

## CHAPTER THREE

### OVERVIEW OF THE LITERATURE ON DISTANCE EDUCATION, THE HOME TUTOR AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE CENTRAL RESEARCH QUESTION

This chapter reviews recent literature concerning distance education and, in doing so, argues that there is a need for developing substantive theory about how parents manage the role of home tutor. It seems that the area is underdeveloped in both practice and research, which is evidenced in the detail that follows.

The chapter has three sections. The first section, ‘research regarding distance education’, reviews writings from a range of sources and notes how significant changes and technological advances have altered the shape of distance education. The second section has a focus on ‘research about distance education in Australia’. The third section, ‘research into the practices and strategies of the home tutor explores recent studies regarding the home tutor and what is known about that role. Other perspectives are drawn into this section and the focus is Western Australia. It is useful to understand and know what other researchers have discovered about the role of the home tutor. A range of perspectives is provided. Very little work on distance education has been undertaken in the area of primary aged children. One of the main problems in generalising about home tutors from much of the literature reviewed here is that the studies have been conducted in various countries, and, therefore, may not inform or be transferable to practices of home tutors in this thesis. The contexts of home tutors in this thesis are seemingly quite unique.

## RESEARCH REGARDING DISTANCE EDUCATION

The field of distance education has been dominated over the past decade by research in areas such as the effectiveness of distance education, research methodologies, learner characteristics, design issues, strategies for increased interactivity, cost effectiveness of new technologies, flexible learning and program development (Berge & Mrozowski, 2001; Brennan, McFadden & Law, 2001; Diaz, 2000; Evans & Smith, 1999; Moore & Thompson, 1997; Saba, 2000). Much of the research has been devoted to comparative studies of distance and more conventional methods of education (Diaz, 2000).

Distance education encompasses a wide range of students who, through the use of new technologies such as the Internet, have become distance learners. The students are not necessarily at a 'geographical distance', but rather are using a range of new technologies such as E-mail and the World Wide Web (www) (Bates, 1997; Dillon & Gabbard, 1998; Freeman, 1997; Freeman & Capper, 1999; Hutton, 1998). Previously distance education referred to correspondence study, but more recently has also become associated with complementary technologies (Berge & Mrozowski, 2001; Distance Learning Resource Network, 1995; Peters, 2000b). Garrison (2000) would argue that a conceptual confusion has been created with the advent of "new terminology, new technologies, new program demands, new audiences, and new commercially competitive providers" (p.1). The pace at which change has occurred provides a range of options about which distance educators need to make sense.

Distance education has become an increasingly popular option for students who fit study around their professional lives and while for some a preferred choice, it is for others the only way in which they can gain access to an education. While distance education has been the main business of institutions such as the Open University other tertiary institutions have not had as their main mode of delivery this style of learning. Increasingly however, tertiary institutions have been exploring alternative flexible options especially with advances in technology such as the World Wide Web. Alternative modes of course delivery have become popular with tertiary institutions that have viewed the expansion into these markets as both a social and economic response to the changing needs of learners and their own funding (Coaldrake & Stedman, 1998). The literature, therefore, reflects this focus, and unfortunately, there is little of direct relevance to this study. It seems that distance education, and more particularly correspondence schooling as it appears in Australia, may well have unique attributes.

The international literature on distance education has revealed a rapid shift to a 'new age' of distance learning that has been supported by the development of new technologies (Koelsch, 1995). Identifying the 'new' learner has become increasingly complex as distance is no longer the main reason that students select distance learning options and the individual learner cannot be easily profiled (Thompson, 1998). Previously the distance learner has been somewhat isolated but with the new technologies the student who is studying in distance modes can now interact directly with the teacher and other students (Bates, 1997; Brace-Govan, 2000; Chabon, 2001; Kirkwood, 2000; Oliver, 1999). The learners themselves have had increased attention as

educational assumptions about how distance learners 'learn' are more fully explored. The favouring of constructivist approaches has altered the way in which distance education is being managed. The learners are increasingly becoming the focus of their own learning and the mode of delivery according to (Saba, 1998) becomes irrelevant.

Over the past decade there have been several encompassing reviews of research pertaining to distance education (Dillon & Gabbard, 1998; Moore & Thompson, 1990, 1997; Perraton, 2000; Phipps & Merisotis, 1999; Schlosser & Anderson, 1994). The most recent by Berge & Mrozowski (2001) sorted articles, dissertations and abstracts according to Sherry's (1996) categorisation system. In their comprehensive summary of research in distance education between 1990 and 1999 from *The American Journal of Distance Education (USA)*, *Distance Education: An International Journal (Australia)*, *Journal of Distance Education (Canada)*, *Open Learning (UK)* and dissertation abstracts they identified trends in both the content and research methodologies. They found only 890 of the 1,419 articles and dissertations published during the ten-year period could be sorted according to the classification. According to Berge and Mrozowski, of the 890 articles, dissertations and abstracts three-fourths involved descriptive research. The content was dominated by research into "design issues, interactivity and active learning, and learner characteristics" (p.13). Berge and Mrozowski suggested that future research should address the deficiencies that were identified during the review:

- The research has tended to emphasize student outcomes for individual courses rather than for a total academic program

- The research does not adequately explain why the dropout rates of distance learners are higher
- The research focuses mostly on the impact of individual technologies rather than on the interaction of multiple technologies
- The research does not adequately address the effectiveness of digital libraries. (p.17)

Berge and Mrozowski (2001) felt that if the research agenda was agreed upon then the gaps that required urgent attention could be removed. Further, that if more of the same research was undertaken that these gaps would remain (p.18).

There is an increasing level of access to and knowledge of technology in society (Bates, 1997; Scott, 1994; Symes, 1996). Infrastructures enable students to surf the web, word process, E-mail at home, at school and use Internet cafes. Flexible delivery has become popularised with increased use of the World Wide Web in recent years. Nunan (1996) and others (Dolence & Norris, 1995) have stated that transformation in the education sector has been largely driven by technology. The emergence of low cost telecommunications and a variety of competitive Internet providers have enabled an entire community of new users at all levels of education. This makes the integration of technology complementary to courses that have traditionally been delivered through lectures, workshops, or written materials a particularly exciting new teaching strategy (Freeman & Capper, 1999; Manathunga, 2000; Peters, 2000b).

Some of the discussion in the literature suggests that the new digital learning environment will enable “increased independent and self-determined

learning” (Peters, 2000, p.16). Further that a ‘pedagogical restructuring’ may be required in order to develop distance education

into an extraordinarily open, flexible and variable form of teaching and learning which can be adapted and adjusted to the learning environments of students, who will differ greatly from one another with regard to their age, social background and vocational orientation and position (p.16).

There is a warning to be had from Bates (1996b; 1997) who feels that the new technologies come wrapped in hype, and that while they promise to meet the needs of all learners, institutions and lecturers alike, caution is necessary. Careful management and design is essential for greater learning effectiveness. Bates identifies the convergence of on-campus and distance learner materials as an area of considerable confusion and argues that:

while distance learners may use similar technology-based materials as on-campus students (which is where the convergence is occurring), we are finding they need a different kind of service from the institution. Distance students need an on-line help service that covers both technical and academic issues. What works beautifully between Sun workstations over fibre optics and/or Ethernet on campus can take several hours to download over standard telephone lines, or may not run at all on a 486 computer. Despite this, I am finding people are constantly using the terms 'distributed learning' and 'distance education' interchangeably or assuming they mean the same thing - to the extent that one Dean told me recently that we do not need any special provision for distance education now that the technologies are leading to convergence - distance education

is just an extension of an instructor's work. While it is true that there is convergence, it is a mistake to think that because the technologies appear to be the same for both on-campus and distance learners, there is no need for specialist design and support services for distance education. (1997, p.96)

The move into an era of technological determinism requires a rethinking of how best technologies can be implemented and in a cost-effective manner (Bates, 1994, 1996b, 1997; Garrison, 2000). The rush forward has created a meeting place for communication and computing technologies. For most, seamless communication between the home, office, car and mobile phone are ordinary daily occurrences. The new opportunities for distance education are seemingly endless. Garrison (2000) stated that the challenge for distance educators would be to develop collaborative rather than independent approaches and uses of technology that “have at their core an adaptive teaching and learning transactions” (p.13).

### *Infrastructure*

Infrastructure is essential for access to new technologies. Many distance education providers require that students have computers, computer networking, databases of digital information and more (Resmer, Mingle, & Oblinger, 1995). This is in contrast to the generations of distance learners who had relied on more conventional infrastructures such as the postal service, television and audiocassettes. While the number of students who have access to computers is increasing, the access to infrastructures such as fibre optics to

enable Internet access is limited in many rural and remote locations in Australia. There is a gap in provision and many students rely on correspondence materials and interactions through what many may call antiquated technology such as HF Radio transceivers and mail.

The national provider for telecommunications in Australia, Telecom now competes with many other providers in a deregulated market. There are about 30 carriers and 500 Internet Service Providers (ISP). Traditionally urban areas have supported the development and investment in rural areas. Since the federal government has moved to privatize Telecom, the company has had to become more mindful of investments and returns. Although Telecom has invested considerable sums into developing infrastructures to meet the needs of rural customers there is uncertainty in the investment environment, which has made it difficult for Telecom to make firm, long-term decisions in some areas of service provision.

In rural areas, cabling can extend 30-40 kms from an access point; in metropolitan areas it is usually around 4 kms. The cabling is mostly copper and the further the lines extend the poorer the line. Furthermore, much cabling can be interrupted by electric fences and other factors. Consequently many families living more than 30-40 kms from an access point rely on a radio network and represents about 4% of the population. The Government does, however provide a 50% subsidy for the use of Big Pond Satellite, but relatively few have taken up the offer (Blackwell, Isaacs, Swain, Simpson & Granville, 1999). The satellite enables high-speed transmission in contrast to the copper cable network. Programs and access to the Internet can be beamed from the satellite early in the day when the airwaves are relatively free of interference.



A reason why families have not embraced the use of Big Pond Satellite is due to its cost. While installation has a government subsidy, the cost of access is prohibitive for some. For example, a family that has no access to a local service provider will pay \$7 per hour plus the cost of a local call. In some of the most remote areas it may not even be possible to get a local call rate to the nearest town; however, Telecom has provided a safety net for these people who can still get access through Telecom Big Pond at the \$7 per hour rate. It seems that it would be impossible to require school students to have access to such infrastructure, as higher education providers often require. The economics of providing more than an 'early generation' of distance education is complex and compounded by the size of the possible virtual schoolroom. However, SIDE intends to ensure that all children will have access to a new broadband satellite system by 2005 and during 2002 was authorized to seek tenders to provide this service. The Western Australian context is unique and while distance education advances technologically at a global level, access and equity of access will for some geographically isolated Western Australian children remain an issue until infrastructure and resource issues are resolved.

## ISSUES IN DISTANCE EDUCATION

The literature available in the area of secondary or primary level distance education is limited. On this Penhalver (cited in Moore, 1990) reported as follows:

According to the International Centre of Distance Learning of the United Nations University, out of 10 million students learning at a distance world wide, only 7 percent are enrolled in primary education level and 25 percent at the secondary level. Further, that less than a dozen of the 250 papers submitted for consideration to the 1992 World Conference of the International Council for Distance Education focused on the schooling of children. (p.1564).

The review of the journal *Distance Education: An International Perspective* that follows provides further evidence of this and since 1980 only a few articles in the journal focus on the school-age group. It seems a limited number of researchers have had a focus on students at these levels and the research is parochial and bound through specific site cases (Fitzpatrick, 1982, 1984).

*Distance Education: An International Perspective* is a refereed journal of international note established in 1980. By way of an overview of the journal's content since inception, an analysis of the 420 Articles, Reports and Surveys was undertaken. Many of the articles discuss new developments in teaching various subject matter such as history distance education programmes (Dymock, 1995; Finkel, 1985), science programmes (Harden, Barnard, & Hong, 1991), accounting distance learning (Halabi, 2000), and foreign languages (Holmberg, 1985, 1990). There are many (more than reported here) descriptive studies regarding the implementation of distance education studies in a variety of countries such as Australia (Evans, 1999; Grace, 2001; O'Toole, 1999; Prain, Rowe, Smith, & Walters, 1992), Korea (Shin, 1999) the South Pacific (Bahlman & Robertshaw, 1989) India (Carr, 1983), Hong Kong

(Coniam, 1993) and China (Ding, 1994). A further group of articles are devoted to technologies with regard to improvements and innovation that includes the use of voice mail, E-mail and the telephone (Carmichael, 1995; Vivian, 1986), satellite use (Hosie, 1985; Latchem & Rapley, 1992), video production, video conferencing, audio conferencing (Soliman & Holden, 1988; Treagust, Waldrip, & Horley, 1993) and TV technologies (Simpson, Pugh, & Parchman, 1993). There are many publications concerned with course design (Berry & O'Shea, 1984; Murphy, 2001; Saba, 2000; Swan, 2001), instruction and student achievement (Baath, 1982; Jegede, 1999; Rumble, 2000). A similar number of articles focus on the area of teacher professional development (Brew & Wright, 1990; De Vries, Naidu, Jegede, & Collis, 1995). A smaller number of articles dealt with student drop-out considerations (Eisenberg & Dewsett, 1990; Kember, 1989; Shin, 1999) and only a few articles revealed any details of secondary students (Jang, 2000), School of the Air or rural schools (Edwards & Rennie, 1991; Fitzpatrick, 1982, 1984; Nyirenda, 1983).

There are a few articles that discussed issues relating to research and establishing research priorities. Jegede's (1994) quantitative study, which promoted research priorities for Australia in Distance Education, is one example. From a sample of 36 distance educators at the tertiary level, areas for future research were suggested. A range of topics was identified. This piece of research is now somewhat dated given the speed at which technology has developed since 1994.

There were only two papers that discussed parental involvement with primary aged students. Fitzpatrick's (1982) research revolved around the Carnarvon SOTA. In the first paper he examined the question of who taught

the children in the Australian School of the Air. There was an emphasis on the perspectives and roles of teachers and parents. It was found “that the School of the Air is an unusual 'dual teacher' situation, that the parent/teacher relationship is complex, and that the relative roles and impact of the two upon the child's education is little understood” (p.183).

In a second article Fitzpatrick (1984) looked at the development, role, nature and function of the distance education pressure group - The Isolated Children's Parents' Association (ICPA) that has had increasing influence in addressing local educational issues as a national lobbying group. The ICPA is an informed group and most are actively teaching their own children. Fitzpatrick felt that “a substantial case can be made that they know more about many of the immediate problems of educational isolation and needed services than do administrators and teachers in education systems” (p.197). Fitzpatrick suggested that there was a case to be made for investigating how home tutors manage their children's education. This thesis is one contribution in providing an understanding and explanation of how home tutors manage their role.

## RESEARCH REGARDING DISTANCE EDUCATION IN RURAL AND REMOTE AUSTRALIA

The journal *Education in Rural Australia* commenced publication in 1991. It was a publication that started as a project of the Society for the Provision of Education in Rural Australia (SPERA). This publication is most useful to this present thesis on how parents manage their role as home tutors as it contains references to primary aged children. The journal was introduced to enable

issues regarding rural and remote education in Australia to be raised and discussed, particularly by those who are participating in distance education modes.

Since 1991 there have been two refereed volumes per year of mostly national content. The articles are essentially qualitative research studies. Of the articles, reports, editorials and keynote speeches found in the journal a considerable number have focused on teaching in rural and remote areas (Crowther, Cronk, King, & Gibson, 1991; Gill & Hand, 1992; King & Young, 1996; Prain et al., 1992; Retallick, Hill, & Boylan, 1995).

There has been an emphasis on training and support strategies for beginning teachers, with several institutions offering field practice in remote and rural areas (Boylan, 1996; Cameron, 1994; King, 1994; Kirk, 1994; Oliver & Lake, 1996; Vance & Sullivan, 1993). There has also been discussion of the meaning of rural and remote education (Cameron-Jackson, 1995; Redman, 1991) and considerable interest in the area of technology, which is not surprising given new developments in this area recently (Cruise, 1991; Walker & Boylan, 1992). There were several articles that focused on secondary schooling and post-compulsory school options (Bailey, Riley, & Knight, 1995; d'Plesse, 1993; Gidley & Wildman, 1996).

Again, the journal reflected a lack of research being undertaken or reported that related to primary-aged children or preschool-aged children. Clyde (1991) explored in case study format the needs of pre-school aged children in rural areas whereas (Bailey et al., 1995) discussed ways in which to address the needs of gifted children from K-12. Hard (1997) detailed the preparation of teachers working with young children noting the differences that

future teachers will encounter between rural and urban teaching environments. She discussed the parent/teacher relationship and concluded that “While the parent/teacher relationship is not without its hurdles, it would seem that teachers may need to more actively work towards facilitating its establishment” (p.28).

Another invaluable source of information regarding rural and remote education, and issues regarding distance education, can be found in conference proceedings of The Society for the Provision of Education in Rural Australia (SPERA). SPERA has held annual conferences since 1987 in locations nationally. The conferences each have had specific themes that reflect concerns, but the scope is at times wider and includes discussion of innovative practices and technological advancements. Much of the content consists of practical suggestions for practitioners, although there is some presentation of empirical research. However, there is little reported that does not ‘ring true’ for others so the issues, developments and initiatives reported from the wider stakeholders of distance education gain support and are therefore validated. The themes since 1995 have included the following:

- Lifelong Learning in Rural Areas: Between a Rock and a Hard Place (Riley, 1995).
- Rural Education: Quality Provision, Quality Experience, Quality Outcomes (Boylan & d'Please, 1996).
- Celebrating Rural Education (Murdoch & Wood, 1997).

- Successful Partnerships Enabling Rural Achievements (The Society for the Provision of Education in Rural Australia (SPERA)).
- Rural Education: More precious than Gold (The Society for the Provision of Education in Rural Australia (SPERA)).
- Dawning of Opportunity (King, 2000).
- Providing Quality Education and Training (Boylan, 2001).

The conference serves as an opportunity for the wider community to promote educational services and remain informed of the developments in rural Australian education.

## RESEARCH INTO THE PRACTICES AND STRATEGIES OF THE HOME TUTOR

It has been acknowledged in Chapter 2 that the home tutor (or supervisor) is known to play a significant role in facilitating the education of children and that this has not been explored in a systematic undertaking. Further, there is a need to identify what it is that the home tutor does in the Australian context for this study.

White (1962) in his thesis *The History of Correspondence Schooling in Western Australia*, identified that in the very early grades that it was essential for students to have contact with a supervisor. The supervisor was required to provide guidance. He found that it was most likely that this supervisor would be the parent or in some cases a governess (p.90). White emphasised that the

success of the correspondence was determined by the enthusiasm of the supervisor (p.91).

Tomlinson, Coulter and Peacock (1985) recognised that primary schooling is usually undertaken at home when children are geographically isolated. Some children have access to SOTA programs and all relied on the regular delivery of correspondence materials from the Distance Education Centre. It was also noted that they had home tutors (parents and governesses) who guided them through the correspondence materials. Tomlinson et al. observed that little is known of the remote learner, but agreed with White's (1962) observations that for distance education to be successful it depended significantly on the involvement of parents as supervisors.

Central to the research of Tomlinson et al., (1985) was the way in which pupils and their home tutors managed their distance education materials, correspondence lessons, School of the Air lessons and audio-visual learning aids, as this had not been previously or since (1985) subjected to detailed analysis. They found that home tutors did not merely 'supervise' study but played an active part in all stages of the child's learning. Further, the child depended upon a responsible adult to mediate between the materials and themselves for effective learning. Whilst the sample of SOTAs in Western Australia, Queensland and Northern Territory was small (36 families) it was felt by the principals that the sample represented the typical families enrolled in distance education.

Taylor (2000a) stated that fundamental issues such as how learning materials were processed by students in geographically isolated areas was still largely unexplored, although it was known that the success of primary distance



education depended on the involvement of the home tutor (Taylor & Tomlinson, 1984; Tomlinson et al., 1985; Turney, 1980; White, 1962).

Home tutors have also reported that it does matter how well they supervise their children. Particularly as this impacts on their success as the home tutor and the learning that takes place for the child (Gall, 1983). Kopke (1983) adds that there is a “direct responsibility of supervising your children’s education, when one has not been trained for that purpose” (p.vii). In a book written by home tutors for home tutors (Condon & Edmondson, 1998) parents are reassured that “this type of education if completed conscientiously, gives a sound basis for further education” (p. 9). Taylor (2000) insists that without the home tutor distance education is inoperable and expressed concern that:

Very few studies have taken place to provide insights into practices deployed by home tutors in using the correspondence teaching/learning materials. By specifically studying how the home tutor handles the tutoring role in an isolated context curriculum developers will be able to improve instructional cues in the learning materials. (p.235)

A more recent project undertaken during 1994-1995 described the language and learning practices of distance education students from Year 6-10 and identified the home tutor as significant in the educational process. The report was based on a survey and fifteen narrative case studies, which described the literacy practices of students and their families. Four of the 15 students in Year 6 and 7 were enrolled in the School of the Air. The project had four aims, namely, to:

- Determine the factors that influence achievement in language and literacy outcomes for students learning in isolation;
- Identify effective practices and strategies within the school and home for the improvement of language and literacy outcomes for students learning in the distance education mode;
- Identify the features of distance education materials and modes of delivery which will enhance the language and learning of students; and
- Develop a model for improvement of language and literacy outcomes for students learning through distance education mode, which features the criteria and principles for curriculum development. (Louden & Rivalland, 1995)

The fifteen case studies provided the main source of data and were ‘stand alone’ accounts of the contexts and practices of individual families, which represented the categories that emerged from data. Data were collected on home and school practices in the area of literacy and included home tutor and student interactions. It is not possible to identify differences between those children who study through School of the Air and those that do not. There is a suggestion that the relationship between the home tutor and their own child could be significantly different than the relationship developed between a nominated home tutor or supervisor who could be a friend or in one case the town police constable.

The kinds of relationships that students who study by distance develop are critical and crucial for their success. These relationships are often more personal than the custodial relationships that adults develop between themselves as the teacher and their students in more conventional settings. Louden and Rivalland (1995) reported that some home tutors found distance education allowed them to achieve positive and rewarding relationships with their children although it required an enormous commitment from all concerned. Although some home tutors “enjoyed the role and regarded it as a very satisfying experience, some found it difficult to ration their time between the school room and their other duties” (p.10). In the final analysis it was identified that the home tutors seemed to have 5 different roles (ways) in which to help students. The roles overlapped in some of the fifteen cases but in others only one or two roles had been developed (see Figure 3.1).

Amongst the case studies, four described students enrolled in Schools of the Air. These students enjoyed taking part in the air lessons and that it was a ‘highlight’ of their day. Air lessons involved the students in taking turns, although the entire class was attending and could be called a ‘virtual air’ classroom. All of the students heard the teacher but the students could only hear each other when they spoke to the teacher. Although communication was quite two-way the students felt they were part of a class and listened carefully to what each had to say. For some the air lesson was an important contact with friends breaking the isolation they can feel on their pastoral stations.

**Figure 3.1: Descriptions of Home Tutor Roles**

<b>Home tutor role</b>	<b>Description of work in this role</b>
Supervisor	Focus on completion of the task
Teacher	Confidently assumed that they knew what the student ought to learn from the text
Mentor	Focus on keeping the learning relationship between themselves and the student alive
Co-learner	Immersed themselves in the learning problems faced by the student
Parent	Combine existing role as a member of the family with their distance education role as a home tutor

Source: Adapted from Loudon W, & Rivalland, J. (1995). *Literacy at a Distance: Language and Learning in Distance Education*, Commonwealth of Australia: Department of Employment Education and Training: Canberra.

Home tutors usually listened in on the lessons, checking what the teacher was saying and ensuring that their children understood what was required of them. Loudon and Rivalland (1995) reported:

they knew the answers to the material, which the children were working on, assisting the children with the answers they give over the air, and making silent judgments about the teacher's handling of the class and the content of the lessons. (p.73)

One difficulty for the teacher conducting the air lesson was that they did not really know what the students were doing and the observations done of the air lessons revealed that the students checking with 'mum' before answering over the air seemed to be the usual pattern. The student would give the answer

to their 'mum' and if it was correct, state that answer to the class. Students who were not answering remained a mystery.

What is evident from the report is that parents in the case study who had children enrolled in Schools of the Air understood the responsibility they had in managing the learning of their child. In two cases school came first and they would organise the shearing to happen during school holidays so that the children would not miss any school time. Although this may have been the case for two of the families, a third family reported that finding time to give adequate supervision was a real issue as there were many other demands on their time. The pressure of working on the station and maintaining routines was at times given over to a governess who could spend more time on a range of subjects. Whereas the mother could only spend time on what she regarded as being most important, hiring a governess allowed the children to experience art, which they really enjoyed. The mother stated that she found her time in the schoolroom stressful and hoped that her girls had 'done alright' as she had not been taught how to teach and it was in the end 'all you can do' (Louden & Rivalland, 1995, p.95-97).

Home tutors are also represented within the transcripts of the Human Rights Equal Opportunities Commission, Perth May 24, 1999. A parent stated quite clearly the reality of distance education, who the home tutor was and what they did "the home tutor, usually the mother, teaching up to sometimes six hours a day, supervising and motivating the student or students, sometimes with pre-schoolers as well" (Newland, 1999).

## CONCLUSION

The small number of studies on how the home tutor manages the schooling of children creates a disparity in the research undertaken in the field of distance education. While the research literature on distance education has a focus on the tertiary environment and new technologies few studies have been reported that deal with how parents, react to, seek to manage and have control over their role as home tutors. The study that is the focus of this thesis is one contribution to this area of research.

The role of the home tutor has been recognised as an important factor in distance education. Some would say that without the home tutor distance education for the primary aged student would be inoperable. This perspective has had attention drawn to it in the literature most recently in the work of Loudon & Rivalland (1995). Distance education however, has many meanings as was shown in the first section 'Distance education in the literature'.

The central research question that was used as the starting point for the current study was: How do parents who assume the role of home tutor in remote and rural locations who have had no specific training as teachers of children 'manage' the primary schooling of the children in their care? In the following chapter the grounds for the particular focus of this question are outlined, as are the boundaries of the study, the methods of data collection and data analysis techniques used.