



**LUNDS**  
UNIVERSITET

Pedagogiska institutionen  
Box 199, 221 00 Lund

Course: PED 622:5  
Bachelor Thesis  
10 Swedish credits/15 ECTS credits  
41-60 credits  
Date: 2006-10-24

## ‘It’s in our culture...’

- A qualitative case study on Indigenous Australians’ experiences of learning at the organisation QATSIHWEPAC

Jenny Sjöblom & Charlotte Wernesten

Supervisor:  
Maria L Martinsson

## ABSTRACT

Type of work:	Bachelor Thesis
Pages:	62
Title:	'It's in our culture' - A qualitative case study on Indigenous Australians' experiences of learning at the organisation QATSIHWEPAC
Authors:	Jenny Sjöblom & Charlotte Wernesten
Supervisor:	Maria L. Martinsson
Date:	2006-10-24
Summary:	In every population there are groups of minorities. These minority groups are often underrepresented on the labour market. This led us to the question whether or not this underrepresentation is connected to the absence of cultural appropriate pedagogy in the education.

In this study the specific minority group in focus is Indigenous Australians. By looking at educational programs with the aim to educate mature Indigenous Australians in a profession, in order for them to be eligible for the labour market, we aimed to study whether the programs are developed from a cultural perspective and what influences this has on learning. Our purpose was therefore to study a specific educational program aimed at Indigenous Australians with focus on what tools were used and what tools were preferred in a learning situation by this group. We also examined what tools should be used in order to create a successful learning situation for this group and why. Finally, we also analyzed and discussed what the educational program could do further to improve the learning situation for this group.

A qualitative case study was used as the strategy for this study. The data collection was done in Cairns, Australia. Initially interviews were held with several people involved in Indigenous Australian affairs in order to get a broad understanding of the situation. However, the data that our study is mainly based on was collected by interviewing developers, trainers and students at the organisation Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Worker Education Program Aboriginal Corporation (QATSIHWEPAC), which delivered an educational health worker program for Indigenous Australians.

Theorists as well as our results indicate that different backgrounds and cultures lead to different ways of learning. A number of different tools were identified as useful and sometimes even necessary in creating a successful learning situation for Indigenous Australians. These tools were of concrete and abstract character. It was also shown that a teacher who were aware of what tools were preferred by their students and managed to regard and accommodate them created a successful learning situation. However, the teacher also had to be aware of the students' cultural background in order for this successful situation to occur.

Keywords:

Indigenous Australians, Aboriginal, Indigenous Australian development, Indigenous Australian education, Cultural differences in learning

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<i>Foreword</i>	<i>i</i>
<b>1. Introduction</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>1.1 Background</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>1.2 Purpose</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>2. Theoretical framework</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>2.1 Selection methods</b>	<b>2</b>
2.1.1 Selection criteria regarding written sources	3
2.1.2 Critique of the sources	3
<b>2.2 Introduction to the theoretical framework</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>2.3 Culture</b>	<b>4</b>
2.3.1 Definition of culture	4
2.3.2 How the culture shapes the individual through the socialization process	5
2.3.3 Individualistic- versus collectivistic cultures	6
2.3.4 Indigenous Australian and non-Indigenous Australian cultures	8
<b>2.4 Learning</b>	<b>8</b>
2.4.1 Definition of learning	8
2.4.2 Differences in learning styles	9
2.4.3 Indigenous Australians' learning styles	11
2.4.4 Guidelines in the learning environment	13
<b>3. Methodology</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>3.1 Case study</b>	<b>16</b>
3.1.1 Defining the case	17
3.1.2 Strategy	17
3.1.3 Ethical considerations	18
<b>3.2 Procedure</b>	<b>20</b>
3.2.1 Data collection	20
3.2.2 Sampling	22
3.2.3 Coding the data	24
<b>3.3 Quality of the results</b>	<b>25</b>
3.3.1 Validity	25
3.3.2 Reliability	27
<b>4. Results</b>	<b>28</b>
<b>4.1 Background</b>	<b>28</b>
4.1.1 History	29
4.1.2 The Community Development Employment Projects scheme	30
4.1.3 Situation today	30
4.1.4 Hindrances to obtain employment	30

<b>4.2 Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Worker Education Program Aboriginal Corporation</b>	<b>31</b>
4.2.1 The organisation	31
4.2.2 Staff and students	32
4.2.3 The courses	33
<b>4.3 Results and analysis</b>	<b>34</b>
4.3.1 Aim	34
4.3.2 Differences in teaching and learning	36
4.3.3 Tools	37
4.3.4 How QATSIHWEPAC has created a successful learning situation	53
4.3.5 How could QATSIHWEPAC further improve the learning situation?	55
<b>4.4 Discussion</b>	<b>56</b>
<i>References</i>	<b>59</b>
<i>Appendix</i>	<b>a</b>

# Foreword

We would like to thank everyone who has helped us making this study possible. Especially we want to thank QATSIHWEPAC with all their staff, trainers and students for participating in this project. You were all fantastic, we were so inspired by your organisation!

We would also like to thank Rowena for taking time driving us around to different organisations. Without your help we would never have got in touch with QATSIHWEPAC.

Frankie, thank you so much for sharing your knowledge about Indigenous Australians with us and bringing us with you to your community. Through you we got a deeper understanding of the situation and the problems faced by Indigenous Australians.

Jim, Kevin, Nadine and John thank you for taking time telling us about your work. It was very helpful. You helped us understand the history and the situation of Indigenous Australians.

Linda and David, thank you for letting us stay with you for our whole visit and thank you for mediating contacts to us that helped us in our project.

Brian, thank you for taking interest in our project and also letting us speak at the Rotary meeting. It was very helpful for us to understand that this situation has to be looked upon from many different perspectives.

We would also like to thank our supervisor, Maria, for being so supportive from step one. You were willing to supervise us by e-mail which was not an easy task and your advices have been very challenging and constructive. Thank you also for inspiring us to continue with this project on a new level in further studies.

Thank you, Institution of Education, Lund University, for sponsoring us. This economical support was highly appreciated and helped us in our project to a great extent.

Finally, we would like to thank our boyfriends for sticking up with us all the time. Even though we have basically not talked about anything but our project since we started working on it, you have been very supportive.

# 1. Introduction

## 1.1 Background

In every population there are groups of minorities. These groups are often characterized by their different ways of perceiving the society due to their different cultures and backgrounds. In our opinion this is an interesting aspect of the reality we live in and something we need to be aware of. The fact that minorities are underrepresented in the labour market all over the world has contributed to a strong interest on our part concerning these groups.

The specific minority group that will be in focus in this study is Indigenous Australians. Indigenous Australians include Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders<sup>1</sup>. The reason why we chose this group is because of an interest that arose during previous visits to the country. It became evident that the Australian society is marked by segregation between Indigenous Australians and non-Indigenous Australians. After reading information from several websites provided by the Australian Government this understanding has been reinforced. The Australian Bureau of Statistics states that the Indigenous unemployment has always been proportionately higher than non-Indigenous unemployment. This minority group is the native population, however the ones who dominate the society are the non-Indigenous Australians. Does this clash of cultures bring an extra dimension to the problematic situation?

We believe that since educational programs directed at Indigenous Australians most often have been developed by non-Indigenous Australians, and therefore from a westernized perspective, might effect how the educational programs are received by Indigenous Australians.

By looking at educational programs with the aim to educate mature Indigenous Australians in a profession, in order for them to be eligible for the labour market, we aim to study whether the programs are developed from a cultural perspective and what influences this has on learning. We believe that different backgrounds and cultures might lead to different ways of learning and should therefore have an impact on the way of teaching. Have these different ways of learning been regarded by the teachers in the educational programs directed towards Indigenous Australians?

---

<sup>1</sup> The term Indigenous Australians will be used in this essay. However, some theorists use only the term Aboriginals and therefore in some of our quotes the term Aboriginals is used.

We are interested in what if any part different values and perspectives of the developer and teachers of these educational programs plays if the receiver does not share their values and perspectives. Will this difference in ideas have an impact on the learning process?

## 1.2 Purpose

Our purpose is:

- 1.) To study a specific educational program aimed at Indigenous Australians. The focus will on one hand be on what tools are used by the group in the educational program and on the other hand on what tools are preferred in a learning situation by this group.
- 2.) With a standing point in the results of what tools were used and preferred, analyze and discuss what tools would be used to create a successful learning situation for this group and why.
- 3.) To analyze and discuss what the educational program could do further to improve the learning situation for this group.

Tools will be referred to as a wide concept, including, settings, considerations, behaviours, and specific components such as for example teaching aids.

## 2. Theoretical framework

### 2.1 Selection methods

The documents used consist of statistics provided by Australian Bureau of Statistics, employment strategies, educational programs and background information about the situation for Indigenous Australians. The documents have been obtained through the Australian government website, and through databases such as Emerald, Elin and Xerxes. Key words that have been used are Aboriginal\*, Labour market, Development, Education, Indigenous Australians and Employment. The search engine Google has also been used and the keywords to find information were 'Australian Aboriginal employment'. We also collected material from both Swedish libraries as well as Australian ones to broaden our data collection.



### 2.1.1 Selection criteria regarding written sources

When selecting literature we established a few criteria to increase the liability and quality of our theoretical framework. In our search for literature we aimed to apply Merriam's following criteria:

- Topicality
- Relevance
- Quality of the source
- Authority on the topic (Merriam, 1998).
- Scientific source

The *topicality*, i.e. the most recent work was searched for in order to present the most current research in the field. The sources needed to provide information *relevant* to our study. Therefore the previous criteria might sometimes have been disregarded if information that was relevant but not topical was found. 'If a particular resource of research study is highly relevant to your present research interest, it should be included even if the 'who' and 'when' criteria are not met.' (Merriam, 1998:54). To enhance the *quality of the sources* we aimed to use mainly primary sources, in order to increase the quality of our study. If a text has been rendered the original message may have been reduced or changed and important aspects may have been lost. The usage of secondary sources could therefore provide distorted information. We aimed to look for sources that were written by authors that are *authorities on the topic*. If the author has been recognized by others in his/her field this increases the source's reliability. The sources needed to be *scientific* in order for us to be able to create credibility in our conclusions.

### 2.1.2 Critique of the sources

In our study we have tried to look for the most recent sources in order to follow our criteria of topicality. However, we have used some old theoretics because of their authority on the topic. Some of these older theoretics and sources have also been used due to the fact that they are still authorities on the topic and relevant for our study. The relevance of the used sources was a criteria applied overridingly for all of our sources.

Our aim has been to use mainly primary sources. However, this has only been possible to some extent. This due to the fact that many of the authors of our primary sources refer to Australian theoretics that cannot be found in Sweden. These secondary sources have been of great importance and relevance for our study and this is the reason why they have been used. In order to enhance the quality of our sources we constantly looked for authorities on the topic by searching for authors that had been recognized by others in their field in quotes, references etcetera.

Most of our sources we would classify as scientific due to them being based on research. However, we are aware of the fact that some reports, collected in Australia,

might be biased due to the authors' involvement in the situation. There might also be a risk that the report has been influenced by who has commissioned it which could have led to biased results. We have kept this in mind while reading and using these reports.

## 2.2 Introduction to the theoretical framework

In our theoretical framework culture and learning and the ways they interact will be brought up. Our starting point will be in culture and the way it shapes the individual's behaviour and ways of thinking. We will then move on to describing what characterizes an individual culture as well as a collectivistic culture. These different types of cultures will be put in relation to Indigenous and non-Indigenous cultures. This in order to understand the importance these different cultures play in our study.

Our next section deals with learning and focuses on what learning means as well as what differences in learning styles exist between individuals as well as cultures. Indigenous Australians' learning styles is looked upon in order to understand what learning styles are preferred by this group and why these are preferred. The final part of the learning section focuses on guidelines that teachers/ trainers who teach Indigenous Australians can apply. These guidelines are important factors in any educational program aimed at Indigenous Australians; the program in our study is therefore no exception.

## 2.3 Culture

### 2.3.1 Definition of culture

Since the concept of culture will be used throughout this whole presentation we will initially define this concept. "Culture means the beliefs, patterns of behavior, and physical objects shared in common by members of a group and passed from one generation to the next through education and daily experience" (International Encyclopedia of the Social & Behavioral Sciences, 2001:4197). The concept has also been defined as: "...the collective programming of the mind that distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from others" (Hofstede & Hofstede, 2005:4).

By this we can see that culture is something which distinguishes individuals and groups from each other, but it also brings them together. It brings them together through time and place (Triandis, 2001) but also through shared cognitive and behavioural patterns. These are also the components that distinguish cultures from each other. In order to understand why individuals within a culture are deeply affected by it, the socialization process needs to be understood.

### 2.3.2 How the culture shapes the individual through the socialization process

In the socialization process people learn to adopt the behaviour patterns, norms, rules, values and customs of their group and society (Nationalencyklopedin, 2006). Vygotsky and his student Luria implied that human psychology is the product of social and economic forces rather than predetermined by biological factors (Vygotsky, 1978). According to Hofstede & Hofstede (2005), the sources of an individual's mental programs, i.e. patterns of thinking, feeling, and potential acting, lies within the social environments in which he/she grew up and collected his/her life experiences. This development process starts in the family and continues in the neighbourhood, school, youth groups, workplace, and community.

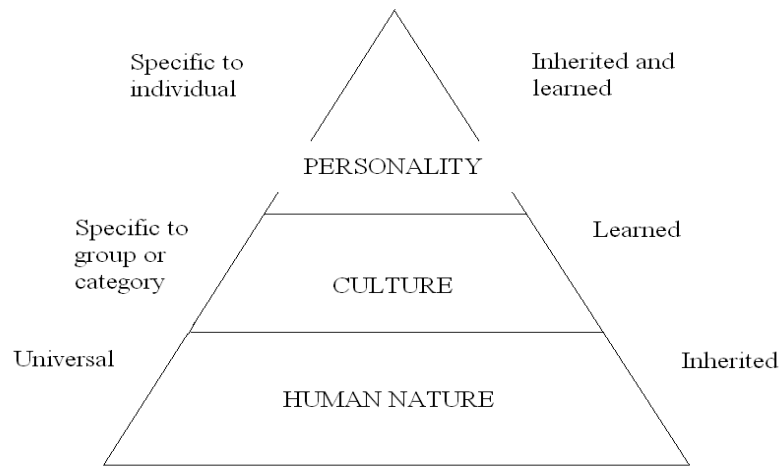
Therefore, as seen above, the culture socializes people to behave, think and feel in certain ways. This means that the social and physical situations and environments people are situated in affects their behaviour, thoughts and feelings.

From the very first contact with the surrounding world we are marked by the culture around us (Herlitz, 1989:15, authors' interpretation).

Hofstede & Hofstede (2005), in alignment with Vygotsky (1978), emphasises that culture is learned, not inherited. Something also supported by Säljö (2000).

Our ways of behaving, thinking, communicating and perceiving reality, are shaped by social and cultural experiences. These ways of behaving and interacting cannot to a great extent be linked to instincts or an individual's genetic makeup of reflexes and behaviours (Säljö, 2000:35, authors' interpretation).

Hofstede & Hofstede's (2005) model of how the individual is shaped by different factors will illustrate this statement closer.



(Hofstede & Hofstede, 2005:4).

As pointed out above the culture an individual is part of influences his/her way of thinking and cognitive patterns. This perspective, that there is a relationship between cognitive styles and culture is not new. In the 1930s the idea that each culture engenders its own cognitive development and particular style of thought based on cultural differences was rising. In research done by John Berry (1966) eighteen different cultural groups were studied. The conclusion of the research was that different cultural groups clearly differ in cognitive style i.e. ways of perceiving and processing information (Cole, 1996).

According to Hofstede & Hofstede (2005) there are several different dimensions of cultures. However, only two of these, the individualistic and collectivistic cultures, are of relevance to our study. These will be discussed below.

### 2.3.3 Individualistic- versus collectivistic cultures

Hofstede & Hofstede (2005) differ between individualistic and collectivistic cultures and points out what characterize each of them. The reason why this needs to be taken into account when examining a particular culture is because:

...self-orientation versus collective orientation is one of the basic pattern variables that determine human action (Samovar & Porter, 2004:59).

## **Individualism**

In an individualistic culture:

1. The individual is the single most important unit in any social setting.
2. Independence rather than dependence is stressed.
3. Individual achievement is rewarded
4. The uniqueness of each individual is of paramount value (Samovar & Porter, 2004:59).

People in an individualistic culture value personal goals more than group goals. The loyalty to a given group is very weak and instead they feel that they belong to many different groups. Competition rather than cooperation is encouraged and individual initiative and achievement as well as individual decision-making is stressed. When working in small groups it is encouraged to work alone. In a classroom setting Hofstede (2001) means that when teachers deal with individual students they encourage student initiative (Samovar & Porter, 2004).

## **Collectivism**

The prototypical collectivistic social relationship is the family, where people have strong emotional ties and feel that they “obviously belong together”, the link is long term (often for life) and there are many common goals. Cooperation is natural and status is determined by position within the group (Samovar & Porter, 2004:61).

Characteristic for a collectivistic culture is that a ‘we’ orientation instead of an ‘I’ orientation is emphasised (Hofstede, 2001). In a collectivistic culture a social framework distinguishes between in-groups and out-groups. Emphasis is on:

1. The views, needs, and goals of the in-group rather than oneself.
2. Social norms and duty defined by the in-group rather than behaviour to get pleasure.
3. Beliefs shared with the in-group rather than beliefs that distinguish self from in-group.
4. Great readiness to cooperate with in-group members (Samovar & Porter, 2004:61).

Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck (1960) have a similar approach as Hofstede (2001) concerning collectivism. They emphasise that group goals take precedence over individual goals and that the group is the most important of all social entities. In a classroom setting harmony and cooperation are stressed instead of competition (Samovar & Porter, 2004).

## 2.3.4 Indigenous Australian and non-Indigenous Australian cultures

In an Indigenous Australian society cooperation rather than competition is valued and the individual desire to fit in and find his/her place in the group and community (Hughes & More, 1997). The ties between individuals in the Indigenous Australian group are often strong and a group attitude exists (Hughes, 1987). These elements in the Indigenous Australian society imply it to be a collectivistic culture. It is important to note that since there is not just one group of Indigenous people in Australia, neither is there one Indigenous culture (Mellor & Corrigan, 2004).

The non-Indigenous Australian culture is according to Hofstede & Hofstede (2005) classified as an individualistic culture. Therefore in the non-Indigenous Australian culture competition rather than cooperation is encouraged and the loyalty to a given group is very weak. The individual strives to belong to many different groups rather than only one.

These differences between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australian cultures might explain why many Indigenous Australians are facing a clash of culture when exposed to the non-Indigenous Australian culture and the other way around.

## 2.4 Learning

### 2.4.1 Definition of learning

The concept of learning has been defined in many different ways, though many of the definitions are very similar and include the same components. We wanted to define the concept in order for the reader to understand what the concept of learning means in relation to this study.

Individual learning refers to when the individual in interaction with his/her surroundings changes his/her behaviour and way of thinking (Ellström, 1992). Jarvis states that:

Learning is about becoming a person in society, about transforming the experiences of living into knowledge, skills, and attitudes so that human individuality might develop... (Jarvis, 1992:237).

For this change and development of knowledge to occur the individual has to reflect over and understand the concept of interest (Jacobsen & Thorsvik, 2002). However, a prerequisite for true learning to occur these changes have to be relatively permanent (Ellström, 1992). This means that learning includes several different components, such

as reflecting and understanding experiences that leads to a relatively permanent change within the individual.

It is important to note that since culture has such a strong impact on the individual's cognitive patterns this will lead to differences in learning styles between cultures as well as individuals. This will be looked into below.

## 2.4.2 Differences in learning styles

All people do not learn in the same way. People learn and process information differently which results in diverse styles of learning. Individuals have different learning styles but learning styles can also differ from culture to culture (Samovar & Porter, 2004). The differences in learning styles between cultures is highly relevant in our study since it has been pointed out that Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians have different cultures and should according to the theory therefore have different learning styles. Calloway-Thomas, Cooper, and Blake imply that:

The way students in one culture learn may not be the way students of a different culture learn (Samovar & Porter, 2004:242).

According to Hayes & Allinson (1998) the socialization has a great impact on an individual's development of learning styles (Yamazaki, Y, 2005). Hofstede (1997) means that the culture people are surrounded by and a part of, shapes the preferred modes of learning for this people through their socialization experiences (Yamazaki, Y, 2005). More recently, it was also suggested by Da Vita (2001) that there is not much room for doubting the cultural effects on the development of learning styles. This statement is supported by analyses of results from the past comparative learning style studies across cultures. These analyses provide insights about certain learning styles tending to be developed in learning environments influenced by a country's or a group's particular culture (Yamazaki, Y, 2005). Hughes & More (1997) has also supported that there are a number of cultural differences that may be related to learning styles. This implies that it is necessary to consider the culture as a crucial factor in trying to understand individual learning styles (Yamazaki, Y, 2005). As stated by Samovar & Porter "...it should be clear that culture dramatically affects the learning process" (Samovar & Porter, 2004:239).

According to Samovar & Porter (2004) there are four dimensions of learning styles subjected to cultural variations; cognitive styles, communication styles, relational styles and motivational styles. Within each dimension there are different styles. However, we have chosen to bring up only those styles which are relevant in relation to our study.

## **Cognitive styles**

*Field independence versus field sensitivity.* Students that are field-independent prefer to work independently, are task oriented, and prefer rewards based on individual competition. Field sensitive students on the other hand prefer to work with others, seek guidance from the teacher, and receive rewards based on group relations. Most individualistic societies are field independent whereas most collectivistic cultures are field sensitive.

*Cooperation versus competition.* The difference between these two cognitive styles refers to whether the student prefers to work together in a cooperative environment or alone in a competitive environment. In a collectivistic culture students tend to favour group work and often work harder in a group than they do alone. This might be because the group is more important than the individual in a collectivistic culture (Samovar & Porter, 2004). According to Hughes & More (1997) the level of importance of the group in a culture can be related to the learning styles in that culture. Whether or not a student prefers to work alone or in a group is therefore related to his/her culture, as seen above.

## **Communication styles**

*Formal versus informal communication.* Refers to the degree of formality the students use when addressing their teachers (Samovar & Porter, 2004).

*Nonverbal communication.* Refers to the communication style where no words are being used. This is often expressed in body language and as a supplement to verbal communication, although it is often used unconsciously. Nonverbal communication is strongly influenced by culture (Samovar & Porter, 2004).

## **Relational styles**

*Relational versus independent learning.* This learning style refers to the degree students rely on support, help, and opinions of their teachers.

*Participatory versus passive learning.* This learning style refers to the degree students want, or are used to, participate in class. Some cultures value participation with active students and focus on discussions and questions, whilst in other cultures the students are supposed to quietly watch, listen and imitate.

*Aural, visual and verbal learning.* These learning styles deal with whether the students prefer aural, visual or verbal ways of learning. Students who are visual learn better through observation and images, verbal learners through listening to others and aural through talking themselves (Samovar & Porter, 2004). If a student prefers learning through observation and imitation rather than verbal instruction or vice versa can according to Hughes & More (1997) be related to culture.



## **Motivational styles**

*Intrinsic versus extrinsic motivation.* This motivational style deals with where the motivation has its source. Intrinsic motivation is motivation found within the person where extrinsic motivation is motivation from the person's surroundings.

*Learning on demand versus learning what is relevant or interesting.* Refers to whether the student is learning what is demanded and in alliance with a set curriculum or learning what is personally relevant and interesting.

According to research students who are permitted to learn through their identified preferred learning style statistically tend to achieve higher scores on tests than when the teaching method does not harmonize with their preferences (Samovar & Porter, 2004).

As mentioned above the differences between Indigenous and non-Indigenous cultures should lead to differing learning styles between the two cultures. What are these differences? Due to the focus in our study on Indigenous Australians their learning styles will also be in focus in this presentation.

### **2.4.3 Indigenous Australians' learning styles**

According to Greenwood and Cresswell (in press 2004<sup>2</sup>) Indigenous Australian students and non-Indigenous Australian students differ in their learning styles (Mellor & Corrigan, 2004). For example they mean that Indigenous students are more likely to be cooperative learners, while non-Indigenous students are more likely to be competitive learners.

More (1990) brings up four dimensions that are related to cultural differences in learning styles; global (holistic)-analytic, verbal-imaginal, concrete-abstract and trial & feedback-reflective. According to Hughes & More (1997) it cannot be proved that there is a single Indigenous Australian learning style. However, a number of learning styles are expected to be more recurrent among Indigenous Australians. These will be mentioned below.

#### **Global (holistic) – Analytic**

The global learning implies a holistic approach with the overall concept and a meaningful context presented first. In contrary, the analytic learning is when the information is presented in small parts that successively add up to the whole picture. According to

---

<sup>2</sup> In *Australian Education Review - The Case for Change - A review of contemporary research on indigenous education outcomes* by Mellor & Corrigan, 2004, Greenwood and Cresswell are cited. However their report was in print at that time and we have not been able to find it, hence the unusual reference.

Hughes & More (1997) the global (holistic) learning style is more recurrent among Indigenous Australians. The reason for this preference is because of the Indigenous Australian's tendency to think in a holistic way (Hughes, 1987; Hewitt, 2000).

### **Verbal – Imaginal**

Verbal learning is based on explanations by words in any form whereas imaginal learning relies on images, symbols and diagrams. However, imagery is not only visual learning, it can be sound images or any other images that are related to our senses. The imaginal learning style is more recurrent among Indigenous Australians (Hughes & More, 1997). Harris (1984) supports this by pointing out that Indigenous Australian children learn more through observation and imitation than through verbal instruction. This might be because traditionally no written language existed within the Indigenous Australian society.

If an Aboriginal child comes from a background in which learning is usually demonstrated, or in which images are used regularly /---/ then the child is more likely to develop a more imaginal learning style (Hughes & More, 1997:9).

### **Concrete – Abstract**

Concrete learning emphasises concrete examples followed by more abstract rules or principles. By the learner at the other end of this continuum the opposite is preferred; the abstract rule is presented first followed by concrete examples (Hughes & More, 1997). According to Hughes & More (1997) the concrete learning style is more recurrent among Indigenous Australians. This can be explained by looking at a traditional Indigenous Australian community where knowledge was transferred by observation and imitations of the behaviours of older people. The education took its base in the informal learning approach (Hughes & More, 1997). An informal approach means learning by observation and by doing and situation-specific learning, i.e. learning is related to immediate everyday experience (Harris, 1984). By relating to everyday experiences the learning situation becomes very concrete.

### **Trial & Feedback – Reflective**

In the trial and feedback process, the learner responds quickly and is dependent on external feedback to improve the learning. The reflective learner reflects upon the new knowledge before using the new knowledge (Hughes & More, 1997). According to Hughes & More (1997) Indigenous Australians uses a combination of these two but tend toward the reflective side through their observation and imitation behaviour.

Finally, it is important to be aware of the fact that individuals within the same cultural group might greatly differ in learning styles and that the individual learning styles must take precedence (Hughes & More, 1997).

Being aware of the Indigenous Australian students' culture and different learning styles should help the organisation with its teachers/trainers to create a successful learning

situation. However, this awareness might not be enough. Therefore we have chosen to bring up guidelines that can be used to help create a successful learning situation.

#### 2.4.4 Guidelines in the learning environment

Reforms aimed at solving the problems in Indigenous Australian education have many times neglected to pay attention to root causes of the failure, such as political and social issues (Folds, 1987).

...there is an attitude among some educators and community leaders that little progress will be made until solutions are found to wider community problems that affect education (Report by Commonwealth of Australia, 2000:44<sup>3</sup>).

Though, there are factors in the learning situation that may increase the chances of creating a successful learning situation for Indigenous Australian students. Firstly, consideration needs to be taken to the fact that Indigenous Australians have different learning styles than non-Indigenous Australians. Secondly, the education needs to be built on appropriate and effective pedagogical assessment practices for Indigenous students as well as integrating the Indigenous student's learning styles (Mellor & Corrigan, 2004).

The most preferable approach for minority students, including Indigenous Australian students, is according to Osborne (1996) to take a holistic rather than a reductionist approach to culturally relevant pedagogy. Culturally relevant pedagogy is based on the following fundamental understandings:

- Social, historical and political circumstances outside the school constrain relationships within the classroom and must be understood by the teacher.
- It is desirable to teach content that is culturally relevant to student's previous experiences. This fosters their cultural identity and empowers them with knowledge and practices to operate successfully in mainstream society.
- Culturally relevant teachers are personally warm towards and respectful of students. Importantly, they must be academically demanding of all students.
- Teachers need to spell out the cultural assumptions on which the classroom (and schooling) operates. (Mellor & Corrigan, 2004:35).

To reach academic success culturally relevant teaching can be seen as a promising aspect of the education. This due to the possibilities for the education to be centred in the students' cultural and community identities (Matthews, 2003). As Hooks points out:

---

<sup>3</sup> The report "Katu Kalpa" was prepared by the Secretariat of the Senate Employment, Workplace Relations, Small Business and Education References Committee. (2000). This report will further on in this paper be referred to as 'Report by Commonwealth of Australia, 2000'.

To teach in a manner that respects and cares for the souls of our students is essential if we are to provide the necessary conditions where learning can most deeply and intimately begin (Samovar & Porter, 2004:232).

Research in this area has shown that for teachers to be able to be culturally appropriate, they need to have the ability to reflect over their cultural influences and cultural understandings before they can understand the culturally influenced behaviours of their students (Mellor & Corrigan, 2004).

McRae et al. (2000) have in their report 'Education and training for Indigenous students: What has worked (and will again)' recognized components and factors in education for Indigenous Australians that increase the chances for a successful learning situation with a successful outcome. The report mentions three factors that are necessary for an education aimed at Indigenous Australians to be successful: 1.) Cultural recognition, acknowledgement and support, 2.) The development of requisite skills, 3.) Adequate levels of participation.

Also pointed out as important components to take into consideration are, according to the report:

- curriculum starting from what the student bring to class
- specific specialized assistance
- cultural support
- personal support
- peer support network
- involvement by Indigenous people
- presence of Indigenous staff
- flexibility
- participation
- engagement
- workshop
- small class size
- role models
- inclusion of Indigenous culture
- cultural awareness
- holistic approach (McRae et al., 2000).

These components in an education for Indigenous Australians leads to a successful learning situation according to the report mentioned above. Many of these components are also mentioned by other researchers regarding successful situations for Indigenous Australian students (Mellor & Corrigan, 2004; Folds, 1987).

Returning to education can for many Indigenous Australians be difficult due to prior negative experiences of schooling and feelings of inferiority in the class situation stemming from unfinished schooling (Report by Commonwealth of Australia, 2000). To

avoid this, a course needs to be flexible and offer different ways of learning, goals, assignments and forms of assessments to be successful (Samovar & Porter, 2004).

The presence of Indigenous teachers and other Indigenous staff is pointed out as an important factor due to the possibility for them to act as role models for the students as well as being someone the students can identify with. These role models may help the students to see what possibilities their people and they, themselves, have academically and personally (Mellor & Corrigan, 2004). As pointed out by Foley & Flowers it is "... recognized that Aboriginal people are the best people to plan and deliver education to their own people" (Foley & Flowers 1992:1). Though this statement is not based on research evidence and should therefore not be regarded as such (Mellor & Corrigan, 2004). However, there is evidence that suggests that a teacher's teaching style is based on the learning style that he/she prefers (Hughes & More, 1997). This might lead to that Indigenous teachers are able to teach in a way that suits the Indigenous students' learning styles.

Indigenous Australians acting as role models is connected to the importance of cultural support. Cultural support includes recognizing the Indigenous Australian history, worldviews, religious ideas but also things as simple as ensuring that visual displays include Indigenous Australian items and people. Support on different levels, personal and cultural, is highly important when setting up an education for Indigenous Australians. It has, in many different projects, become evident that culturally appropriate support was crucial and that curriculum was less of an issue. Also personal support from peers and family is very important as well as economic support from the government (Report by Commonwealth of Australia, 2000). The need for Indigenous Australian involvement at all levels as well as community-controlled programs would according to the Commonwealth government agencies be the most effective way to improve the quality of provision of education (Foley & Flowers, 1992).

A factor often stressed, as mentioned above, is the importance of being aware about the possibility of social problems, extended family responsibilities as well as family problems in the individual's life. Also low socio-economic circumstances are something that needs to be considered (McRae et al., 2000; Report by Commonwealth of Australia, 2000).

Finally, the need for a holistic approach both in and outside education is crucial. As stated in Report by Commonwealth of Australia (2000):

Educational improvements on their own have little chance of success without improvements in health care, social and community well-being, and general living conditions" (Report by Commonwealth of Australia, 2000:189)

## 3. Methodology

### 3.1 Case study

As the design for our study we chose a qualitative case study.

“A qualitative case study is an intensive, holistic description and analysis of a bounded phenomenon such as a program, an institution, a person, a process, or a social unit” (Merriam, p. xiii, 1998)

Since the purpose of our study was to closely and thoroughly study a specific educational program we believed that a qualitative case study was the most appropriate way to obtain the extensive information we sought (Bryman, 2001). This strategy gave us the opportunity to look at all the different aspects of the educational program and its context. This in order to understand what tools were used by the people in the educational program and what tools were preferred in a learning situation.

A qualitative case study can, according to Merriam (1998) be characterized by three features. She describes the case study to be:

- Particularistic - the focus is on a specific situation, event, phenomenon or individual.
- Descriptive - the case study, in its report, provides a thick description of the studied phenomenon with as many variables as possible and describes their interaction substantially.
- Heuristic - the study contributes to the readers understanding concerning the studied phenomenon and also broadens his/her mind and perspective.

In our case study we focused on a specific situation and were therefore particularistic. We provided a thick description of our studied phenomenon, which made our case study descriptive in its character. Hopefully we also contributed to the reader's understanding concerning our studied phenomenon and made the study heuristic.

The focus in a qualitative case study is on “...process rather than outcomes, in context rather than a specific variable, in discovery rather than confirmation” (Merriam, 1998:19). This contributes to the interpretative aim in case studies, (Merriam, 1998) the aim that we also shared.

According to Yin (1994), the case study is particularly advantageous to shed light on questions concerning *how* and *why* (Merriam 1998). The why-questions played an especially prominent role for us since to detect the underlying causes of learning were of great interest in our study. To be able to discover these causes we first needed to answer

a range of how-questions to clarify the different variables in, and background of, the situation.

Our lack of control over different variables in the situation we wanted to study also contributed to the choice of a qualitative case study. This approach allowed us to see the phenomenon as it presented itself, since the purpose in a qualitative case study is not to alter specific variables and measure effects. Instead, the purpose is to study a phenomenon as it is created by the individuals involved in it (Merriam, 1998).

Merriam (1998) points out that the disadvantage with doing a case study is that the report often tends to be too lengthy and detailed. We are aware that this also happened in our case study. Though, to not leave any important components out of the presentation we found the lengthy presentation necessary.

### 3.1.1 Defining the case

Miles & Huberman (1994) points out the importance of defining one's case, the unit of analysis. This to be able to determine what is to be studied, the focus, but also what is not to be studied, the boundaries. Inside of the boundaries is the context, which is not in focus, but nevertheless included in the case. A case can consist of one or several different phenomenon: an individual, a role, a small group, an organisation, a community or a nation.

The focus in our case was on a program, its trainers and its participants. The context was the surrounding organisation as well as the social context, in which the individuals and the organisation were situated.

### 3.1.2 Strategy

We chose a qualitative strategy as the method for our study. This due to our approach and desire to study individuals' experiences, thoughts and feelings in and considering a specific situation. Sherman and Webb (1988) argue that:

Qualitative research implies direct concern with experiences as it is 'lived' or 'felt' or 'undergone' (Merriam 1998:6).

The qualitative strategy aims to capture the subjective meaning of social actions and to do so the researcher needs to take an interpretative approach to the data (Bryman, 2001). Based on this we believed that a qualitative strategy was the most appropriate one for our study.

We took an inductive approach in our work process. A researcher with an inductive approach strives to find a theory that can explain the collected material (Merriam 1998). In our study this means that we took our starting point in the accumulated empirical material and through this tried to understand and interpret the meaning people had constructed. After the analyzing of the data we tried to find theories that would support the results we found in our material.

In contrary, a researcher who is deductive in his/her work process aims to find information that is unanimous with an existing theory (Merriam, 1998). If we had taken a deductive approach we believe this would have limited us and we would not have been able to provide the holistic picture that was our purpose.

We realized that we were not able to fully disregard the fact that we started this process with pre-existing knowledge. Though, by keeping this in mind, we believe that we were able to keep an open mind to new influences and angles that presented themselves in our accumulated material. If we had not continually considered this aspect of our subjectivity as a variable that might have impact on the interpretation, and in continuation the result, interesting aspects of the material might have been lost in the process.

### 3.1.3 Ethical considerations

The ethical aspect in our research process was of great importance and something we constantly had to consider. The people in focus, Indigenous Australians, have been exposed to extensive research conducted in recent years. We have understood that the results of this research have rarely been used for the benefit of Indigenous Australians. A fact that has contributed to researchers being viewed negatively in the Indigenous communities.

In qualitative studies the emergence of ethical dilemmas are likely to occur during two phases, the collection and dissemination of data. Walker (1980) points out five specific problems that the researcher must consider during the work process.

- The fact that the researcher becomes too involved in his/her research questions or in the situation which is being studied.
- Confidentiality
- Anonymity
- The fact that different groups of interest wants to get hold and control of the results from the research.
- The reader's inability to differ between the information and the researcher's interpretation of it (Merriam, 1994:189-190, authors' interpretation).



To deal with these problems the researcher needs to consider possible consequences of the research before initiating it, presenting results in a correct and in distorted way and taking special care in disseminating the results (Merriam, 1998).

Bryman (2001) emphasizes that it is only if the researcher is aware of the ethical aspects in a research process that he/she can make ethically motivated decisions about what would be the correct thing to do in a study. This was an important aspect for us to carry with us through the whole process. We increased our awareness and understanding that it is always the researcher's responsibility to ensure that the final product and the process leading up to it are ethically defensible. There are no rules how to do this, however Mertens points out three ethical principles that the researcher should be aware of:

1. Beneficence: Maximizing good outcomes for science, humanity, and the individual research participants and minimizing or avoiding unnecessary risk, harm, or wrong
2. Respect: Treating people with respect and courtesy /---/
3. Justice: Ensuring that those who bear the risk in the research are the ones who benefit from it; ensuring that the procedures are reasonable, non exploitative, carefully considered, and fairly administered (Mertens, 1998:24).

These are guidelines and should be a goal for every researcher to attain, however Merriam (1998) emphasizes that: "...the best a researcher can do is to be conscious of the ethical issues that pervade the research process..." (Merriam, 1998:219).

During our work process we came in contact with some of the ethical problems pointed out by Walker (1980), which were mentioned above. The fact that the researcher becomes too involved in the situation being studied was a problem that became very real to us. Especially during the first weeks of the project when we started to do background research. It was very hard not to become personally involved and attached to the harsh reality that faced us. However, it became easier when we received more and more information from different perspective and also when we had a case to focus on. We have tried not to let our own personal thoughts and feelings in the situation become too evident in the meetings and interviews or in our presentation of the results.

Questions about confidentiality and anonymity were regarded in each interview. Prior to each interview we asked if we were allowed to record the interview. We also mentioned that we would be the only ones who would listen to the recording and that we would stop the recording any time during the interview if they wished to. Concerning the usage of the organisation's name (Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Worker Education Program Aboriginal Corporation) as well as their abbreviation (QATSIHWEPAC) in the report, we got the permission to do so from the CEO.

The problem that the researcher puts his/her own interpretations of the data in the text without differing these interpretations clearly from the data in itself is something we

have thought about. We chose to integrate our presentation of the results with our analysis of them to avoid repeating ourselves. Though, we have tried to be as clear as possible concerning what are the results from the data and what is our analysis.

We have also tried to meet all our interviewees and other people we have met with respect and courtesy. An example of this was when we divided the students in groups of two instead of interviewing them individually.

To ensure that those who bear the risk in the research are the ones who benefit from it we have offered all of our interviewees and other people who have helped us during the project to send them the final product.

## 3.2 Procedure

### 3.2.1 Data collection

#### **Initial idea**

Our process started with an interest in questions concerning different minority groups and different cultures. We discussed possible groups for us to examine and look further into. Characteristics we looked for in the group were them being a minority in their environment with difficulties to compete on the labour market. To be able to gather information from this group we needed to be able to talk to them, which meant that they had to speak either English or Swedish, preferably quite well. This to be able to acquire as accurate and adequate information as possible without facing major language barriers. After further discussion we decided to focus on Indigenous Australians, i.e. Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islander People. A group of people we had both come in contact with during longer visits in Australia.

Initially we wanted to create an understanding of the situation of the Indigenous Australians by looking into;

- The unemployment rate among Indigenous Australians.
- What is being done and what has been done to improve their position on the labour market in the form of development and educational programs.
- Why is the situation like this?

We developed these questions from our preconceived notions that the Indigenous Australians is an underprivileged and underrepresented group on the Australian labour market. As well as there being a need to develop programs to change this situation.

We decided to collect data through semi structured interviews and documents. Our aim was to contact people who had been working with Indigenous Australians, developers of educational programs as well as trainers and participants of them. We wanted to receive a holistic picture of the situation by accumulating accurate and relevant information from different perspectives in order to be able to study the area in depth.

### **Initial contact**

Initially we searched on the Internet for interesting development projects, mainly at the Australian Government's homepage. On this homepage we found information concerning the current situation and links to the Australian bureau of statistics' homepage, where we found a lot of illustrating figures concerning the situation for the Indigenous people in Australia. These figures reinforced our preconceived notions that the situation for the Indigenous Australians is not equal to the situation for non-Indigenous Australians. On the Australian Government's homepage we also found the 'Cape York Indigenous Employment Strategy'. This was a report recently produced by two consultant firms situated in Cairns, Queensland. The report was commissioned by the Queensland Government. We contacted both of these firms by e-mail. One of these agreed to meet with us to discuss the 'Cape York Indigenous Employment Strategy' as well as the situation for Indigenous Australians in general.

To be able to develop a broader understanding and knowledge of the situation we also contacted a few personal contacts, people we had come in contact with during previous visits to the country. We did this with the hope that they could refer us to other people and organisations working in areas concerning these questions and possible programs running or being developed. This proved to be successful and one of our contacts, an employee at the Cairns City Council, referred us to a woman who later on forwarded our project plan to the Council's Indigenous Liaison Officer.

### **Background interviews**

Our first interview in Cairns, Australia was with the consultant that had developed the 'Cape York Indigenous Employment Strategy'. We got a lot of background information; however we did not find a specific project that we could examine.

Our next interview was with the Cairns City Council's Indigenous Liaison Officer. We received further background information during that interview. She also put us in contact with two other organisations that were working with projects concerning Indigenous Australians. One of these organisations was Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Worker Education Program Aboriginal Corporation (QATSIHWEPAC). At QATSIHWEPAC we interviewed the Chief Executive Officer (CEO), and one of their board members. At the other organisation we got to speak to three people in charge of different projects. Both organisations developed plans to increase the number of Indigenous Australians on the labour market. QATSIHWEPAC had a program for educating Indigenous Australian health workers while the other organisation had several different projects running to give young Indigenous Australians a

proper education. However, since the projects run by this organisation mostly concerned young people we decided to do our study at QATSIHWEPAC.

By coincidence we met two Aborigines at a café one day. They turned out to be two very influential and quite famous people and we had even come across one of their names several times in different books. This meeting turned out as a very informal and unexpected meeting and after it we met several times with one of these men. He even took us with him to his own community for a visit. It was extremely interesting to experience a community with a local, we got a whole new understanding of the problems faced by Indigenous Australians.

We were also requested to hold a presentation of our project at one of the local Rotary clubs where the members got to ask questions afterwards. After answering these questions we realised that we should not take for granted that people would look at the problem from the same perspective as we did. It was good to realise that in such an early phase of the project because we kept that thought in mind when we continued with our project. Some of the members also mediated further contacts and we met up with one of these for another informal meeting at a café. This meeting provided us with some more background information about the situation for Indigenous Australians.

### 3.2.2 Sampling

#### **The organisation**

As mentioned above, we chose to do our study at the organisation QATSIHWEPAC. We chose this organisation because their program was more interesting from our point of view since it mostly involved adult learning. This organisation met the criteria that we had established. These criteria included:

- The education would be directed towards Indigenous Australians.
- The education would be directed towards adults.
- The organisation had to be fairly successful, i.e. the pass rate had to be more than fifty percent.

We decided to use a purposeful sampling strategy in our study.

Purposeful sampling is based on the assumption that the investigator wants to discover, understand, and gain insight and therefore must select a sample from which the most can be learned (Merriam, 1998:61).

We listed a few criteria to follow that we thought would be essential for our study to be able to choose how many and who we should interview at QATSIHWEPAC.

- We wanted the students to have attended at least one course in the organisation previous to the one they were doing. This in order for them to have some experience and knowledge of the education and the organisation.
- We wanted to interview both Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians. Because we had found out that only one of the trainers was non-Indigenous we thought it would be interesting to hear that trainers' point of view as opposing to the Indigenous trainers' point of views.
- To be able to acquire different perspectives of the organisation as well as a thick description of it we wanted to interview someone from the board, trainers and students.

Our type of purposeful sampling was a snowball, chain or network sampling. This strategy means that the researcher asks each interviewee to refer him/her to other participants (Merriam, 1998). The CEO and each trainer we met referred us to another trainer and the trainer we interviewed last referred us to four students. When we had interviewed the CEO twice, five trainers and four students we felt satisfied because we had got our questions answered as well as a thick description of the organisation. According to Lincoln and Guba (1985) it is recommended to stop sampling when you have reached a point of saturation (Merriam, 1998).

The trainers were interviewed individually but the students were interviewed in groups of two. After the interviews with the students we got to give them feedback on the interviews. There were two reasons why we chose to interview the students in groups of two.

- 1.) To make the students more comfortable during the interview and less exposed in the situation. We did this since we had realised that a lot of Indigenous Australians can feel quite shy and inferior while talking to non-Indigenous people. This due to how the Indigenous Australians have been treated in the past by non-Indigenous people.
- 2.) One of the trainers had organised the meeting with the students and she thought we wanted to speak to the four of them at the same time. However, we managed to divide them into two groups and arrange with two of the students to come back later.

This strategy turned out to be very successful and it was very inspiring to listen to the students' extremely positive attitude towards the organisation. We were also pleased that the students differed in age and background. Although it is important to note that it was one of the trainers that chose which students we could talk to. Something that will be discussed in the section 'Quality of the results'.

When we developed our interview guides for these interviews we conferred with our tutor back in Sweden and made some changes in our interview guides. Mainly we changed the language into a more colloquial one in order to avoid confusing our interviewees with technical language.

During the process we have altered the interview guides. The changes were based on information we received during the interviews. We were also constantly discussing which approach we would take in order to try to ask relevant questions during the interviews.

### 3.2.3 Coding the data

In total we held sixteen interviews with eighteen people. Seven of these interviews were background interviews, where five were recorded and partly transcribed. The remaining nine interviews were done at QATSIHWEPAC and they were all recorded and transcribed.

During the coding process some considerations must be taken not to lose or overlook important data. Bryman (2001) suggests that the coding is to be done as soon as possible after the data has been acquired. This in order to help the researcher acquire a better understanding of the data and be able to let this understanding influence the research process. This could also contribute to avoid being overwhelmed by the vast amount of data collected. If coding is not possible or preferable on this stage the researcher should at least start transcribing the interviews.

After we left Australia with all our acquired material we did not work with our material for about two months. Even though it was all transcribed we did not do the coding immediately as recommended by Bryman. We believe this was mainly to our advantage since we during this time were able to let the information sink in and discuss the project with people around us. Talking about and explaining things we had found out during our project made us process our material and get a better idea of what we wanted to focus on in the final product. However, we are aware that by not coding the material immediately we might have created a somewhat distorted picture of our collected material. Though, we believe we did not do this to a great extent since we were careful to let the data, and not our own opinions and preconceived notions guide the coding process.

Reading the material several times is also something that is recommended. The first time it should be read without making any comments or categorizations. After the initial reading, comments and notes of important parts and words in the text can be made (Bryman, 2001). We read through the material several times, however not in the way that Bryman suggests. Instead we chose to make comments the first time we read the material and then read through the material bit by bit while following our interview guides, taking one question at a time and putting all the answers on post-its on a big sheet of paper. By organising the answers in this way we got every question's answers beneath each question. We did the coding this way in order to select important information as well as create an idea of patterns in, and connections between, the different items and themes of data. This made it possible for us to search for more general theoretical ideas in relation to our coded data as recommended by Bryman (2001). Since our ap-

proach is inductive, in our coding process we did not look for particular words but kept an open mind of what we were searching for.

## 3.3 Quality of the results

We believe that the terms validity and reliability cannot be used in a qualitative study in the same way as in a quantitative study. However, it is important to realise that they can be applied in a different manner and therefore play an important role. Thus validity and reliability should not be rejected in a qualitative study, but considered with a different approach, as seen below.

### 3.3.1 Validity

Validity deals with whether the researcher is measuring what he/she believes is being measured. Do the findings capture what is really there? In a qualitative study the focus is not on the objective reality but on the individuals' constructions of the reality and their experiences of it. Therefore the qualitative researchers are interested in perspectives of the world and not the world itself. The validity in a qualitative study concerns whether the result is credible to the person that was the origin of the data (Merriam, 1998). Validity could therefore in qualitative research be replaced by the term credibility, i.e. how likely and probable the results are (Bryman, 2001). Though we will continue to use the term validity.

There are several strategies that can contribute to increase the validity in a qualitative case study. We applied five of these in order to increase the validity in our study. These were:

1. Triangulation
2. Peer examination
3. Researcher's biases
4. Member checks
5. Rich and thick description of the case (Merriam, 1998).

#### **Triangulation**

Triangulation refers to the usage of several different sources and methods to collect data and confirm the emerged results (Merriam, 1998). We managed to apply triangulation in our project by collecting data from different perspectives, outside as well as inside the organisation. By interviewing both Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians with a lot of knowledge about the situation for Indigenous Australians, we received different kind of information due to their different perspectives. We also used documents from the Australian Government's webpage. These sources with different perspectives pro-

vided us with a substantial and broad understanding concerning the situation. Collecting data inside the organisation was done by interviewing individuals on all different levels; the CEO, who was on the administration, five trainers teaching different subjects and four students from the same course, who had all previously attended another course at the organisation. As mentioned earlier we felt that the number of trainers and students interviewed was sufficient for our study. The reason why we interviewed students within the same course was because we wanted them to have been in the same situations and classes at the organisation. Otherwise we believe that our data would have been based on too diverse experiences.

We are aware that it might have had an impact on our study that it was one of the trainers who chose which students we could interview. The four students that we interviewed were in the program because of their own choice. We did not speak to any students that had not chosen themselves to be there but were placed there by the Government on a program called The Community Development Employment Projects scheme (CDEP). A program which will be explained later in this report in the section 'Background'. This may have had an impact on our data since we did not get any of those students' opinions.

### **Peer examination**

Peer examination implies asking colleagues for comments and views of the results during the process (Merriam, 1998). Our initial idea was to use peer examination. This due to our belief that the more people that scrutinize our process and interpretations of the data, the more critical to ourselves we can remain. During our collection of data we had contact with our tutor over e-mail in order to receive feedback. We also constantly discussed our general impression on our findings with people around us, both during our visit in Australia as well as when we came back to Sweden. For example the presentation we had at a Rotary meeting in Australia regarding our study provided us with comments and views on the problem.

### **Researcher's biases**

Researcher's biases are the preconceived notions of the researcher. According to Merriam (1998) the researcher needs to make himself/herself aware of his/her standpoints, views of the world, theoretical perspectives and implicit assumptions and thereafter explicitly give an account of these (Merriam, 1998). The Rotary meeting mentioned above made us aware of our own biases towards the situation we were studying. Before this we had not clearly and explicitly discussed our standpoints towards all the new information we had received in Australia and this meeting helped us do that. We continued to try and keep this in mind and discuss it during our study.

### **Member checks**

Member checks is carried out when the original source of specific information is given the opportunity to check and take a stand regarding the interpretations and descriptions



the researcher has drawn from it (Merriam, 1998). Member checks was a strategy we initially aimed to use, however it was never used during the project. After we had conducted all the interviews we had got the impression that our interviewees did not feel the need to read through our transcriptions. This impression derived from the fact that we had offered our interviewees to read the transcriptions, but none felt the need for that. If this had been done, some information might have been added or altered. However, what we were searching for was the interviewees' immediate answers to the questions in order to capture their first thoughts regarding our questions.

### **Rich and thick description of the case**

This strategy is done in order to provide the reader with a rich and thick description of the case (Merriam, 1998). The holistic way of approaching our phenomenon, by describing the background situation for Indigenous Australians, the background of the organisation, as well as interviewing the CEO, trainers and students within the organisation we have tried to provide the reader with a rich and thick description of our case. We believe this enhanced the validity of the study.

By applying triangulation, peer examination, researcher's biases and rich and thick description of the case we believe that the validity of the study was enhanced.

### **3.3.2 Reliability**

Reliability refers to whether the study, if replicated, will give the same results. However, it can be argued that this is only possible in quantitative and not in qualitative research. This due to the fact that in qualitative research the aim is to study human beings in their social context, something which is continually changing. Human beings also have several different ways to interpret a situation or experience which leads to the fact that the same study cannot give the same results if it were to be replicated. The term reliability in qualitative research should therefore, according to Lincoln & Guba, be replaced with "dependability" or "consistency" (Merriam, 1998). The question here is not whether the study is possible to replicate with the same result but whether the results in the present study are consistent with the data collected. The following three measures can be taken to ensure that this consistency is sustained.

1. The investigator's position: The investigator must be aware of his/her own position in the process and explicitly make sure that this is clear for the reader.
2. Triangulation: The researcher uses different types of methods to collect and analyze information.
3. Audit trail: The investigator must in order for an audit to take place describe in detail how data were collected, how categories were derived, and how decisions were made throughout the process (Merriam, 1998).

We have tried to make our position in the process clear for the reader by explaining the basis for our selection of interviews, explaining the social context from which our data was collected as well as being aware of our own biases (something explained earlier).

Triangulation was done by holding interviews, having informal meetings as well as searching for information in databases, web pages and libraries. Thereby we used different methods to collect the data. This gave us the opportunity to ensure that the results were consistent with the data. Taking an inductive approach and having a high degree of openness in the coding process resulted in us not disregarding pieces of data that would influence the result of the study.

We aimed to provide a clear and detailed report of our procedure in collecting and analysing the data, in order to audit our trail. This to provide the reader with a complete picture of the process and the underlying reasons why certain decisions and choices were made. If the reader is provided with this complete description it will give him/her a chance to create his/her own opinion about whether the results and the study are reliable (Merriam, 1998). In order to be able to audit our trail we kept a diary where we wrote almost everything that had to do with our project. This included for example notes about who we were going to interview, who we should contact, thoughts and ideas after interviews, meetings, new ideas how the final product should be, comments from our tutor etcetera. The diary was very helpful when we audited our trail because it helped us remember how our whole process had proceeded.

The three strategies mentioned above helped enhancing the reliability in our study.

## 4. Results

The situation faced by Indigenous Australians can only be understood by looking at the history. Therefore we have decided to initially present the background to the current situation. A presentation of the designer and distributor of the educational program, Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Worker Education Program Aboriginal Corporation (QATSIHWEPAC) is then presented. Both of these presentations are done in order to create an understanding about the setting in which the educational program operates.

### 4.1 Background

Australia has a population of just above twenty million people where two percent (approximately 400 000) are Indigenous Australians. Out of all Australians aged fifteen years and above, about fifty-eight percent had employment in 2001 and eight percent

where unemployed. The same figures for the Indigenous population were forty percent and twenty percent in 2001 (Hunter, 2003).

### 4.1.1 History

The problems faced by Indigenous Australians today can only be understood by looking at the history that has led to the current situation.

Indigenous Australians have lived in Australia for over 40 000 years. They lived as nomads, moving around from sight to sight, living off the land. Indigenous Australians are not one group of people, they were a number of different clans occupying different pieces of land. Indigenous Australians believe no one can own the land but the land owns man and the man is born out of the land. This means that different clans belonged to different pieces of land, which they referred to as their motherland.

When James Cook arrived from England in 1788 and claimed the country for the English king he did not conquer the land through fighting nor were any negotiations held with the Indigenous peoples, i.e. the Aboriginals and Torres Strait Island people, populating the land. The land became English territory, a concept completely foreign to the Indigenous peoples.

Many of the Indigenous peoples who lived where the English built their settlements were brought into Christian missions. Due to the white man's lack of knowledge concerning Indigenous beliefs and the different clans, individuals from different clans and parts of the country were put together in the missions. The first mission was opened in 1825. These missions are still there today, but are now self-governed communities instead of missions. Even to this day the different clan affiliations create difficulties in these communities (Senior Project Officer/ Higher Expectations Program, Cape York Institute for Policy and Leadership, in interview 2006).

In 1967, a referendum was held to change the Australian Constitution so that the federal government could make laws for Indigenous Australians throughout Australia which had not been the case before (Barlow & Hill, 2001). Prior to this referendum the state had the responsibility to make good governance on behalf of all Australians, apart from Indigenous Australians. The referendum decided that also Indigenous Australians were to be included (Board member at QATSIHWEPAC, in interview 2006). The Indigenous Australians were now to be counted as citizens in the national census (Barlow & Hill, 2001). The referendum also made it possible for Indigenous Australians to attend tertiary education and they were entitled to equal pay (Board member at QATSIHWEPAC, in interview 2006).

### 4.1.2 The Community Development Employment Projects scheme

The Community Development Employment Projects scheme (CDEP) was developed as a response to the increased unemployment benefit payments in remote Indigenous communities in 1977 (Hunter, 2003). The aim of the scheme was for Indigenous Australians in the communities to eventually obtain employment. The initial aim was that the participants would work approximately two days a week and receive unemployment benefit payments. Taking part in this scheme would give the individual experiences and knowledge to be able to acquire real employment. It was to be a stepping stone (Coursework manager, Cape York Institute for Policy and Leadership, in interview 2006).

### 4.1.3 Situation today

As mentioned above Indigenous Australians accounts for approximately two percent of the total population in Australia. The Indigenous population in itself is remarkably diverse, partly due to the fact that non-Indigenous Australians mostly populate the south-eastern corner, while the Indigenous population is evenly spread over the country. This has resulted in different levels of westernization and traditional living amongst Indigenous Australians. Nevertheless, some characteristics are common throughout most of the communities, such as high unemployment, low employment and poor education. The level of literacy and numeracy are significantly lower for Indigenous Australian in comparison to the figures for all Australians (Hunter, 2003).

### 4.1.4 Hindrances to obtain employment

Each of these communities has its own particular history, and each community has a different structure, though most of them were originally church missions. Indigenous Australians were either directly sent to them or forced to go there. Living under the protection of the missions and, after the missions had become communities, receiving welfare from the Government, the majority of the residents have never experienced a free enterprise economy. This makes it difficult for the people to develop that kind of structure, and create jobs, in the communities (Cape York Indigenous Employment Strategy, 2005).

Also community norms can be a hinder to acquire a job. Work in the ‘mainstream’ sense is not normal in the communities. This means that a person aspiring for a job or a career may not have that support from family and friends, that people in a western society often take for granted (Cape York Indigenous Employment Strategy, 2005). Indigenous Australians, trying to acquire a job or educate themselves might be called coconuts by their peers referring to that they are black on the outside but trying to be white on the inside.

Many Indigenous Australians have a number of certificates they have received after completing various courses. The problem with these is that there is no job outcome. It becomes training for training's sake, which creates a negative attitude towards participation in courses and programs (Coursework manager, Cape York Institute for Policy and Leadership, in interview 2006).

As mentioned above the CDEP program was to be a stepping-stone into real employment. Unfortunately, to a great extent people never took, or were able to take, that second step which meant they got stuck in the scheme, working for the dole, as it has come to be called. The result of the fact that people continued on the program, not obtaining real employment is that there are generations of families whose members have never had a job; they have always relied only on CDEP (Cape York Indigenous Employment Strategy, 2005). "Most of the population has never ever known what it's like to have a job." (Coursework manager, Cape York Institute for Policy and Leadership, in interview 2006).

## 4.2 Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Worker Education Program Aboriginal Corporation

### 4.2.1 The organisation

Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Worker Education Program Aboriginal Corporation (QATSIHWEPAC) is situated in Cairns, North Queensland, Australia. The organisation is a community controlled organisation, meaning that the board of the organisation is made up of representatives from the different Indigenous communities. QATSIHWEPAC's board consists of only Indigenous Australians. The core business of the organisation is training Indigenous Health Workers from all parts of Australia. QATSIHWEPAC was established in 1991 but has only been delivering training since the middle of 2003.

QATSIHWEPAC's vision is:

...to create awareness, endorse mindfulness and understanding by the wider community of the need for culturally appropriate training courses specifically designed for health providers to reconcile the differences in health status, for the betterment of Indigenous People (<http://www.qatsihwepac.com.au/>, 2006).

The aim of the course is according to one of the board members:

Not only to overcome the health problems at a community level, but also to give people a career in life. /---/ It's about Indigenous people, people from the community. We take somebody out of the community, we give them the tools to overcome the problems in their community. We don't want to send them to somebody else's, we want to send them back into their own community /---/ It's about us, overcoming our own problems, wherever we may come from (Board member at QATSIHWEPAC, in interview 2006).

QATSIHWEPAC has adopted the Medex System developed by World health experts through the University of Hawaii. This system was fully supported by the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community. The Medex system was developed as a plan for Indigenous Hawaiians to completely take over the delivery of health services for Indigenous people in Hawaii (<http://www.qatsihwepac.com.au/>, 2006).

What they believed is the same that what we believe, is while somebody else is delivering the health services to the people. Aah, it's not going to work, until we ourselves deliver our own, we must overcome our own problems. Nobody else can do it for us. We need the tools to do that and this is what that plan was really about. That plan was to take control of all health delivery in all the (line) communities... (Board member at QATSIHWEPAC, in interview 2006).

#### 4.2.2 Staff and students

All the staff at QATSIHWEPAC, except for the CEO and one of the trainers, are Indigenous Australians. The organisation strives to have only Indigenous staff, however due to difficulties in finding Indigenous trainers for all subjects, one non-Indigenous Australian is employed.

To be accepted into the program you have to identify as an Australian Aboriginal. According to QATSIHWEPAC's homepage (2006) this is:

A person who identifies as being of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent and is accepted as such by the community which he or she is associated.

There are 175- 180 students ranging from around seventeen to about fifty years of age taking part in the education (CEO and one of the trainers at QATSIHWEPAC, in interview 2006).

Prior to each course all the students are individually assessed in order to determine what level their existing knowledge is. They need to have an adequate level of literacy and numeracy. If a student does not have sufficient knowledge in these areas, he/she is recommended to take a course that will help them acquire an adequate level of literacy and numeracy. When they have reached the adequate level of literacy and numeracy they are encouraged to apply for the courses at QATSIHWEPAC.

### 4.2.3 The courses

QATSIHWEPAC provides the courses certificate III, certificate IV, diploma and advanced diploma. The higher certificate a student acquires the more qualified he or she becomes. The knowledge the students acquire concerns different aspects of health. Both preventative and reactive knowledge is taught, for example how to store food, how to handle pets, first aid, CPR (cardiopulmonary resuscitation), how to treat infections etcetera. According to QATSIHWEPAC the courses in their program:

...develops understanding and provides practical experience in working with Indigenous people. It also develops competent, confident and qualified Indigenous workers, empowering them to bring about change in community settings (<http://www.qatsihwepac.com.au/>, 2006).

The training is delivered in terms of three blocks of two weeks at a time, over a six months period. Half of the students are working in between these blocks. For those who are not working the organisation tries to arrange work placement to support the students and help them to keep up the skills they acquire during the course. The reason the program has been designed to be delivered in blocks is to give Indigenous Australians who do not have the ability to be away during long periods at a time (due to family duties, children, community commitment etcetera) a chance to educate themselves. However, if students cannot attend one of these blocks the teachers have the opportunity and resources to fly out to them and provide the training (CEO at QATSIHWEPAC, in interview 2006).

According to QATSIHWEPAC's homepage (2006) they limit their class sizes to approximately fifteen students. However that did not seem to be the case in every class. The reason seemed to be an anxiety that no one would turn up and instead quite the opposite had occurred.

The organisation provides tutors in class but also extra tutorial time outside of class.

QATSIHWEPAC has a pass rate of seventy-five percent over a calendar year. However, due to an awareness that everyone cannot finish within these frames because of a lot of issues in the communities the organisation allows the students to continue over the next year. If these students are included in the pass rate it increases to eighty-five percent. Compared to other courses for Indigenous Australians this is considered a very good pass rate (CEO at QATSIHWEPAC, in interview 2006).

## 4.3 Results and analysis

As stated above our purpose in this study was:

- 1.) To study a specific educational program aimed at Indigenous Australians. The focus was on one hand on what tools were used by the group in the educational program and on the other hand on what tools were preferred in a learning situation by this group.
- 2.) With a standing point in the results of what tools were used and preferred, analyze and discuss what tools would be used to create a successful learning situation for this group and why.
- 3.) To analyze and discuss what the educational program could do further to improve the learning situation for this group.

In the presentation of the results of our study we have chosen to combine it with the analysis. As mentioned earlier, this was done in order to make it more interesting to the reader and not constantly having to repeat ourselves. Initially we provide the reader with the students' and trainers' aims with the course in order to see whether the organization, the trainers and the students' aims are in alignment or not. This is followed by the trainers' opinions concerning differences in learning styles between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians. In order to follow our purpose we have then divided the section into three parts that follow the order of the research questions in our purpose. In the first part the used and preferred tools are presented and analyzed. In the second part we look into how QATSIHWEPAC has created a successful learning situation. The final part deals with what QATSIHWEPAC could do in order to further improve the learning situation.

Since the term trainer instead of teacher is used on QATSIHWEPAC's homepage, as well as by our interviewees, this term will be used throughout the following presentation. In the quotes the trainers will be referred to as T followed by a number and the students as S followed by a number. The numbers are there in order to distinguish the trainers from each other and the students from each other.

### 4.3.1 Aim

As mentioned above QATSIHWEPAC's aim is according to one of the board members to provide their students with the knowledge and skills to be able to go back to their community and help their people overcoming their health problems. QATSIHWEPAC also wants to create an awareness and understanding in the wider community of the need for culturally appropriate training courses. This can be put in relation to the trainers' and students' aims with the course.



The trainers' aims for the course are to get more health workers out in the communities, get more people on the ground, provide directly relevant training, and in the end to have competent and confident students. And as one trainer puts it she wants...

...to empower our people with knowledge (T5 p.2).

The trainers think the students' purpose for taking the course is to be able to go back home and help their own people. It was pointed out that the purpose is not for themselves but for their people.

The fundamental purpose would be to help their people, help improve the health of their people, and that takes a lot.../---/...they wanna help their people, and it really is at that level (T4 p.16).

Students implied that their purpose for taking this course, in alignment with the trainers' thoughts, is to be able to go back to the communities. The students were therefore motivated by intrinsic values and what they learn is highly relevant to them (Samovar & Porter, 2004).

The students also mentioned that they have an advantage while delivering health services to Indigenous Australians compared to non-Indigenous Australians, because they know what their people want. Due to this the students felt they could meet the needs of the people in the Indigenous communities as well as develop programs in the most appropriate ways for their communities. The culture as a shaper of the individual through the socialization process would explain the students' capacity of being able to tell what their people want. People growing up in the same culture with similar patterns of thinking and frames of reference are more likely to understand each other. Though, all of the students are not brought up in communities, but mainstream and have therefore not been socialized into the Indigenous Australian culture. For these students to be able to meet the needs of the people in a culturally appropriate way they need to learn culturally relevant social codes, which they do during the education at QATSIHWEPAC.

The students' individual goals with the course were to complete the course, accomplish a qualification as well as gaining employment. The students' collective goals were to use the course to set up programs in communities that could meet the people's needs, help their own people and quite simply be able to be out there, hands on. The trainers had almost the same idea about how the students would be able to use the course in the future. They meant that the students could either use the knowledge to go back and educate their own people or move on to further studies. As we can see above both individual and collective goals were expressed. However, it was not clarified whether or not the collective goals took precedence over the individual goals, although we noticed that the collective goals were mentioned more frequently and with more emphasis.

### 4.3.2 Differences in teaching and learning

In our interviews we got varying answers to whether or not it is different teaching Indigenous Australian students and non-Indigenous Australian students and if there is a difference in learning styles. Some trainers believed that the difference existed to a great extent, whereas some trainers did not believe so at all. However, those who believed differences existed were all Indigenous.

A lot, a lot. /---/ ...with Indigenous people, if you pull something apart and put it back together again like... /---/...they'll follow suit and just do it. Where, with a white person they want you to take them step by step by step by step, into doing it. And then they'll get you to write it down so they can remember the steps. Where an Indigenous person wants you to show them, hand it to them, get them to do it, check to see if they're doing it right, and if they're doing it right, they'll never forget it (T:5).

Am, I would say, overridingly no, and I'd say that of the teaching of anyone, kids or anyone. I just think that fundamental principles of teaching are pretty universal I think... (T:4).

Due to these differences the trainers who believed there was a difference in learning styles chose different modes of teaching for their Indigenous Australian students than they would have chosen if they were to teach non-Indigenous Australian students. For example they expressed that they would use a different language, i.e. use simple words, and not the big medical terms, while teaching Indigenous Australian students. The trainers also mentioned that they would take a holistic approach while teaching Indigenous Australian students. The usage of simple language as well as the holistic approach will be focused on later in the analysis.

Hofstede (1997), Da Vita (2001) and Hughes & More (1997) Calloway-Thomas, Cooper and Blake, supports the fact that the culture people are surrounded by and part of shapes the preferred modes of learning through the socialization process. Because culture plays such an important role in the development of learning styles it must therefore, according to Yamazaki (2005) be considered as a crucial factor when trying to understand individual learning styles.

Socialisation was also brought up in the interviews as a factor that has contributed to the fact that Indigenous and non-Indigenous people learn differently and therefore need to be taught differently.

Since many theorists have agreed that differences in learning styles can be found between cultures this should be regarded in a classroom setting. A global (holistic) learning style, an imaginal learning style, a concrete learning style and a complex combination of trial & feedback and reflective learning style are learning styles expected to be more recurrent among Indigenous Australians (Hughes & More, 1997). As mentioned in the quote above where the trainers point out that the students want the trainers to show them the whole concept first, i.e. taking on a holistic approach with the overall

concept and a meaningful context presented supports this theory. This can also be related to the Indigenous Australian preferring to be shown concrete examples first followed by more abstract rules or principles (More, 1990).

If these learning styles are not considered it might have a negative impact on the learning situation. The trainer who does not see that there are any differences might try to teach all the students in the same way, with good intentions, but with a non-successful outcome. The fact that some of the trainers in the organisation have observed the differences and have an awareness of them should lead to a more suited education for the Indigenous Australians in these classes. However, an awareness that all individuals do not learn in the same way seems to exist among the trainers. As Hughes & More (1997) points out, it is important to remember that individuals within the same cultural group might greatly differ in learning styles and that the individual learning style must take precedence over learning styles more recurrent in the culture the individual belongs to. Following this line of argument, the trainer who does not believe that there are any differences might even create a more positive learning situation than those trainers who believe that there are differences. If the trainers believing in the differences between cultural groups exclude that there are individual differences, this might have a negative effect for some students if their learning styles fall outside the frames of the most recurrent amongst Indigenous Australians. These students' preferred ways of learning would then not be facilitated by these trainers.

Although not all trainers agreed about differences in learning among Indigenous Australians our data showed that all trainers were aware of certain tools that Indigenous Australians seemed to prefer. These tools will be shown and analyzed below.

### 4.3.3 Tools

In our purpose we have mentioned that we are referring to tools as a wide concept, including settings, considerations, behaviours, and specific components such as for example teaching aids. Our presentation of different tools will show the wide definition of the concept in this study and the diversity of tools used by the trainers. We have divided the tools into concrete tools and abstract tools. The concrete tools include: visual tools, practical tools, participation as tools, group work as a tool and relating to personal situations as a tool. Abstract tools include: cultural awareness as a tool, flexibility as a tool, attitudes as a tool and facilitator to education and learning and support as a tool.

In class the trainers found that certain tools were more useful than others while teaching Indigenous students. These will be presented and analyzed below.

## Concrete tools

### - Visual tools

Visual components were brought up over and over again as one of the most successful tools. These tools had also created the most successful learning situations. Therefore the trainers used a lot of Power Point, pictures and drawings on whiteboard, which the students expressed that they appreciated to a great extent. When asked why visual aids were so successful the trainers pointed out;

...lot of visual components to it is very handy because I find the Indigenous people, generally speaking, that they really enjoy pictures. They find that a lot easier to pick up... /---/ ...maybe a few pictures from communities that show other Indigenous people who are working in the area to the time and about (T:4).

So it's much easier to get across to people when they're doing or they're seeing pictures. /---/ That's our indigenous people /---/ ...well how did we communicate years ago, through pictures. /---/ And so it's just come down from generation to generation that a picture tells more. /---/ Still very strong in the culture (T:5).

The reason why visual components seemed to be the most successful learning tools for the students can be explained by Hughes & More (1997). He states that an Indigenous Australian with a background where learning is usually demonstrated or images are used regularly develops a more imaginal learning style. Hughes & More (1997) also supports that Indigenous Australians have a more imaginal learning style as well as Harris (1984) who emphasizes that Indigenous Australian children learn more through observation and imitation rather than through verbal instruction. According to Samovar & Porter (2004) as well as Hughes & More (1997) learning styles can be related to culture. The Indigenous Australians have, as described by Hughes & More (1997), traditionally learned by imitating elders and they have as mentioned by one of the trainers been reading stories by looking at pictures. The fact that the Indigenous Australians develop a more visual learning style can therefore be related to their culture. During their socialization process they have internalized this way of processing information. Therefore the reason why a student prefers a visual learning style instead of a verbal can be understood by looking at his/her culture.

The inclusion of Indigenous people in the pictures, mentioned by one of the trainers in the quote above, can be seen as a sign of the cultural support provided by the organisation. Cultural support is also shown in the organisation's cultural awareness, which will be discussed later in the analysis.

When the students were asked to describe a less successful situation in class, they mentioned situations when the trainers tried to just tell them something. The students had no concept of how to relate to this and had difficulties in processing the information. According to the trainers talking too much was something they tried to avoid.

Standing up in front of the class and just raveling on, it does not work. /---/...our students get bored with that very quickly (T:5).

The reason why the students thought of this as a less successful situation can be explained by the line of argument above; why imaginal learning styles are more recurrent among Indigenous Australians.

#### **- Practical tools**

Hands on, i.e. doing practically, was also mentioned over and over again as one of the most successful tools. Therefore trainers used role play, games, real life experience, field trips, workshops, group sessions and team work which the students expressed that they appreciated to a great extent. When talking about what tools had created the most successful situations in class trainers mentioned role play, workshops, group work and the students giving presentations. The students, when talking about successful situations in class mentioned how the trainers got them to participate. It was also pointed out by one of the trainers that Indigenous people learn manual things very easily because they have dealt with those kinds of things all their life.

Why the students seemed to appreciate practical tools to a great extent could be derived from the fact that a concrete learning style is one of the more preferred and recurrent learning styles among Indigenous Australians (Hughes & More, 1997).

#### **- Participation as a tool**

Participation, such as for example brainstorming, discussions and presentations in class, was also mentioned as one of the most successful tools.

According to Samovar & Porter (2004) different cultures value participation to different extents. In the Indigenous Australian culture, classified as a collectivistic one, the learner is often supposed to quietly watch and listen before trying it themselves. Therefore it was interesting to note that participation was one of the most successful tools in class. We believe this extensive participation goes against the Indigenous Australian culture. This shows that even though the organisation aims to provide education in a culturally appropriate way they put the needs of the individuals first and sometimes this means that they will work against the learning traditions of the Indigenous Australian culture. McRae et al. (2000) supports that for an education aimed at Indigenous Australians to be successful it must involve adequate levels of participation. The fact that the students thought of participating as one of the most successful learning tools supports this idea.

#### **- Group work as a tool**

The students, when talking about successful situations in class mentioned how the trainers got the whole class to learn together and accomplish the same. Both the students and the trainers mentioned that working together was something highly thought upon. Ac-

ording to them it all related back to their culture. Most of the students explained that they found it easier to work with other people because they could then learn from each other and from other's experiences.

It's our culture and it's the fact that we've been brought up in an orientated way (S:3). Family orientated... (S:4).

...I suppose when you're at school, it's always you had to do you own work... /---/  
...you weren't allowed to help. We help each other... (S:1).

However some students wouldn't choose to either always work together or always work alone, it all depended on what subject they were doing.

The fact that the students generally preferred to work with others and receive rewards based on group relations shows that they are field sensitive (Samovar & Porter, 2004). According to Mellor & Corrigan (2004) Indigenous Australian students are more likely to be cooperative learners and this can explain why the students generally seemed to prefer group work. The reason why Indigenous Australians generally are field sensitive and hence more cooperative learners is probably derived from the fact that the students belong to a collectivistic culture where harmony and cooperation are stressed rather than competition and that most collectivistic cultures are field sensitive. A collectivistic culture is also characterized by the idea that group goals take precedence over individual goals and the group is the most important of all social entities (Samovar & Porter, 2004). This explains why the students mention when the whole class learns together and accomplish the same, as a successful situation. The development of this preference can be explained by the fact that the culture shapes the individual through the socialization process. The Indigenous Australian, growing up in a culture where collectivistic values are of importance, the culture socializes the individual to be a more cooperative and group oriented learner. This line of argument can be illustrated in the following quote.

...we're all quite family orientated. /---/ Whereas you go into mainstream and you sit there and everybody seems to be an individual, whereas here everyone's just a big family (S:4).

### **- Relating to personal situations as a tool**

Relating to personal situations and using real life experience was another successful situation mentioned by the trainers. This was appreciated to a great extent by the students. Trainers pointed out that they used a lot of their own experience while teaching and used formats that had worked for them while they were at school.

...I generally try to get them to sit around me, I don't like them sitting in rows and I prefer to be sort of in a U-shape /---/ ...that worked better for me at school... /---/  
But I think that it could have something to do with cultural issues, we all sit around in circles (T:3).

According to Hughes & More (1997) a teacher's teaching style is based on his/her preferred learning styles. This is supported by the quote above.

As mentioned earlier Indigenous people with an education can sometimes be looked down on by their peers and in our interviews the trainers spoke a bit about this. Many trainers had experienced this problem themselves and therefore tried to prepare their students for this dilemma.

Yeah, when I went home... /---/ ...going back with that education didn't sort of help me, that sort of was a hindrance and, which is really bad, you know jealousy and that (T:3).

The trainers who had experienced this believed that it could help their students in the future if they knew about this problem and had talked about it in class.

But yeah, I don't tell them everything is rosy, you know, and I tell them how it is, and you know, my difficulties, and what I've learnt from those experiences and how I overcome things, try to impart some of that knowledge to make them strong (T:3).

Real life experiences were used as a means of teaching here and this teaching method made the knowledge concrete to the student. By doing this the trainers used a concrete teaching style, which means that concrete examples are followed by more abstract rules or principles (Hughes & More, 1997). As mentioned before, concrete learning is expected to be a more recurrent learning style with Indigenous student according to Hughes & More (1997).

When the trainers use their own experience while teaching the students, they might also enhance the students' motivation due to the students' ability to relate to the information. According to Samovar & Porter (2004) the students are thereby learning what is relevant and interesting to them rather than only what is demanded and in alliance with a set curriculum. By relating to personal and immediate everyday experience the trainers also use an informal approach in their teaching, which is a central approach in the traditional Indigenous Australian education (Harris, 1984).

## **Abstract tools**

### **- Cultural awareness as a tool**

QATSIHWEPAC is a community controlled organisation. Foley & Flowers (1992) point out that according to the Commonwealth government agencies, having community controlled programs is one of the most effective components to improve the quality of the provision of education to the students. QATSIHWEPAC wants to design a program that is designed in a culturally appropriate way for the Indigenous Australians. The true

Aboriginal health ritual is what they want to deliver. Though it's not just the knowledge that is culturally appropriate but also the delivery of the course. We believe that due to their experience and knowledge QATSIHWEPAC has come a long way in reaching their goal to design a culturally appropriate program.

The knowledge in the course is culturally based in the sense that the students learn about different social codes in the communities, such as respect towards elders, how to separate women's and men's business etcetera. Mellor & Corrigan (2004), McRae et al. (2000) and Report by Commonwealth of Australia (2000) states that to make a learning situation for Indigenous Australians successful, it is highly important that the knowledge taught takes its base in the student's culture. Some of the students are brought up with these cultural codes, but others are brought up mainstream and therefore need to acquire an understanding about the people they are going to work with. As health workers, the students need to meet the needs of the community, something both the trainers and the students stress. The fact that some of the students, who have been brought up in a community, have this knowledge already creates a situation where they can share that information with other students. The students that have been brought up with these cultural codes have been socialized into thinking and behaving according to them. Though the students who have not developed this knowledge through the socialization process need to acquire it through help from their peers. This is accommodated through discussion and group work. One of the students who had been brought up mainstream supported this idea.

It's opened my eyes a lot, and you're talking to the locals and things like that... /---/  
...it's just amazing. I didn't realize so many things were happening, and the approaches they wanna take to it. /---/ ...there's certain things that you can say or do to a gentleman, in the medical side of it... (S:4).

This sharing of information between students points to the Indigenous Australian culture being a collectivistic culture, where the group and its needs and goals are more important than the individual and his/her needs and goals.

When talking to the students and trainers, the aspect of the cultural appropriateness of the courses kept occurring in the conversations. Issues that were brought up were the respect that is paid to elders in the communities and the relationship between men and women. Terms like men's business and women's business were frequently used. Matthews (2003) as well as Mellor & Corrigan (2004) points out that cultural relevance in the content of what is learned is desirable and that the education needs to be centred in the student's cultural and community identity. This gives the student a chance to connect with the knowledge and it becomes concrete rather than abstract. As mentioned before the concrete learning style is pointed out by Hughes & More (1997) as a learning style more recurrent with Indigenous Australians.

The fact that also the trainers brought up the aspect of cultural appropriateness shows that they have, to at least some degree, reflected over what it means to be a culturally



appropriate trainer. Mellor & Corrigan (2004) mentions this reflection as something required to occur, in order for the trainer to gain ability to understand their students' culturally influenced behaviour. Also the trainers' own culturally influenced behaviour and how this behaviour interacts with the students' behaviours can be understood by the trainer if this reflection occurs. If the trainer has this understanding there are good chances that a successful learning situation will be created.

Also the relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians and issues concerning the distrust still remaining from experiences in the past were spoken about in our interviews. Circumstances due to social, historical and political issues are here understood and considered by the organisation and the trainers. This is one of the fundamental understandings about culturally relevant pedagogy pointed out by Mellor & Corrigan (2004).

Since the issue of distrust can create major hindrances in a learning situation for Indigenous Australians the organisation try to employ only Indigenous Australians as trainers. These measures are taken to increase the comfort of the students and give them someone to identify with. The presence of Indigenous teachers and staff in order for them to act as role models and someone the students can identify with is also recommended by McRae et al. (2000) as well as stated in Report by Commonwealth of Australia (2000).

Though, due to lack of Indigenous Australians with the right training and experience, one of the trainers is a non-Indigenous Australian. This trainer spoke about difficulties in teaching situations due to him not being Indigenous. These difficulties included him using words and phrasings an Indigenous Australian would not. Due to the different backgrounds of many Indigenous Australians, not having finished school and grown up with broken English, this might be a problem. The non-Indigenous Australian trainer also pointed out that many Indigenous Australians are nervous and shy amongst non-Indigenous people, a fact that can create difficulties in getting feedback for a non-Indigenous trainer. This was something the trainer as well as the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the organisation (also a non-Indigenous Australian) had experienced when teaching Indigenous Australians.

...ideally they would have an Indigenous person teaching this but they couldn't get anyone. Now, part of the reason I got this is because I get on really well and I've worked, worked with them for years... (T:4).

Foley & Flowers (1992) has pointed out that it has been recognized that Indigenous Australians should themselves deliver their own education. Even though this has not been based on research evidence we believe that the statement made by the non-Indigenous Australian trainer above shows the importance in regarding the issue that Indigenous Australians should deliver their own education.

The difficulties that sometimes arise in the learning situation when non-Indigenous Australians collaborate with Indigenous Australians might be due to the non-verbal communication, a communication style often used unconsciously. This type of communication is strongly influenced by culture (Samovar & Porter, 2004). The problem mentioned by the non-Indigenous Australian trainer about Indigenous Australian students being shy and nervous around non-Indigenous Australians might be explained by the non-Indigenous Australian trainers using non-verbal communication styles that the Indigenous Australian students are not familiar with.

One very important aspect mentioned frequently by both the trainers and the students is the holistic approach that the organisation takes to health work. A holistic approach means that the whole person is taken under consideration, not only a bad leg or an aching stomach, but also the mind and the environment the person lives in. This approach is also maintained when looking at the students. The whole person is considered and not just the person in the learning situation. Teaching in a respectful and caring way is something emphasised by Hooks in Samovar & Porter (2004) to be a condition for learning. Both the holistic approach towards health work and the students as individuals was experienced as very positive by the students, since this is something they can relate to and feel is important.

...our people we look holistically... /---/ ...so we just look at everything, not just one thing. And that's what makes a big difference (S:4).

The holistic approach is stressed by McRae et al. (2000), Hughes & More (1997) as well as in Report by Commonwealth of Australia (2000) as a crucial component in Indigenous Australian education. The fact that QATSIHWEPAC and its trainers have this approach also correlates with the global (holistic) learning style pointed out by Hughes & More (1997) as being one of the more recurrent learning styles among Indigenous Australians. It was pointed out by students as well as trainers that the holistic way is their way. That the education is designed to recognize and include the Indigenous Australian culture reflects its cultural awareness. Recognizing, including and showing awareness of the Indigenous Australian culture are important components for a successful education aimed at Indigenous Australians according to McRae et al. (2000). The holistic qualities in the education's content are also culturally relevant due to that they correlate with the students' previous experiences and patterns of thinking. The reason why the students seem to prefer the holistic approach might be because they have been socialized by their culture to see the holistic view as important. Though, as mentioned earlier, all the students may not have these patterns of thinking due to their different backgrounds, with some growing up in a traditional Indigenous Australian community whilst others have grown up in the mainstream Australian society marked by individualistic values.

By having a cultural awareness the organisation is providing their students with a cultural support. As stated in Report by Commonwealth of Australia (2000) cultural sup-

port includes recognizing the Indigenous Australian history, world views and religious ideas.

### **- Flexibility as a tool**

The trainers and the students pointed out that a typical day was very rare, since every day seemed to be different from the previous one. The students seemed to really appreciate how the trainers managed to constantly be able to change their teaching styles if there seemed to be a need for it.

...like Katrina she sees that we're getting you know tired or slack, or whatever, she'll change it up, and throw something different in there... /---/ ...it's very, very exciting, you don't know how they're gonna do it or what they're gonna do... (S:2).

Report by Commonwealth of Australia (2000) states that many Indigenous Australian students may be unused to classroom situations due to unfinished schooling. The fact that the trainers adopt a flexible teaching approach by changing their teaching styles when they see a need for it should facilitate the Indigenous Australian students' learning in class. Flexibility is a component that could lead to a successful learning situation for Indigenous Australians according to McRae et al. (2000).

One reason why the trainers managed to alter their teaching styles was because they had the support from the organisation to take on a very flexible approach in their teaching. They could for example have the lessons outside if it was a very hot day. The trainers also had the knowledge that all the students could not be trained in the same way and that certain factors had to be taken into consideration. This due to the fact that many of the students were on different levels in for example literacy and numeracy due to different background in training.

The knowledge among the trainers about how all the students cannot be trained in the same way is very important. As Hughes & More (1997) points out there is not just one Indigenous Australian learning style, and the individual learning style must take precedence. The flexible approach the trainers can take should make it possible for them to cater most learning styles.

An example of the trainers' flexibility was their usage of plain English in class, which the students expressed appreciation towards. The fact that the trainers understood the level the students were at and adapted their teaching to this was seen as positive by the students.

...you've got girls that don't even have a job at all, no work and we have different learning levels and it caters that (S:1).

The trainers' ability to teach at the level where the students were at shows the organisation's willingness to be flexible. Adapting teaching styles to fit the students' knowledge is pointed out by McRae et al. (2000) as an important component when teaching Indigenous Australians.

We also asked the students about their opinions concerning the individual assessment they did before starting the course. Appreciation was expressed and they said it was used to find out how much support the students would need and for the organisation to get to know what level the students were at. This gives the trainers the possibility to see where they should start off with the students. However, it was not only an academic assessment, it was also to give the trainers a chance to find out about personal issues that may interact with the student's education, and that needed to be respected.

This assessment therefore also makes it possible for QATSIHWEPAC to gain knowledge concerning the student's personal and social situation. According to Report by Commonwealth of Australia (2000) and McRae et al. (2000) it is also important to be aware of the student's possible social issues. The individual assessment are used by QATSIHWEPAC in order to provide individual support if needed. Personal support is stated in Report by Commonwealth of Australia (2000) as highly important when setting up an education for Indigenous Australians. The importance of support will be focused on later in the analysis.

The trainers had the freedom to assess the students' accomplishments in class in any way that they thought were suitable. What the trainers tried to do was to assess the students in ways that the students felt comfortable with in order to help them express themselves. A student with great difficulties in writing could therefore do the test orally or give a demonstration, in order to pass.

This flexibility in assessment can, according to Samovar & Porter (2004) prevents the students feeling inferior in class due to inabilities, like illiteracy, when being assessed. If they are given the possibility to be assessed practically or orally this problem could be avoided and the student's confidence can grow with every accomplishment instead of being broken down with every defeat.

It was also mentioned that when assessing the students, it was important for the trainers to be aware of in what way they should tell a student who had not passed a test. This had to be done in a way which did not put them off for further participation.

You can't say fail to our people, cause our people run, they think they are failures full time without you saying fail (T:5).

That the trainers do not say fail to their students is of consideration to their historical and social circumstances. Circumstances that must be taken into consideration according to Mellor & Corrigan (2004), due to their possible impact on the situation in the classroom.

One of the reasons why the students take the course at QATSIHWEPAC and not somewhere else is because of the design of the education. Many of the students have a job and a family they cannot leave and it would not be possible for them to go to school everyday from nine to five. Since the course is divided into blocks of two weeks at a time the students felt it was possible to go through with the education since they could plan their time to fit this schedule.

This design of the education regards the social circumstances of the students and thereby makes it easier for them to attend the education. As mentioned earlier, Report by Commonwealth of Australia (2000) stresses that social issues need to be considered for the education to be successful.

The flexibility of the organisation is also shown when the trainers are able to fly out to those students who cannot participate during one block due to personal issues. This will be discussed later when talking about support as a tool, since this is also a sign of the support the organisation provides to their students.

#### **- Attitudes as a tool and facilitator to education and learning**

Many trainers expressed that they did not prefer to be on a teacher-student level and did not see themselves as any better than the students. The students seemed to have the same opinion about how their trainers acted in class. They believed the trainers came down to “their level” and did not feel their relationship with their trainers were on a teacher-student level. In class some trainers preferred to move around a lot and mingle with the students while some did not do that in the classroom but only outside of it.

...there's a class teacher, but not a class teacher, it's a class friend... (S:2).

The students also felt that they could ask questions and be completely honest with their trainers and explained how (1<sup>st</sup> quote) and why (2<sup>nd</sup> quote) the trainers had created this environment.

...she (the trainer) says to you, which is to be really honest, say “If I'm doing something wrong, or you don't feel I'm teaching right, be honest and stand up and say what you think” (S:1).

Because they don't want to put us into a situation of them lectures and us students and have that barrier, that wall between us (S:2).

This attitude shown by the trainers as personally warm towards the students is in alignment with Mellor & Corrigan's (2004) understandings concerning culturally relevant pedagogy. The trainers' attitude also enables the students to use a low degree of formality when addressing their trainers. According to Samovar & Porter (2004) both the trainers' and the students' style of communication would therefore be classified as informal. Though, Hughes & More (1997) point out that in traditional Indigenous Australian culture a learning situation was characterized by elders telling stories and illustrating how things were to be done while the students listened and then imitated. To question what was taught was not something that was done. Therefore, the trainers' informal communication styles in the classroom might go against the traditional Indigenous Australian culture. This again shows QATSIHWEPAC's willingness to put the needs of the individuals first even if it means that they will work against the learning traditions of the Indigenous Australian culture.

Another sign of the trainers' informal communication style is shown in their description of having fun inside and outside of class as a successful situation. It was pointed out by the trainers how important it was that the students were enjoying themselves while they were learning.

...role-play, you can get some very funny role-play, and the laughter, and yet they're learning while they're having fun. And I think learning is about enjoying yourself, not about having to do this and having to do that, it's about enjoying what you're doing (T:5).

This was highly appreciated by the students and one even expressed;

...I've enjoyed every minute of it. I wanna keep going! (S:4)

The trainers have thereby by making the learning situation fun created a less formal class situation. As mentioned above this was done by taking on an informal communication style (Samovar & Porter, 2004). This might result in the students feeling more relaxed and comfortable in class.

### **- Support as a tool**

The organisation provides a lot of support for the students, academically, socially, emotionally as well as culturally. This is shown in a lot of different ways. The cultural support is shown in the cultural awareness, discussed above. The following examples of the organisation's support are academic, social and emotional support.

The organisation provides a full time employed tutor, who provides literacy and numeracy support. For the social and emotional issues the students have a student representative and one of the trainers is also a councillor. The students get to take their time

with what they need to learn. An example of this support provided by the trainers is shown in the following quote.

...we support the students while they're doing their assignments, we don't tell them what to write, we explain the situation more (T:5).

The trainers help the students that do not have a job with vocational placement in between blocks, so that they can use the knowledge they acquire during the course in real life. The trainers have, as mentioned above, the opportunity to fly out to those students who cannot participate in one block for some reason. This had been experienced by one student and was greatly appreciated and seen as a demonstration of the organisation's support and dedication to their students. Also the students might experience problems coming back to the communities as educated people, a problem mentioned before. Report by Commonwealth of Australia (2000) points to the importance of peer and family support. This support does not, as seen above, always exist. However, to help the students who are facing this difficult situation or other obstacles, the trainers emphasized that the students could always contact them by telephone or e-mail for support.

The actions taken by QATSIHWEPAC and the trainers can be seen as signs of their personal support towards the students as well as their engagement to them. Both support and engagement are important components to consider, pointed out by McRae et al. (2000). These components can contribute to a successful learning situation for Indigenous Australians. The importance of personal support is also stressed in Report by Commonwealth of Australia (2000). McRae et al. (2000) points out that specific specialized assistance is needed to create a successful learning situation, something which is provided at QATSIHWEPAC through their full time employed tutor. That the support of the Indigenous Australian students is stressed points to that they tend towards a relational learning style rather than an independent learning style according to Samovar & Porter's (2004) learning style dimensions. This due to them relying on support and help from their trainers to a great extent.

Students are by some trainers put in groups, as support groups when they first start a course. One of the reasons for this is to not leave quiet students alone but to get them in a group to mingle. The other reason is that these group interactions often leads to that older students can get back into the routine of teaching. Something that is very common in the traditional Indigenous Australian culture, where knowledge was transferred from the elders to the younger ones. These support groups can help create a situation where not only the trainers give the students support but the students support each other. The students pointed out that they always help each other if someone falls behind and they share information amongst each other.

...there's always, always, someone that will help you. If it's not a teacher it's another student (S:4).

The peer support in the courses is facilitated by putting the students in support groups. These groups also support the Indigenous Australian culture, being a collectivistic one where the group and belonging to a group is important to the individual (Hofstede, 2001 in Samovar & Porter, 2004). Since the older students can get back into the routine of teaching in these support groups, the groups can also be seen as a sign of the trainers' recognition of the Indigenous culture. This recognition is thereby made by using components from traditional Indigenous culture and using them in a present setting. The imitation of elders is a behaviour pointed out by Hughes & More (1997) to be traditional in the Indigenous Australian culture. This behaviour has therefore been internalized by many of the students in their upbringing through the socialization process and the behaviour is therefore natural to these students. However, since not all students are used to this behaviour they can by this process take part in a traditional Indigenous Australian learning situation and thereby get a deeper and broader understanding of the people they are going to work with. Supporting and acknowledging the student's culture in a learning setting is emphasized by Mellor & Corrigan (2004), McRae et al. (2000) as well as in Report by Commonwealth of Australia (2000) as important components when educating Indigenous Australians.

Though, some students mentioned that they did not get enough time in the beginning of the courses to really get to know each other. They requested a get to know each other session in the beginning of the course in order for them to feel more comfortable from the very start of the course.

Many of the students have a lack of confidence and a bad self-image due to experiences in the past and the way they have grown up. This is something that is considered by the trainers.

We support them. We support them, we tell them how important it is, their job, and let them know what they're doing is important. So you build them up as well. A lot of the students have low self-esteem when they come here (T:5).

I wasn't a very confident person because I finished school at grade ten.../---/ They delivered cert. III that well that it built my self-esteem, my confidence... (S:2).

In class the trainers were very specific on how they did not spotlight one student if he/she were having problems.

We can see that the trainers and the organisation have a great understanding concerning the students' lack of confidence and bad self-image. Mellor & Corrigan (2004) mean that in order for teachers to adopt a cultural relevant pedagogy they must have an understanding about the impact the students' social background and the Indigenous Australians' historical background have in the learning situation. The lack of confidence and bad self-image many Indigenous students have, are probably a result of many years of oppression, and can be a hindrance in the learning situation. Due to the fact that consid-



erations are taken by the trainers regarding the students' lack of confidence and bad self-images, a successful learning situation should be more likely to occur. This because the hindrance that a lack of confidence and bad self-image might be, is reduced in this way.

The students seemed to feel that they have a lot of support from the trainers and from their fellow students, both on an academic and personal level. They described the trainers as very approachable and dedicated. According to the trainers they take time to have a yarn with students if they seem to fall behind or need extra help, something that was brought up by the students as well. The students felt that the trainers go all out for them and that they care about them as a person. They also felt that they got a hundred percent back from the trainers and that they had plenty of time for their students.

If students need you they come first, and no problem with that (T:5).

This statement is a clear indicator of the engagement the trainers feel towards their students and the education. Also personal and peer support is evident. All three of these components are mentioned in McRae's et al. (2000) report as facilitators in learning situations involving Indigenous Australians.

The students were being encouraged to come back for further studies, however it was pointed out that:

...our role here is to support whatever they want (T:3).

The trainers were respectful as well as demanding of the students. They encouraged them to come back for more academic development but respected their choice if they chose not to come back. The trainers being demanding but respectful is pointed out by Mellor & Corrigan (2004) as fundamental for a successful education aimed at Indigenous Australians.

### **And finally...**

Even though the organisation seems to work well we felt it was important to mention a few of the less successful situations brought up by both the trainers and the students. It was pointed out by one of the trainers that lack of preparation had led to a less successful teaching experience. Due to the trainer's lack of preparation she tried to teach by reading out of a book. This did not work and she emphasized that this was not something she would do again. As discussed earlier this could be explained by the fact that Indigenous Australians generally have difficulties relating to information that is only being taught verbally.

A less successful situation brought up by some of the students was when what was being taught verbally did not match the information in the books. Another less successful situation, also mentioned by the students, was a communication breakdown that had occurred between the organisation's different buildings. This had only happened once but the students mentioned this as a less successful situation because of their image of the organisation as perfect, every little fault seemed huge to them.

Another less successful situation brought up by one of the trainers was when a student did not want to be there. This situation occurs when the government places people on the CDEP scheme in the course without them really wanting to be there. This is a dilemma to the trainers and one trainer expressed that:

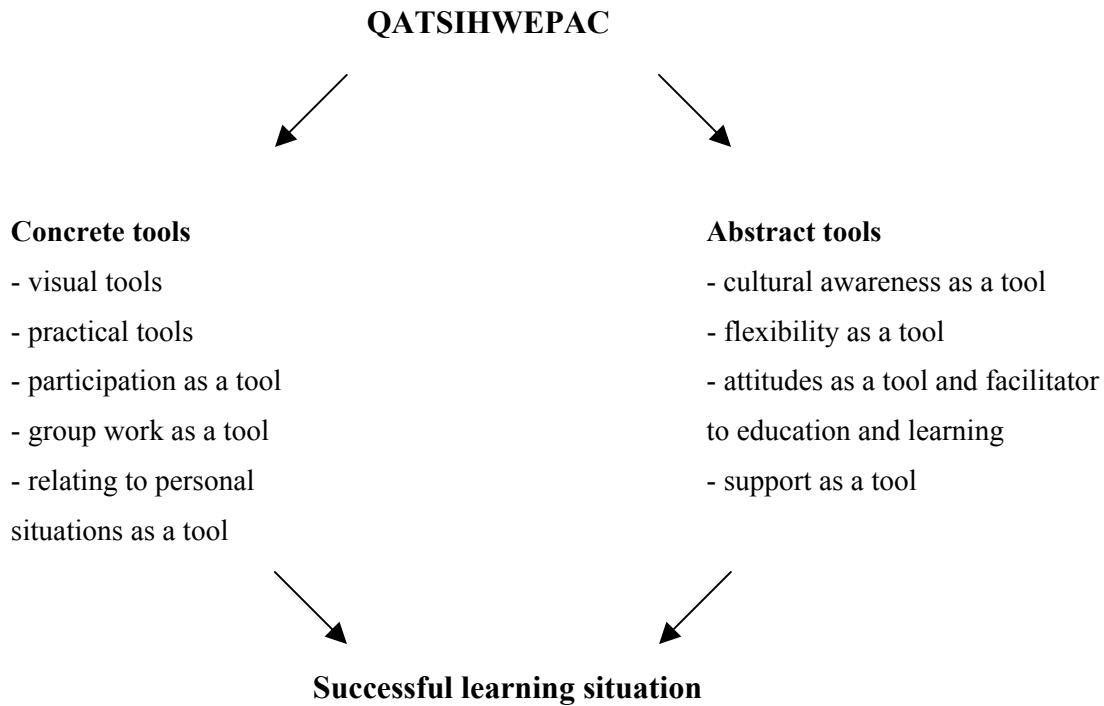
...I don't believe you can teach anyone who doesn't want to be here (T:2).

The assumption that it is not possible to teach anyone who does not want to be there might lead to that the trainer is not as demanding of this student and do not expect as much from him/her as from the other students. This might have the outcome that the student does not work as hard as the other students due to lack of demands from the trainer. It might become a self-fulfilling prophecy.

This can also be related to Samovar & Porter's (2004) motivational styles. The students who do not want to be in the course learn on demand whereas the students who have chosen to participate themselves would hopefully feel that what they learn is relevant. However, whether the student feel what they are learning is relevant will also depend on the design of the education. If the students are not learning what they feel is relevant it can be very hard to motivate them.

So even though the organisation use many appropriate tools, follow guidelines and have a culturally appropriate pedagogy to help their students in every possible way the problem with what to do with those students who do not want to be there still remains. As mentioned by one of the trainers above this is a problem the trainers must face. However, one trainer estimated that about eighty to eighty-five percent of the students had applied to the course by their own and wanted to be there.

This section has focused on what different learning tools were used and preferred in the classroom situations at QATSIHWEPAC. We believe that these tools have contributed to the successful learning situation for the students at QATSIHWEPAC. The following model illustrates this.



How QATSIHWEPAC has used these tools to contribute to create a successful learning situation will be explained below.

#### 4.3.4 How QATSIHWEPAC has created a successful learning situation

The reason why QATSIHWEPAC has managed to create a successful learning situation is because they have regarded and accommodated what learning styles are preferred by their students. Samovar & Porter (2004) states that students who are permitted to learn through their identified preferred learning style achieve better.

It has been shown that QATSIHWEPAC has regarded three of the four components, mentioned by Mellor & Corrigan (2004), as necessary for teaching a culturally relevant pedagogy. The following points clarify how these components have been regarded.

- They have considered the social, historical and political circumstances outside the school that can have an impact on the relationships within the classroom.
- The content of what is being taught is culturally relevant and regards the students' previous experiences.
- The trainers are personally warm towards and respectful of students, which make them culturally relevant trainers. The trainers are also academically demanding of their students. However, as discussed above we could see a risk that some of the students, those

who do not want to be in the course, might not be as challenged by their trainers. Though, we have no evidence of this.

The last component; that teachers need to spell out the cultural assumptions on which the classroom (and schooling) operates has not openly been regarded by the organisation. Though, as seen above the cultural assumptions, such as for example the holistic approach, seem to be shared by both the trainers and the students. Something which points to that the assumptions are implicit among them.

QATSIHWEPAC has also taken the components pointed out by McRae et al. (2000) in order for education to work into consideration. This has been done by:

- Having a curriculum that starts from what the student bring to class by assessing each student individually before the course begins.
- Providing specific specialized assistance in form of a tutor.
- Providing cultural support by recognising the Indigenous Australian history by regarding the impact this has had on the students' self-images.
- Providing personal support by having a student representative, a trainer as counsellor, giving the students a lot of time to finish assignments, helping the students to organise vocational placement, being reachable when the students go back to their community as well as trying to build up the students' self esteem.
- Providing peer support network by placing the students in support groups.
- Involving and having Indigenous Australian staff by striving towards employing only Indigenous Australian staff.
- Applying a flexible approach in the design and delivering of the education by for example having block training, flying out to students who cannot participate during one block, having the class outside on a warm day, changing modes of teaching in order to teach where the students are at as well as assessing the students in ways that suits them.
- Making the students participate in the classroom situation to a great extent through discussions and presentations.
- The trainers' engagement towards their students is shown by the trainers' extensive support.
- Having workshops in order for the students to get real life experience.
- Trying to keep the sizes of the classes small.
- Employing almost only Indigenous Australian people in order for them to act as role models.
- Including the Indigenous Australian culture in the curriculum by for example showing Power Point presentations including Indigenous Australians in the pictures.

- Having a cultural awareness by regarding the cultural codes in the Indigenous Australian culture such as for example giving the students a choice to be separated into female and male groups when learning about men's and women's business and using a lot of visual tools since it is regarded as a preferred learning style for Indigenous Australians.
- Applying a holistic approach by looking at the students' academic, social, emotional and cultural sides.

We believe that the fact that QATSIHWEPAC is a community controlled organisation also has contributed to them being able to deliver a successful education. As mentioned earlier, according to the Commonwealth government agencies, having community controlled programs is one of the most effective components to improve the quality of the provision of education to the students.

We believe that in order to create an optimal learning situation the students, trainers and CEO must work towards the same goal and have the same aim with the course. The results from our interviews show that this was the case to a great extent within the organisation even though the aim did not seem to have been explicitly expressed.

However, since an organisation always can learn more it is important to examine what QATSIHWEPAC could do to further improve the learning situation for their students.

#### 4.3.5 How could QATSIHWEPAC further improve the learning situation?

Since the last component, spelling out the cultural assumptions on which the classroom operates, is missing we believe measures should be taken in order to change this. As mentioned above the cultural assumptions seem to be shared by both the trainers and the students. However, we believe that it would be to the organisation's benefit to spell out their cultural assumptions in order for all the trainers as well as the students to more clearly know what they are working towards. The cultural assumptions would thereby be explicit instead of only implicit.

We also believe that the organisation should more clearly spell out their aim. As mentioned above, the CEO, trainers and students seem to have a similar aim, however this aim is not spelled out. According to their homepage, QATSIHWEPAC has an aim but not all of the trainers and students seemed to be aware of this. We believe it could be beneficial for the trainers if the aim was more explicit, since they could thereby easier work in alignment with the organisation's aim. It could also be beneficial for the students because they would know what QATSIHWEPAC's as well as the trainers' aims and goals where and would thereby be able to regard these. If a student does not have goals in alignment with QATSIHWEPAC's implicit goals they might feel pressured

into conforming. Though, if these goals are explicit and open to discussion it might be easier for the students to relate to them.

The fact that the trainers were free to take on a flexible approach should also be explicitly expressed by the organisation. From our interviews we got the impression that not all the trainers were aware of their space of action in their choice of teaching styles. Therefore we believe the organisation as well as the trainers and students would gain if these implicit understandings were spelled out. All the involved would then know what their opportunities and frames were.

Since the students requested for a get-to-know session in the beginning of the course we believe this is something QATSIHWEPAC should consider in order to enhance the students' comfort in the classroom situation.

## 4.4 Discussion

Our initial idea was to examine a program which had been developed in order to decrease the high unemployment rate among Indigenous Australians. However, when we started to interview different people involved in designing programs for Indigenous Australians we came to understand that the idea of these programs was not to initially decrease the high unemployment rate, but to provide Indigenous Australians with self-esteem, self-confidence, skills, tools and knowledge in order to take the situation into their own hands, i.e. empowerment. Therefore gaining employment is not the initial aim of the educational programs but a secondary goal.

A question we have been asking ourselves is whether the courses at QATSIHWEPAC are successful because of their cultural awareness or their flexibility towards the individual student, or due to both. If the decisive factor is the flexibility this would mean that anyone would be able to develop, deliver and take the courses at QATSIHWEPAC with success. We do not believe this to be the case. The cultural awareness is a foundation on which the courses are built and it is also a frame in which the trainers operate. It is on this foundation and within these frames that the flexibility exists. Therefore we believe it is a combination of cultural awareness and flexibility towards the individual that would explain the success at QATSIHWEPAC. However, these cultural frames, could they also pose as boundaries in the learning situation?

The fact that there is not just one Indigenous Australian culture has been brought up before. In traditional times there were many different tribes and in the contemporary Australian society there are not only different tribes but also different levels of urbanization amongst the Indigenous Australians. Due to this diversity there might be risks in recognizing certain learning styles as being Indigenous Australian learning styles. The diversity makes it important not to rely on the usage of modes that comply with these

learning styles, and thereby believe that all that can be done has been done. There is a great need for flexibility in these situations. At QATSIHWEPAC there is a great flexibility, but this flexibility is mostly within the frames of the Indigenous Australian learning styles mentioned above. Maybe they need to take an even broader approach concerning their flexibility in teaching to be sure to include all of their students' preferred learning styles.

It has been shown in the theoretical framework that it is recommended that Indigenous Australians are to plan and deliver their own education in order for it to be successful. By looking at QATSIHWEPAC it seems that this probably is the best way to do it. From our background interviews we understood that several projects directed towards Indigenous Australians have failed due to them being delivered by only non-Indigenous Australians who have not had the "right" knowledge, such as for example cultural knowledge. We also read about several projects directed towards Indigenous Australians who had failed for the same reasons. So if it seems that Indigenous Australians are the best to plan and deliver their own education should it not be easily done? We asked ourselves that question several times and concluded that it is not as easy as it might sound. Due to lack of Indigenous Australians with an education, it can be difficult to accomplish this. Even though QATSIHWEPAC tried to have only Indigenous staff they had faced this problem, which had led to them having to employ a few non-Indigenous staff. We also believe that it might be dangerous to have organisations with only Indigenous Australians as well as it would be dangerous to have an organisation with only non-Indigenous Australians. This due to the fact that these organisations will be very culturally homogenous and not able to take part in the other ethnic group's knowledge and perspectives. We also discussed whether this might not lead to even further segregation in a society already faced by enormous segregation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians. Are we striving towards this? This is a question that needs to be looked further into. We are ambivalent regarding this question. On one hand we believe that if a strategy works really well, then this strategy should be applied. For example if Indigenous Australians are benefiting from only having Indigenous Australians as staff, yes then they should have that. On the other hand we believe that in order to make a multicultural society work people from different ethnic groups have to cooperate. However, as long as the Indigenous Australians are not recognised in the mainstream Australian society and part of that system, no multicultural society will ever be created. The Indigenous Australian culture is still not taught in school and their culture is still neglected. We believe that without a recognition of the Indigenous Australian culture and changes within the school curriculum no multicultural society will ever be created. If the government are not willing to make such changes and the non-Indigenous Australians not willing to learn about the history of their Indigenous population, yes, then maybe it is better that the Indigenous Australians are to plan and deliver their own education, so their culture will not be lost.

We believe that the situation faced by Indigenous Australians can only be solved through one measure, empowerment. For us the word means help to helping yourself, and this is exactly what the Indigenous Australians need to do. They need to get help in order to help themselves if any changes are going to occur. We believe

QATSIHWEPAC is trying to empower their students in order for them to be able to go back to their communities and help their people. However, empowerment was not something the organisation spoke about explicitly, although their actions show that this is what they are doing. Bringing with us the knowledge we got in Australia and from QATSIHWEPAC we aim to continue with the issue of Indigenous Australians, however this time with focus on empowerment.

The program 'Svenska för Invandrare' (SFI) (translated as 'Swedish for Immigrants') has recently published a report concerning their classes' low pass rates. Conceivable components pointed out as contributors to these failures where; lack of support from the education coordinators, lack of flexibility when putting a student in a course and not have the ability to get the student to change course if it is not on the right level for the student, the student's ambitions in the course and unforeseen events in the student's life that intervene with the training. Why are all these components missing? Could the knowledge we gained at QATSIHWEPAC be applied at these courses as well? As mentioned above we believe empowerment to be one of the most important components in courses aimed at exposed and disprivileged groups. Indigenous Australians as well as immigrants in Sweden are examples of such exposed and disprivileged groups. However, we need to be aware of the fact that these two groups are of highly different character. This due to the Indigenous Australians being a native population in their country and immigrants in Sweden having arrived to Sweden leaving their own country.

As mentioned above we would like to focus on Indigenous Australians in relation to empowerment in further studies. We believe that further research needs to be done concerning how Indigenous Australians can use empowerment as the initial tool to improve their health situation as well as their underrepresentation on the labour market. We would also find it very interesting to see what empowerment could contribute to a course at SFI. Are there any possibilities to apply empowerment in these courses and would it help the students to achieve more? These are questions we ask ourselves, and hope to look into and acquire a deeper understanding about. We therefore want to do a comparative study between QATSIHWEPAC and SFI in relation to empowerment in our next study. However, being aware of the fact that Indigenous Australians and immigrants in Sweden are of highly different character we believe that some tools and principles of empowering that work for Indigenous Australians might not be transferable to immigrants in Sweden. Though, we believe that many principles and tools can and should be transferred between the two groups.

Our hope is that this study can be used by the organisation QATSIHWEPAC in order for them to further improve their education. We also hope that other Australian organisations, as well as organisations in other countries can use the knowledge we have collected in order to improve the situation for minority groups. As mentioned above we believe that there need to be changes in the Australian curriculum in order for a change to occur in the society at large. We therefore hope that this knowledge may be utilized not only by organisations but also by politicians who can have an influence in this matter.



# References

- Barlow, A. & Hill, M. (2001). *Aboriginal People, Then and Now- Bosses Ourselves, the story of Aboriginal self-government*. Port Melbourne: Heinemann Library
- Bryman, A. (2001). *Social Research Methods*. New York: Oxford University Press
- Cape York Indigenous Employment Strategy – “Local jobs for local people”. (2005). Prepared for Department of Employment & Workplace Relations, Department of Employment & Training, Department of Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Policy. With the assistance of Kleinhardt-FGI Corporate Advisors and Business Mapping Solutions Pty Ltd.
- Cole, M. (1996). *Cultural psychology: a once and future discipline*. London: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press
- Commonwealth of Australia (Report by). Report prepared by Secretariat of the Senate Employment, Workplace Relations, Small Business and Education References Committee. (2000). *Katu Kalpa – Report on the inquiry into the effectiveness of education and training programs for Indigenous Australians*. Canberra: Senate Printing Unit, Parliament House
- Coombs, H. C. (1994). *Aboriginal Autonomy – Issues and Strategies*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press
- Ellström, Per-Erik (1992). *Kompetens, utbildning och lärande i arbetslivet. Problem, begrepp och teoretiska perspektiv*. Publica, Stockholm
- Foley, G. & Flowers, R. (1992). *Knowledge and power in Aboriginal adult education*. Convergence. Vol. 25, Issue. 1, 1992, pp. 61-75. International Council for Adult Education
- Folds, R. (1987). *Whitefella school: education and Aboriginal resistance*. Sydney: Allen & Unwin Australia Pty Ltd
- Gordon, M. (2001). *Reconciliation – A journey*. Sydney: University of New South Wales Press Ltd
- Harris, S. (1984). *Culture and learning – Tradition and education in north-east Arnhem Land*. Canberra: Northern Territory Department of Education

- Harris, S. (1990). *Two-Way Aboriginal Schooling – Education and Cultural Survival*. Canberra: Aboriginal Studies Press
- Herlitz, G. (1999). *Kulturgrammatik: hur du ökar din förmåga att umgås med människor från andra kulturer*. Uppsala: Uppsala Publ. House
- Hewitt, D. (2000). *A Clash of Worldviews: Experiences from Teaching Aboriginal Students*. Theory Into Practice. Vol. 39, Issue. 2, 2000, pp. 111-118. Ohio State University
- Hofstede, G. (2001). *Cultures consequences- comparing values, behaviors, institutions, and organizations across nations*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications
- Hofstede, G. & Hofstede, G. J. (2005). *Cultures and Organisations – Software of the mind*. New York: McGraw-Hill
- <http://www.qatsihwepac.com.au/> (2006-05)
- <http://www.ne.se>, (2006-10)
- Hughes, P. (1987). *Aboriginal Culture and Learning Styles – A Challenge For Academics in Higher Education Institutions*. Armidale: University of New England
- Hughes, P & More, A. J. (1997). *Aboriginal ways of learning and learning styles*. Paper presented at the Annual Conference of the Australian Association for Research in Education, Brisbane
- Hunter, B. H. (2003). *Indigenous Australians in the contemporary labour market*. Canberra: Australian Bureau of Statistics
- International Encyclopedia of the Social & Behavioral Sciences, Volume 6. (2001). Editors-in-chief Smelser, N. J. & Baltes, P. B. Oxford: Elsevier Science Ltd.
- Jacobsen, Dag Ingvar & Thorsvik, Jan (2002). *Hur moderna organisationer fungerar*. Lund: Studentlitteratur

- Matthews, L. E. (2003). *Babies overboard! The complexities of incorporating culturally relevant teaching into mathematics instruction*. Educational Studies in Mathematics. Vol. 53, Issue. 1, 2003, pp. 61-82. Kluwer
- McRae, D., Ainsworth, G., Cumming, J., Hughes, P., Mackay, T. Price, K., Rowland, M., Warhurst, J., Woods, D. and Zbar, V. The SRP National Coordination and Evaluation Team. (2000). *Education and Training for Indigenous Students. What has worked (and will again). The IESIP Strategic Results Projects*. Canberra: Australian Curriculum Studies Association and National Curriculum Services
- Mellor, M. & Corrigan, M. (2004). *Australian Education Review - The Case for Change - A review of contemporary research on indigenous education outcomes*. Camberwell: ACER Press
- Merriam, S. B. (1994). *Fallstudien som forskningsmetod*. Lund: Studentlitteratur
- Merriam, S. B. (1998). *Qualitative Research and Case Study Applications in Education*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers
- Mertens, D. M. (1998). *Research methods in education and psychology - Integrating diversity with quantitative & qualitative approaches*. Thousand Oaks, USA: Sage Publications, Inc.
- Miles, M. B. & Huberman, A. M. (1994). *Qualitative data analysis: an expanded sourcebook*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications
- Samovar, L. A. & Porter, R. E. (2004). *Communication between cultures*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth/Thomson Learning
- Säljö, R. (2000). *Lärande i praktiken, Ett sociokulturellt perspektiv*. Stockholm: Prisma
- Triandis, H. C. (2001). *Individualism-Collectivism and Personality*. Journal of Personality. Vol. 69, Issue. 6, 2001, pp. 907-924. Blackwell Publishing
- Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). *Mind in Society – The development of Higher Psychological Processes*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press

Yamazaki, Y. (2005). *Learning styles and typologies of cultural differences: A theoretical and empirical comparison*. International Journal of Intercultural Relations. Vol. 29, Issue. 5, 2005, pp. 521-548. Pergamon

Yukl, G. (2002). *Leadership in organisations*. Upper Sadel River, NJ: Prentice hall, cop.

# Appendix

## **Interview guide for background interview I with the developer of the “Cape York Indigenous Employment Strategy”**

- *Ok to record?*
- *We will transcribe it and send it to you so you can read it and if you would like to change something and take something out. We will not use any of it until you have approved of it.*
- *We will take some notes as well*
- *If you want to stop the recording just let us know*
- *What we want to do: interest in minority groups in the society and especially in the labour market*
- *A case study on one of the strategies developed for Indigenous people here in Australia, from an educational perspective.*

### **About the interviewee**

- Your background
- Your experience of previous projects or developing strategies

### **About the situation of Indigenous Australians**

- The current situation for Indigenous Australians on the labour market (His perspective)
- What has been done to improve the situation?

### **About the specific project (Cape York Indigenous Employment Strategy)**

- Explain the strategy briefly
  - When was it finished?
- How did you get involved in this specific project (Cape York Peninsula...)?
- Why did you get involved in this project?
- Your part in the project?
- What was the purpose and what did you want to accomplish?
- What was the goal of the strategy?
- How was it planned to be accomplished?

- By whom was it developed and planned. What are their backgrounds (education, work experience?)
- How was it planned and developed?
  - Research in the communities, interviews
  - Mapping
  - Why?
- Does this strategy differ from other projects and strategies that have been done concerning this?
  - If so in what way is it different from previous ones?
- Was it divided into different small projects?
  - How come?

### **Education**

- Was there any education included in the strategy?
  - What was the aim of this education?
  - How was it planned? What did it contain, work experience, classes etc...?
- Where there any specific factors that you had to consider during the development of the strategy?
- Were the participants' different previous experiences and competences something that was considered during the development of the strategy?
- Was the idea to enhance the participants' competence in any way?
  - If so, how was this done?
- Is it different to develop a strategy involving Indigenous Australians than it would be developing one for non Indigenous Australians?
  - In what way?
  - Any specific factors?
- Have you ever noticed any differences between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people in their ways of learning? (Cultural differences)
  - In what way?
  - Has this influenced the strategy in any way?
  - If so, in what way?

### **Implementation?**

- Do you know why this program has not been implemented?

- If you were to plan this implementation, how would you like it to be done?
  - Would that be possible?
  - How?

**Project for us to examine**

**Trail 1:** - Would it be possible for us to examine one part of this project? (Interviews with participants, developers, government people etc.)

**Trail 2:** - Is there any other project? Our aim is to...

Would it be all right for us to contact you again if we have any further questions?

Thank you very much!

## **Interview guide for background interview with the Indigenous Liaison & Policy Officer at Community & Cultural Development, Cairns City Council**

- *Ok to record?*
- *We will transcribe it and send it to you so you can read it and if you would like to change something and take something out. We will not use any of it until you have approved of it.*
- *If you want to stop the recording just let us know*
- *We will take some notes as well*
- *What we want to do: interest in minority groups in the society and especially in the labour market*
- *A case study on one of the strategies developed for Indigenous people here in Australia, from an educational perspective.*

### **About the interviewee**

- Your background
  - What do you do?
  - What have you done in the past? (other strategies/projects)
  - Education?

### **The current situation for Indigenous Australians**

- What has been done to improve the situation for Indigenous Australians on the labour market?
- What needs to be done?
- What kinds of strategies and programs are there? (we have read the Cape York Indigenous Employment Strategy and some others...)
- The government's purpose for these strategies?
- What is the aim with these strategies? (for the society and the people)
- How are these strategies planned to be implemented?
- Who would be suitable to develop these strategies?
- Have you been involved in any of these strategies?
  - In what way?

### **Implementation**

- Have any of the strategies been implemented?



### **Trail I**

- If so, by whom?
  - Why?
- How?
- What has been successful, less successful?
  - Why?

### **Trail II**

- Why not?
- How could they be implemented?
- In that case, who should do it?

### **Education**

- Is there any education for the participants included in strategies of this kind?
  - What is the aim of this education?
  - How is it planned? What does it contain, work experience, classes etc..?
- Are there any specific factors that you have to consider when you develop a strategy?
- For whom are these strategies developed?
- Are the participants' different previous experiences and competences something that would be considered during the development of a strategy?
- Is the idea to enhance the participants' competence in any way?
  - If so, how would this be done?
- Is it different to develop a strategy involving Indigenous Australians than it would be developing one for non Indigenous Australians?
  - In what way?
  - Any specific factors?
- Have you ever noticed any differences between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people in their ways of learning? (Cultural differences)
  - In what way?
  - Does this influence the strategies in any way?
  - If so, in what way?

**Project for us to examine**

- Ask about specific strategies.
- Would it be possible for us to examine one project that has been developed (and implemented)? (Interviews with participants, developers, government people etc.)
- Other people who would be suitable to talk to about these questions?

Would it be all right for us to contact you again if we have any further questions?

Thank you very much!

## **Interview guide for background interview with employees at the Cape York Institute for Policy and Leadership.**

- *Ok to record?*
- *We will transcribe it and send it to you so you can read it and if you would like to change something or take something out. We will not use any of it until you have approved of it.*
- *If you want to stop the recording just let us know...will take some notes as well*
- *What we want to do: interest in minority groups in the society and especially in the labour market*
- *A case study on one of the strategies developed for Indigenous people here in Australia, from an educational perspective.*

### **About interviewee**

- Your background
  - What do you do?
  - What have you done in the past? (other projects)
  - Education?

### **About the organisation (Cape York Institute for Policy and Leadership)**

- Could you tell us about your organization and its aim and purpose
  - What is its aim and goal?
  - Size of the organisation?
  - How many people are involved in it etc.?

### **Education**

- Is there any education involved in your projects (current or recent ones)?
- If so, could you tell us about the education
  - Who is it for?
  - Who can take part in your education?
  - How many people take part in it (a year)?
  - What is the aim of this education? (move on to further education, get employment...)
- What kind of education is provided for the participants?

- How is it planned in detail? What does it contain, work experience, classes etc...?
- Is the education developed the same for everyone? (based on the individual...)

### **The design and development**

- Who has designed the education?
  - Why is it designed the way it is?
- Are there any specific factors that you have to consider when you develop these kinds of education programs?
- Are the participants' different previous experiences and competences something that is considered during the designing and carrying through of the program/education?
- Is the idea to enhance the participants' competence in any way?
  - If so, how would this be done?
- Is it different designing an education for Indigenous Australians than it would be designing one for non Indigenous Australians?
  - In what way?
  - Any specific factors?
- Have you ever noticed any differences between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people in their ways of learning? (Cultural differences)
  - In what way?
  - Does this influence the designing and carrying through of the education in any way?
  - If so, in what way?

### **Outcome of the education**

- What are the expected outcomes?
- What were the actual outcomes?
- Is the education evaluated?
  - If so how?

- By whom?
- Why?
- What were the results?

**Our project**

- Would it be possible for us to talk to anyone in charge of the education for Indigenous people in any of your projects, and also some participants in the courses?

Would it be all right for us to contact you again if we have any further questions?

Thank you very much!

## **Interview guide for interview I with the CEO at Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Worker Education Program Aboriginal Corporation (QATSIHWEPAC)**

**Core business:** Training Indigenous Health workers from all parts of Australia

- *Ok to record?*
- *We will transcribe it and send it to you so you can read it and if you would like to change something and take something out. We will not use any of it until you have approved of it.*
- *If you want to stop the recording just let us know*
- *We will take some notes as well*
- *What we want to do: interest in minority groups in the society and especially in the labour market*
- *A case study on one of the strategies developed for Indigenous people here in Australia, from an educational perspective.*

### **About the CEO**

- Your background
  - What do you do?
  - What have you done in the past? (other projects)
  - Education?

### **About the organisation (Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Worker Education Program Aboriginal Corporation)**

- Could you tell us about your organization and its aim and purpose
  - What is its aim and goal?
  - Size of the organization?
  - How many people are involved in it etc?

### **Education**

- Tell us about the education
  - Who is it for?
  - Who can take part in your education?
  - How many people take part in it (a year)?

- How many finishes it?
  - What is the aim of this education? (move on to further education, get employment...?)
- What kind of education is provided for the people training to be health workers?
    - How is it planned in detail? What does it contain, work experience, classes etc...?
    - We read on the web page that each class contains approximately 15 students. What is the purpose of that?
    - Is the education developed the same for everyone? (based on the individual...)

### **The design and development**

- Who has designed the education?
  - Why is it designed the way it is?
- Are there any specific factors that you have to consider when you develop these kinds of education programs?
- Are the participants' different previous experiences and competences something that is considered during the designing and carrying through of the program/education?
- Is the idea to enhance the participants' competence in any way?
  - If so, how would this be done?
- Is it different designing an education for Indigenous Australians than it would be designing one for non Indigenous Australians?
  - In what way?
  - Any specific factors?
- Have you ever noticed any differences between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people in their ways of learning? (Cultural differences)
  - In what way?
  - Does this influence the designing and carrying through of the education in any way?

- If so, in what way?

### **Outcome of the education**

- How many proceed to a full time job?
  - If so, why do you think this is so successful?
  - If not, why do you think that is?
- How many proceeds to further education?
- Are the courses evaluated?
  - If so how?
  - By whom?
  - Why?
  - What were the results?

### **Questions regarding the information provided by the web page**

We have a few questions regarding the information provided on the webpage.

- We are wondering what it means to be ‘flexible in your approach’ regarding the courses. How do you accomplish this flexibility?
- We also read that you ‘encourage innovation in presentation but not at the expense of student learning’
  - How do the teachers know where to draw the line?
  - Please explain different ways to be innovative for the teachers, are there courses for that?
- Since it is your policy to “provide learning opportunities to all persons...” In what way do you seek to accomplish this?
  - Is it being successful / less successful?
  - Why?
- We were also wondering what an acceptable level of literacy is?
  - What is required of the students?



**Our project**

- Would it be possible for us to talk to the one/the ones in charge of the design, the teachers on the course, and also some participants in the course, both current and certified?

Would it be all right for us to contact you again if we have any further questions?

Thank you very much!

**Interview guide for interview II with the CEO at Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Worker Education Program Aboriginal Corporation (QATSIHWEPAC)**

- *Ok to record?*
- *We will transcribe it and send it to you so you can read it and if you would like to change something and take something out. We will not use any of it until you have approved of it.*
- *If you want to stop the recording just let us know*
- *We will take some notes as well*
- *What we want to do: interest in minority groups in the society and especially in the labour market*
- *A case study on one of the strategies developed for Indigenous people here in Australia, from an educational perspective.*

**Questions regarding the last meeting**

The last time we spoke to you, you mentioned that the course didn't work well when TAFE delivered it. Do you think you could specify why?

One of the board members also said that you 'made sure that the Indigenous components were still there, that it was run on an Indigenous mind.

- What does that mean?
- How did you make sure that the Indigenous components were still there?

A set of skills and tools identified by Indigenous people that were put into the training program.

- What sort of skills and tools was this?
- Consequences for the course?

The fact that almost all your staff is Indigenous. What effects do you think that have in the situation in the classroom / in the learning situation?

- Pros and cons?

You mentioned the last time when we spoke about differences in learning, that it's a different process with Indigenous people than with non-Indigenous.

- In what way?
- Why do you think that is?

- Is this regarded in the classroom?
  - If so how?

How are the classes designed? (Sit and listen, discussions, practical exercises, workshops...?)

You mentioned in the last interview that: “The group learning situation is highly important. Am, but it doesn’t mean that it works for everybody. There are individuals and people who wanna do things on their own, and we accommodate that. But I guess that a lot of the, the way the lessons that have been developed over the years have been structured as, around group learning. But with individual tasks, not group assessment but individual.”

- Do you mean that everyone does not like and doesn’t have to do it or that some people learn better alone?

Female / Male? How many students?

Last time you mentioned that about fifty percent receives a job after this course. How do you calculate that?

- Are only the students who receive a job as a health worker included in this or do you include everyone who gets any type of job?

What happens to the other fifty percent?

- Why do you think that they don’t get a job?

You also said last time that the aim is not only for the students to get a job but to give something back to their community. In what way can they do that?

Do you provide any support for the students in their home communities?

- Contact with family, friends, etc.?
- Are you involved with the councils in the communities?

Do you provide support for the students after they graduate?

- If so, what kind of support?
- How much?

- Do you regard the difficulties that could face the students when they come back, with people giving them a hard time because they've been away for education?

We have read and heard people speak about the amount of certificates that a lot of people up in the Cape have, without leading anywhere. That it has only been training for the sake of training? Is this something you have considered in this course?

Are the students aware that there might not be a job outcome of the course?

- If so, how do you think they motivate themselves?

### **Questions regarding the information provided by the web page**

From the information on your web site we could read that you want to create awareness and understanding of the need for 'Culturally appropriate training courses'.

- First, what does culturally appropriate mean in this context?
- And secondly, how do you aim to accomplish this in the classroom?

We also read that you 'encourage innovation in presentation but not at the expense of student learning' Could you please explain what that means.

- How do the teachers know where to draw the line?
- Please explain different ways to be innovative for the teachers, are there courses for that?

We are wondering what it means to be 'flexible in your approach' regarding the courses? Could you please specify that?

- How do you accomplish this flexibility?

Since it is your policy to '... provide learning opportunities to all persons...' In what way do you seek to accomplish this?

- Is it being successful / less successful
  - Why?

We were also wondering what an acceptable level of literacy is?

- What is required of the students?

Would it be possible for us to meet any students who have already finished and who have a job?

**Questions to one of the board members**

Could you please explain the Hawaiian project in detail?

- What was the name of the person who came up with it?

How have you implemented that in this course?

**Interview guide for the trainers at Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Worker Education Program Aboriginal Corporation (QATSIHWEPAC)**

- *Ok to record?*
- *We will transcribe it and send it to you so you can read it and if you would like to change something and take something out. We will not use any of it until you have approved of it.*
- *If you want to stop the recording just let us know*
- *We will take some notes as well*
- *What we want to do: interest in minority groups in the society and especially in the labour market*
- *A case study on one of the strategies developed for Indigenous people here in Australia, from an educational perspective.*

Background:

- Where are you from?
- Education?
- Work experience?

Why are you teaching?

What is your aim with this course?

Tell us about a typical day

Tell us about a typical class

Describe a successful situation in class

- Why do you think this was successful?

Describe a less successful situation in class

- Why do you think this was less successful?

How do you prepare for this?

Are there any specific tools that you find more useful in the classroom?

- Why?

Have you experienced/ Do you think there are...any differences between teaching Indigenous students and non-Indigenous students?

- If so, in what way?
- Why do you think that is?

What do you think is the student's purpose for taking this course?

How...In what way... do you think the students will be able to use this course?

**Interview guide for the students at Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Worker Education Program Aboriginal Corporation (QATSIHWEPAC)**

Background:

- Where are you from?
- Education?
- Work experience?

Why are you taking this course? (Purpose)

- Expectations

What do you want to accomplish?

So far, does the course meet your expectations?

Tell us about a typical day

Tell us about a typical class

Describe a successful situation in class

- Why do you think this was successful?

Describe a less successful situation in class

- Why do you think this was less successful?

What kinds of situations or setting do you prefer for learning?

- Why?
- How do you feel about working in a group?
- How do you feel about working alone?
- What do you prefer?

Flexibility:

- Do you feel the course can meet all your needs?



- Do you feel the teachers and staff (including tutors, student support) can meet all your needs? Do they listen to you individually?
- What did you think about the individual assessment before the course?
- Was it helpful?
- Was it accurate?

How/ In what way... do you think you will be able to use this education?