in various
organisations like the Malay Club, like the Union executive um what else the Board CIP
members but now currently only active in my work.  I’m also a member of Volunteer
Fire Brigade, also a member of State Emergency Service.

**What are your hobbies and interests?**
My hobbies I enjoy painting which was my hobby before but I have hardly done any
painting in the last couple of years but hobby also swimming is my hobby, fishing, yes
fishing seems to be my main hobby these days every weekend I go out fishing at night
and sometimes come back the next morning *(12 hours sometime more than 12 hours
Anne from 4 until the next morning at 10 am)*. My second home is my boat.

**What are your future plans or hopes for you and your family?**
Well my future plans and hopes for myself and my family.  I hope the island phosphate
mine will last for another 10 years at least but the longer the better. I just like to stay on
the island and have the kids grown up on the island and I know that the kids have to go
out of the island for further education which is fine for us as long as they can come back
and visit us every term and every year during their school break.
There is a plan that we might go to Perth when our youngest daughter goes to Perth for
yr 11, that was our plan settling down in Perth but then because when we asked the kids
once we settle down in Perth there is no way of us coming back to the island they were
sort of unhappy about it and so we said in that case we might have to, on second
thought, we might not have to leave the island and we might just send the children to
Perth so we can just see them every semester.
I think that is a good thing as well it gives them a bit of independence as well as come back every semester and come back to the family and the culture so keep the contact, so they are exposed to the outside world and then come back to the island and the island life style. I think it is a good thing rather than if we stay in Perth together we will adapt to the lifestyle there and slowly adapt to a different lifestyle especially for the kids they enjoy the lifestyle on the island as we all know there is more freedom for them it is easy going they can go out anywhere, friends just around the corner. So that is where we have decide that it is not best for the family to settle down in Perth. What are your feelings about Zaiton studying at an Australian University and retraining to become a teacher? Yeah I think it is good that she is doing all the study but at the same time I have to learn to cook properly (get out of here you don’t) and do my own ironing (get out of here you don’t) which I don’t think is a good thing … [laugh laugh]… that one is not right. I don’t mind Zaiton doing her study I think it is a good role model for the company. [Laugh]. For the my company… for the family. I think she is keen in her work. I think it is a good thing that someone who is capable to study can put time to study I wish I could do that but it is very difficult with my age (I’ve been telling you) and my brain capacity. [Laugh]. Its good that Zaiton have this ambition and I support it very much I think she has the personality to be a good teacher, although she is a good mother I’m not sure about being a good wife. [Laugh]…that is yet to be proven after her teaching career. Yeah I think it is a good thing, lah, it is a good example to my kids and the community and the school… you shouldn’t be listening to this. (Make sure you say all the good things)

What sort of effect has her study had on you and your family? It don’t have to be and or it is definitely negative because I have to look after myself there is no sharing anymore (get out I cook every day). No, it doesn’t effect us very much she is very lucky that I am easy going, simple, no problem type of person – if there is no food I just get something simple (get out that one is not true). [Laugh]. Yes the family is looked after, the kids are all grown up and can help – no problem. One positive thing about Zaiton doing her study is that I can spend more time fishing she don’t mind its more time to her study – she is sitting in front of the computer ignore me so much [laugh].

What do you think other members of the Malay community think about Zaiton studying to become a teacher? (eg your friends, work colleagues) (I’m asking this because there is a perception among some people in the “West” that Moslem men do not believe women should study, get a job etc – how would you respond to this?) Yeah I think that its an old, its not an old belief, I think the Moslem religion encourage women to stay home and be a good mother because women naturally look after the kids very well and its just the nature of being a mother and man is the bread winner of the family but also Moslem encourage to share responsibility I believe as long as we can look after the well being of the children and the religious side of practice hasn’t been neglected then I think its alright to have woman to work as well in the sense that we share responsibility and the husband share responsibility to look after the family I think its alright. As other families look at our family I don’t think there is any problem we all know now even in Malaysia and all around the world in Singapore especially women work is just to share I suppose to share the financial burden of life in this world today.
Appendix 3  Questions for Reflective Journal

3.1  Biography

Please use these questions as a guide only. Write as much or as little as possible. Include any anecdotes (short stories) or little memories that you have. Don’t worry about spelling, grammar, neatness etc etc. Write it like a journal or diary eg “I was born in ……”

Term 1 Week 1

Your Family background

• Date of birth?

• Where were you born – country, region, village/town?

• Describe your childhood house/houses and the local area/s you grew up in (include sketches or photos if you like).

• Describe your siblings – ages, gender, personality in relation to you (eg were you the oldest, only girl 1 of 5 etc)? And any other extended family that may have lived with you.

• Describe your parents’ backgrounds (where they were born etc), education and occupations. What were they like?

• What were their attitudes or expectations towards education for you and your other siblings?

• What responsibilities did you have in the home (house work, part time work, caring for siblings)?

Terimah Kasih – Perhaps we can all graduate together!!!  

Anne
Term 1  Week 2/3

• Schooling – Describe your experiences at school (primary and or secondary).
  Use these questions as a guide only. Include any special memories, turning points etc.
• What age did you start school?
• Where was your school located?
• How many students attended? Were they male and female? Mixed ethnic/language groups?
• Describe or sketch or include a photo of the school and / or a typical classroom.
• What subjects were you taught? What was the language of instruction?
• What were your feelings about school (did you enjoy going; were you shy, nervous etc.)?
• Who was your favorite teacher – describe him or her. Why did you like them?
  How did they teach?
• Describe your worst teacher? Why were they so bad?
• What sort of expectations do you think teachers had of you as a student?
• When did you leave school and why?
Appendix 4  Guidelines for Mentoring

CIDHS Trainee Teacher Mentor Role Statement

Mentors – in History
The word Mentor comes from Greek Mythology. In ‘The Odyssey’, circa 800BC, Homer, the Greek poet writes of how Odysseus, the King of Ithaca, has to leave his young son Telemachus at home while he goes off to fight in the Trojan Wars. Odysseus decides to leave his son in the hands of a wise and trusted family friend called Mentor. Odysseus instructs Mentor to be, among other things, a friend, an advocate, a father, a teacher, a trusted adviser, a confidant, an encourager and a role model.

Mentoring Today
Mentoring today is a key professional development strategy used in both the public and private sectors. Whilst the relationship may be different from that of Mentor and Telemachus in many ways the intent is the same. Within the WA Public Sector the role of mentor involves providing both professional and personal support and involves elements such as role modelling, counselling, sponsorship, friendship and coaching.

The Centre for Excellence in Teaching defines mentoring for Graduate Teachers in WA as:

A professional learning partnership in which a more experienced teacher (a mentor) takes an active and nurturing role in assisting a graduate teacher to attain specific professional teaching competencies through offering guidance and support in the graduate’s early career learning projects.

Reference: Martin G, 2000, Mentoring Graduate Teachers Creating Effective Learning Partnerships, Centre For Excellence in Teaching, Perth WA

The Mentoring Program at CIDHS.

Key Functions of the Mentor
These should be negotiated between the mentor and trainee teacher and are largely dependent on the individual needs of the trainee teacher.

1. Provide the trainee teacher with support in the preparation and delivery of lessons.
2. Provide regular constructive feedback (both formal and informal) on the preparation and delivery of lessons.
3. Provide support in the understanding and fulfilment of a range of professional issues related to teaching (e.g. system and school policies and procedures, duty of care,
4. Professional Development, time management.
5. Provide assistance with University studies (e.g. assistance with understanding course readings, providing feedback on draft assignments, planning future course enrolments).
6. Promote the Trainee Teacher program in the school and wider community.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Function</th>
<th>Examples of Tasks / Action</th>
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| **Relationship Building** | The Mentor could, for example:  
Acknowledge and support differences in teaching style  
Clarify own and trainee teachers expectations of the mentoring partnership  
Consider use of body language at meetings  
Accept and respect the trainee teacher’s opinions, ideas and feelings even if s/he disagrees.  
Avoid judgmental, or evaluative comments when responding to the trainee teacher’s actions thoughts or suggestions.  
Respect confidentiality |
| **Coaching** | The Mentor could, for example:  
Model teaching and learning strategies (i.e. conduct demonstration lessons).  
Share planning documents such as programmes and daily lesson plans.  
Discuss monitoring and assessment strategies and provide examples/samples of student records.  
Observe lessons and provide constructive feedback on the extent to which particular professional teaching competencies have been acquired.  
Explain system, district and school policies and procedures.  
Model particular system, district and/or school procedures. |
| **Facilitation** | The Mentor could, for example:  
Encourage the trainee teacher to assume increasing responsibility for professional learning  
Pose questions to the trainee teacher which stimulate dialogue about teaching and learning theory and practice  
Assist the trainee teacher to determine particular PD needs.  
Assist with prioritising PD needs.  
Help the trainee teacher to access particular resources.  
Prompt the trainee teacher to reflect upon progress in relation to a particular learning project.  
Alert the trainee teacher to potential difficulties that might be encountered in pursuing particular learning projects.  
Encourage the trainee teacher to take ‘calculated risks’ in |

**Generic Mentor Functions**

**Function**  
**Examples of Tasks / Action**  
**Relationship Building**  
The mentor should build and maintain a professional relationship with the Trainee teacher. This partnership should be based on mutual trust, openness, honesty, respect and willingness to work together.  
The Mentor could, for example:  
Acknowledge and support differences in teaching style  
Clarify own and trainee teachers expectations of the mentoring partnership  
Consider use of body language at meetings  
Accept and respect the trainee teacher’s opinions, ideas and feelings even if s/he disagrees.  
Avoid judgmental, or evaluative comments when responding to the trainee teacher’s actions thoughts or suggestions.  
Respect confidentiality  
**Coaching**  
Coaching is the process of assisting the trainee teacher to operate successfully within a school and classroom environment through passing on and/or modelling vital professional knowledge, skills and values. As coach, the mentor creates new learning experiences for the trainee teacher by sharing or modelling expertise, and by assisting them to understand how the system, district and school operates.  
The Mentor could, for example:  
Model teaching and learning strategies (i.e. conduct demonstration lessons).  
Share planning documents such as programmes and daily lesson plans.  
Discuss monitoring and assessment strategies and provide examples/samples of student records.  
Observe lessons and provide constructive feedback on the extent to which particular professional teaching competencies have been acquired.  
Explain system, district and school policies and procedures.  
Model particular system, district and/or school procedures.  
**Facilitation**  
Facilitation, or the process of helping things to happen, involves the mentor working with the trainee teacher to assist them to work through a particular learning project or path. As facilitator, the mentor ensures that support and guidance are offered to create favourable conditions for learning.  
The Mentor could, for example:  
Encourage the trainee teacher to assume increasing responsibility for professional learning  
Pose questions to the trainee teacher which stimulate dialogue about teaching and learning theory and practice  
Assist the trainee teacher to determine particular PD needs.  
Assist with prioritising PD needs.  
Help the trainee teacher to access particular resources.  
Prompt the trainee teacher to reflect upon progress in relation to a particular learning project.  
Alert the trainee teacher to potential difficulties that might be encountered in pursuing particular learning projects.  
Encourage the trainee teacher to take ‘calculated risks’ in
conditions for learning to occur | exploring innovative teaching and learning strategies that meet the needs of all students.
---|---
**Counselling**
Counselling is the process of helping the trainee teacher work through professional problems and issues with a view to resolution. As counsellor, the mentor serves as a sounding board when the trainee teacher is faced with an issue or problem. The mentor often assists the trainee teacher to see the issue from different perspectives.

**The Mentor could, for example:**
- Listen to and empathise with the trainee teacher
- Assist the trainee teacher to clarify a particular problem or issue.
- Offer the trainee teacher alternative perspectives on a particular problem or issue.
- Provide the trainee teacher with support and encouragement to make difficult professional decisions.
- Assist the trainee teacher to explore all the options associated with a particular problem or issue.

**Sponsoring**
Sponsoring requires that the mentor act as an appropriate advocate for the trainee teacher. As sponsor the mentor protects supports and promotes the trainee teacher in the workplace.

**The mentor could for example:**
- Protect or shelter the trainee teacher from extremely difficult professional situations.
- Support the trainee teacher with any tasks or assignments given to the trainee teacher (e.g. writing PD applications, conducting parent interviews, writing reports)
- ‘Promote’ the trainee teacher in the school by introducing the training to other teachers and members of the community.

Reference: Martin G, 2000, Mentoring Graduate Teachers Creating Effective Learning Partnerships, Centre For Excellence in Teaching, Perth WA

Adapted by Anne Price 7/03/02
Appendix 5  
Researcher’s Reflective Journal

Term 3, 2001

21-08-01

Accreditation Process

I have just had a meeting with the Program Chair when all this began 2 years ago and we were deciding which units they should apply for RPL for. Since then a structure has been developed which has meant that they have had to write a submission for each unit they are asking for exemption from. This has been an evolving process and we are following the Aboriginal model as recommended by him – Earlier this year he emailed me a copy of some examples. I gave this to P who took this on as her role as their Performance Manager. She had a meeting with them each individually and asked them to bring along a brainstorm of what they had done. She then asked them to come back regularly with drafts. In July she emailed these to T and asked for his comments on the drafts. Just before I planned to come down to Perth I again emailed T to request a meeting with him to see how his feedback was progressing. I met him on Tuesday 21-08-01 at 11am in his office. He printed off a copy of Mei Zhu’s submission for accreditation for three units with his one paragraph comments. He explained what changes needed to be made and that it was essentially good but needed some editing, and extra use of the term ‘teaching’ rather than ‘teacher assistant and more emphasis on her cross curricular experience not just LOTE teaching as she was aiming to be a primary teacher. I noted that this use of the word teacher was difficult for Mei Zhu and Zaiton – both were conscious not to use the term until they were qualified – he also said they should continually emphasise the length of time they had been teaching – 15 to 20 years. In the cover page include their academic record that showed distinctions etc. I then asked about Zaiton and he said oh I haven’t got that – I couldn’t download the attachment. Given how much this means to these women it was a bit sad to see it so easily misplaced – I then rang Z and asked her to resend the documents. T thinks the process should take the rest of this year. So now I have to go back and help them write 1-2 page submissions for each unit. Given my lobbying down here and that the Program chair is behind this it should not be a problem.

30 08 01

Have organised a meeting tomorrow with Z, M and E re: RPL and the LOTE program. P and I will suggest that we mentor one person each with Jen as well. We hope that we can now get them through by 2003. They are going to Broome soon for TA conf and up to One Arm with the DD to meet the Badi community language people. Emma has been off sick a lot and especially this week – two people have been to see P and said they have seen her out at night.

4 11 01

I organised a meeting with P, Z, M and E to provide feedback from my meeting re RPL. At this meeting I outlined the units they had done, needed to ask for RPL, could do at school and then were left to do. We tried to develop a plan for the next few years. We decided to assign a teacher to each EA to help with the RPL applications P would take Zaiton (she is growing increasingly annoyed with Emma for various reasons – especially recently as she has been having days off for sick leave and has been seen out and about at night and was at the refugee rally and P is getting complaints), I will work
with Emma and we have asked Jen to work with Mei Zhu. We have arranged to meet this week to begin the process. P is very much against spoon feeding and insists they must do the work themselves. I am more inclined to help more as this is so important in getting them through and it is another example of a Discourse barrier but I’ll do as P suggests.

13 09 01

It’s been a big month on the island – first the Tamper / Refugee incident which brought hundreds of media and military to the island. Some local residents staged a protest against the closure of the harbour and the detaining of the residents – the Islamic school marched the children to the demo. The refugees were mostly from Afghanistan and were another 400+ after a few earlier boat loads of a couple of hundred – John Howard took a stand and refused them entry – they were sent off to Nauru but then the court found the govt guilty of illegal detaining them – Emma turned up to her meeting today re RPL having done nothing – I gave her my edits and a brainstorm – its up to her – the course is too fast for her – interestingly they are all going on different paths and rates now. I must include info about the use of I and we – at the Yvonne Haig PD Zaiton said in their community they were used to saying ‘WE’ – but for the RPL and to become a teacher they must learn to say I – Kurt Lewin (Field Theory) calls this the difference between democratic and autocratic societies!!!
# List of Abbreviations

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<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
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<tr>
<td>Bachelor of Education</td>
<td>B Ed</td>
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<td>British Phosphate Company</td>
<td>BPC</td>
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<td>Canberra Teaching Service</td>
<td>CTS</td>
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<td>CI</td>
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<tr>
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<td>CIDHS</td>
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<td>CIP Co</td>
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<td>Technical and Further Education</td>
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