

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **METHODOLOGY**

#### **Introduction**

The overview of the literature on overseas students presented in the previous chapter indicated that few studies have focused on the involvement of TAFE personnel in the education of such students in Australia. The study reported in the remaining chapters of this dissertation is one response to addressing this deficit. Three aims guided the study. The first aim was to develop an understanding of the background to overseas students studying at TAFE colleges in Western Australia (TAFE WA). The second aim was to develop an understanding of the present functions of TAFE WA in providing for overseas students who come to study at its colleges. The third aim was to develop an understanding of the concerns of TAFE WA personnel who have had responsibilities relating to the provision of technical and vocational education and training for this student cohort.

The argument for these three research questions was put forward in Chapter One. Briefly, the reader will recall that for many years, overseas students have been coming to Australia to study. In the same period also, Australian educational institutions have offered Australian education and training courses in foreign countries. Since 1987, the number of overseas students educated and trained under these programs has increased and is expected to continue to increase in the medium to long term. Whereas many of the early initiatives of providing

Australian education for overseas students involved university education, Australian TAFE institutions have become increasingly involved in overseas education since the commencement of the 1990s in particular. At the same time, in terms of educational research on overseas students in Australia, TAFE is a relatively neglected sector. Accordingly, it was decided that the focus of the study reported in this dissertation would be on TAFE, particularly TAFE WA. Western Australia was chosen because of its proximity to the South-East Asia region, from where most overseas students come, and the likelihood that, because of this proximity, Western Australia will become a main provider of TAFE courses for students from the region in the future.

This chapter is concerned with the research design and methodology of the study. First, the nature of the interpretive paradigm that underpins the study is outlined. Secondly, an overview of methods of data collection and analysis used in the study is presented. Thirdly, the manner in which this paradigm was adopted in relation to each of the three research questions is considered. Fourthly, the provisions that were made to ensure the quality of the data are detailed. Finally, ethical issues that were considered in conducting the study are outlined.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The interpretivist paradigm was chosen to underpin the research concerned with pursuing the aims already outlined for the study reported later in this dissertation. The value of adopting an interpretivist approach to research is that it can uncover people's understandings of a phenomenon. The important reality, it is argued, is

what people perceive it to be. This reflects a tradition in social science that fundamentally depends on observations taken in people's natural settings and interacting with them in their own language and on their terms (Kirk and Miller, 1986: 9). A researcher adopting an interpretivist approach is concerned with revealing the meanings behind empirical observations. In such an approach, the researcher is the primary data-gathering instrument, using carefully constructed questions aimed at understanding a phenomenon through semi-structured or open-ended interviews with the people involved and in their own surroundings. Other important means of gathering data are through 'thick' description, review of documents and other records, and on-site observation. These methods rely on the interactional, adaptive, and judgemental abilities of the human inquirer.

Keedy (1992: 162) considers that the adoption of qualitative research methods within an interpretive research approach enables the researcher to visualise how events or phenomena are perceived differently from multiple perspectives and from across similar events. Furthermore, the interpretive approach can produce a vast amount of detailed information about a small number of people.

According to Blackledge and Hunt (1985: 234-236), there are five major assumptions that underpin the interpretivist approach to research. These assumptions involve everyday activity, freedom, meaning, interaction and negotiation. Because each of these assumptions has influenced the study being reported here, they need to be considered briefly.

First, Blackledge and Hunt (1985: 234) state that everyday activity is the building block of society. Ultimately, every aspect of society can be traced back to the way people act in everyday life. For example, what keeps the educational system together is the day-to-day activity of teachers, learners, administrators, inspectors and other educational professionals. Changes in education or society are brought about by changes in such activity. Thus, if we want to understand TAFE in Western Australia, we must begin by looking at everyday activity.

Secondly, everyday activity is never totally imposed; there is always some autonomy and freedom (Blumer, 1969: 2). This is not to say that there are no constraints on the way people act; nor does it imply that people are uninfluenced by their background. What is insisted upon is that people can and do create their own activity to some extent. Accordingly, everyday life in TAFE WA, for example, is produced by people employed within the system acting together and producing their own roles and patterns of action.

Thirdly, to understand everyday activity, people must grasp the meanings that other people give to their own behaviour (Chenitz and Swanson, 1986: 6). In interpretivist theory the term 'meaning' is complex and often undefined. However, it seems to include such notions as aims or intentions (so one can ask what a lecturer aims to do in a class, or what a student's intentions are). It also seems to include the idea of significance (so one can ask what a lecturer or student sees as significant in a lecture or a lesson). Moreover, the notion of reasons is included (allowing people to ask what reasons does the lecturer or student give for the activity). It is assumed that the meanings are personal to the actor; they are not

given by culture or society. Rather, they are constructed from culture by the actors involved.

Fourthly, everyday activity rarely involves a person acting in isolation; rather it consists of interaction with other people (Blumer, 1969: 2). Consequently, as well as giving meaning to our own action we also give meaning to the activity of others. Put differently, people mutually interpret the behaviour of other people with whom they interact.

Finally, everyday activity involves a process of 'negotiation' of meaning and through this we come to modify our understandings and views. It is important to note that the analysis of action must include a study of the participants' meanings and interpretations. However, it would be incorrect to think that meanings and interpretations remain static and unchanging. It is clear, for example, that people do modify their views. Nevertheless, the interpretive approach suggests that, over time, participants in various circumstances, including those who work in situations like TAFE WA, come to have shared understandings and interpretations (Blackledge and Hunt, 1985: 236). The sharing is brought about through a continuous process, not something that happens once and is finished. It occurs in subtle ways, with modification to the participants' understanding of what is going on.

## **Overview of Data Collection and Analysis Methods**

Grounded theory methods of data gathering and analysis (Strauss and Corbin, 1994: 274) are consistent with the interpretivist approach. Grounded theory is a “general method for developing theory and is grounded in data systematically gathered and analysed” from the empirical world in question (Strauss and Corbin, 1994: 273; Chenitz and Swanson, 1986: 14; Glaser and Strauss, 1965, 1968).

In keeping with the grounded theory approach to the analytical process, it was decided that data gathering and analysis in the study reported here, would be undertaken simultaneously (Strauss and Corbin, 1990). The first stage in this analytic method is to gather all the data together, sort it and place it into categories. In doing this, data are simultaneously read thoroughly and listened to intently, and appropriate notes, comments, observations and queries are made. Further, data are constantly compared for similarities and differences and are subject to questioning, thus involving the ‘theoretical sensitivity’ of the researcher, namely, “the ability to recognise what is important in data and give it meaning” (Strauss and Corbin, 1990: 46). This exercise amounts to what is known as ‘open coding’ or the “unrestricted coding of the data” (Strauss, 1987: 28), with the aim of producing concepts that fit the data.

Open coding is defined as the process of “breaking down, examining, comparing, conceptualising, and categorising data in order that concepts drawn from data are identified and developed in terms of their properties and dimensions” (Strauss and Corbin, 1990: 61; Strauss, 1987: 55). In doing so, the concepts can “be closely

examined and compared for similarities and differences, while constantly asking of the data the following question: to what category or property of a category does this incident relate?" (Glaser, 1992: 39). Through the process of open coding, one's own and others' assumptions about a phenomenon are analysed, questioned or explored. This, in turn, then leads to new discoveries (Strauss and Corbin, 1990: 62).

The final adjunct to coding is the employment of 'member checking'. In other words, emergent categories are taken back to the respondents and they are asked if the interpretations made are plausible. By using these approaches it is possible to develop categories and relate them in terms of their properties and dimensions. This leads, in turn, to the emergence of more precise and specific themes and propositions that could be related further (Strauss and Corbin, 1990: 96-115). In this way, the findings of a study are generated.

Throughout the coding process the researcher is engaged in two basic analytic procedures. These are "asking questions" and "making comparisons between the data, concepts and categories" (Glaser, 1978). These two procedures, as Strauss and Corbin (1990) point out, help to give the emerging concepts their precision and specificity. The researcher can also prepare code notes, theoretical memos and diagrams to represent the questions asked of the data and the comparisons and relationships between concepts and categories as they emerge from the data. These notes, memos and diagrams are detailed recordings of ideas about the data and the coded categories, and they represent the development of codes from which they are derived (Miles and Huberman, 1984: 211-214). Code notes, memos and

diagrams become progressively more detailed and sophisticated as the analysis progresses.

### **Adapting the Theoretical Framework for the Three Research Questions**

#### **The First Research Question**

The first research question of the study reported in this dissertation was aimed at developing an understanding of the background to overseas students studying at TAFE colleges in Western Australia (TAFE WA). To this end the interpretivist paradigm was applied by the researcher in reviewing data contained in a wide range of public and private records and documents. This approach is consistent with Greene's (1994: 538) declaration that document review is one of the methods that offers the greatest consonance with the interpretivist perspective.

#### **Data Gathering**

Various types of written data were collected from files compiled by government departments. The files contain mainly education and immigration details regarding overseas students studying in Australia, as well as miscellaneous organisational papers relating to the same matter. They are held in State and National archives. Included are the records of correspondence between the Head Offices of the separate Commonwealth Departments of Education and Immigration and their successors

Administrative documents, such as current working files, submissions and proposals, progress reports, agenda and minutes of meetings, official government



announcements and other pronouncements intended for intra-government as well as external use also proved vital in the research. Government inquiries into overseas students were also drawn upon. Other printed sources consulted included conference papers and reports, as well as newspapers.

Personal documents, such as certain individuals' files and memoranda, lecturers' teaching and learning resources, along with other pedagogic and curriculum material prepared for or in regard to overseas students, completed the array of documentary sources from which data were gathered to address the first research question.

As the study was exploratory, it was not possible from the outset to know the sum total of sub-research questions needed to guide the research with regard to this first research question. However, some guiding questions were deduced from it and were laid out as follows:

<b>CENTRAL RESEARCH QUESTION</b>	<b>GUIDING QUESTIONS</b>
1. What is the background to overseas students studying at TAFE colleges in Western Australia?	1.1 In what circumstances have overseas students studied at TAFE colleges in Western Australia?  1.2. Under what conditions have overseas students studied at TAFE colleges in Western Australia?  1.3. What policy changes have enabled overseas students to study at TAFE colleges in Western Australia?

Such guiding questions, of course, are not specific questions to be answered.

Rather, they are those that suggest themselves at the commencement of the study

as being the most productive guides to generate data pertinent to the central area of interest.

From the guiding questions, an *aide-memoire* (Minichiello, Aroni, Timewell and Alexander, 1990; Burgess, 1984) was developed. The questions on the *aide-memoire*, however, were used only to initiate ‘conversation’. As participants raised unforeseen issues they were allowed to pursue them. Further, as new questions suggested themselves they were pursued. Finally, where participants were unable to respond meaningfully to questions, they were not pressed on them.

The following illustrates how Guiding Question 1.1 was translated into a set of subordinate guiding questions in the initial *aide memoire*.

GUIDING QUESTION	EXAMPLES OF QUESTIONS IN THE INITIAL <i>AIDE MEMOIRE</i>
1.1 In what circumstances have overseas students studied at TAFE colleges in Western Australia?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What is the record of overseas students enrolling at TAFE colleges in WA?</li> <li>2. Who sponsored/paid for the students, both in regard to academic fees and living costs?</li> <li>3. Why did overseas students attend TAFE colleges in WA, in preference to elsewhere in Australia?</li> </ol>

Similar *aide-memoire* questions were developed for the other guiding questions.

### Data Analysis

The total body of written data consulted was analysed systematically and logically by the researcher using the ‘grounded theory’ methods described earlier in this

chapter. In particular, general ideas, themes or concepts as analytical tools for making generalisations were sought, as the following example indicates:

**Open Coding of a Document Gathered in the Course of Examination of Written Data. The document is an extract from a monthly report about Colombo Plan students studying in Western Australia sent from the Officer in Charge of the Perth office of the Commonwealth Office of Education to the Director of the Commonwealth Office of Education in Sydney, dated 17th May 1954:**

DOCUMENT	CODING
<p>The group of 10 Indonesian students attending Leederville Technical School has recently been interviewed. The common problem is difficulty with English. They are being given 3 hours tuition per week in English language as well as receiving double the amount of instruction time normally given to Leaving English candidates in that subject. Already some of the students are showing marked improvement in their English and it is hoped that by the end of the year all members of the group will have reached a sufficient standard to cope with their university studies.</p>	<p>Group of Indonesian students Studying in a TAFE college</p> <p>Common problem with English Special extra tuition in English language Even more additional assistance deemed necessary</p> <p>Improvement by some students</p> <p>Hope for improvement in all students</p> <p>Higher grades in English needed to graduate to university</p>

This document, one of many analysed, provides possible insights into the background to one distinct cultural group, Indonesian students, studying in TAFE colleges in the late 1990s. It indicates that as far back as 1954, there were issues that needed to be managed by TAFE WA personnel and others who had responsibilities relating to providing technical and vocational education to, in this case, Indonesian students. Further aspects of the background to other overseas students coming to study at TAFE colleges in Western Australia will be explored in Chapter Five of this dissertation.

### **The Second Research Question**

The second research question of the study reported in this dissertation aimed to develop an understanding of the present functions of TAFE WA in providing for overseas students who come to study at its colleges. At this point it is necessary to explain what is meant by the term 'function' within the present context. This refers simply to activities that people working in TAFE WA carry out. Accordingly, it incorporates not only those activities which are officially assigned to them but also actions they allocate to themselves. Also, for some people, it encompasses not fulfilling certain actions they are charged to perform.

In addressing the second research question the interpretivist paradigm was applied in two ways. One was the researcher's interpretation of a wide range of contemporary, official records. These records consisted principally of Job Description Forms, job advertisements, organisation charts, and internal memoranda arising in or in connection with a number of TAFE institutions. The interpretivist paradigm also guided a series of semi-structured interviews with TAFE administrators and lecturers.

### **Data Gathering**

The interviewing and record search regarding the second research question was an iterative process. The initial source of data came from interviews with TAFE WA personnel in colleges and administrative departments. In connection with these interviews, various documents were made available to the researcher by the interviewees. These included formal administrative instructions emanating from the Western Australian Department of Training (WADOT) central office, TAFE

International Western Australia (TIWA), and five TAFE colleges in the metropolitan area, setting out policy and procedures to be followed in providing for overseas students. Also provided were Minutes of meetings of the TIWA Advisory Board, as well as reports of some general and specific-purpose meetings between college level personnel who provided for overseas students. Other workplace documents produced included examples of special teaching and learning worksheets prepared by lecturers explaining particular terms and definitions relevant to specific study areas that were unfamiliar to overseas students.

TAFE WA personnel interviewed were located at the central office of WADOT, at TIWA, and at five TAFE colleges in the metropolitan area. Full-time TAFE colleges are spread throughout both metropolitan and country areas and total nine in all. However, since overseas students began attending TAFE WA, they have studied almost exclusively at metropolitan institutions. This was the principal reason why metropolitan colleges were chosen as the location of the study. In addition, constraints of time, finance and accessibility meant that the study was further limited to the Perth metropolitan area. The decision as to who should be interviewed was based on the potential, as identified by the researcher's previous observations, of individuals to provide rich descriptions of their functions carried out during their work with and in regard to overseas students.

Sixty current TAFE WA staff members participated in the study. Accordingly, a very wide range of perspectives was canvassed. As shown in *TABLE 1* on page 108 of this work, it is possible to place the participants who were selected into

twenty categories based on the positions that they held when overseas students attended TAFE WA colleges. Even though some of these participants were not located in colleges at the time, they were involved in placing students in the colleges. First, there are TIWA personnel responsible for marketing of courses, recruiting of students, advising and counselling students, and administering immigration regulations in order for students to be granted right of entry to Australia and TAFE WA institutions. Next are college-based TAFE WA personnel who are directly connected to teaching the students. These are: managing directors, assistant directors responsible for overseas students, directors of academic services/training in charge of different subject disciplines, heads of academic departments, heads of English Language Intensive Courses for Overseas Students (ELICOS) programs, and lecturers in various study areas. Also included here are learning resource centre (library) staff and laboratory and computer technicians. Thirdly, there are institution-based staff who are associated with what may be termed 'welfare and social' issues. These are the student counsellors, overseas student co-ordinators, student services officers, travel and accommodation staff and canteen managers. The position held by all personnel interviewed and the institution at which they were located are set out in the following table:

**TABLE 1: TAFE WA PERSONNEL INTERVIEWED**

Position	College	CMC	SMC	SEMC	MC	WCC	TIWA	WADOT	TOTAL
Chief Executive Officer								1	1
Assistant Director								1	1
Academic Registrar							1		1
Student Services Officer							1		1
Counsellors		1		1			1		3
Transportation Officers		1	1	1	1	1			5
Accommodation Officers		1	1	1	1	1			5
Managing Directors		1	1	1			1		4
Teachers/Program Managers		5	4	2	2	2			15
ELICOS Personnel		2	2	2					6
Overseas Student Co-ordinators		1	1	1	1				4
Library Resource Centre Personnel		1	1		1	1			4
Laboratory Technicians			1	1					2
Student Liaison Personnel		1	1	1	1	1			5
Canteen Personnel		1	1	1					3
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>15</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>60</b>

As with the first research question, this aspect of the study was also exploratory.

Thus, it was not possible from the outset to know the sum total of sub-research questions needed to guide the research into this second research question.

However, some guiding questions were deduced from this central question and were laid out as follows:

CENTRAL RESEARCH QUESTION	GUIDING QUESTIONS
2. What are the present functions of TAFE WA in providing for overseas students who come to study at its colleges?	2.1 What systems have been established by TAFE WA to deal with the sojourn of overseas students at its institutions in Western Australia?  2.2 What procedures have been established by TAFE WA to deal with the sojourn of overseas students at its institutions in Western Australia?  2.3 What have been the actual duties carried out by all TAFE WA staff who have had responsibilities relating to the provision of technical and vocational education and training for this student cohort?  2.4 What have been the actual tasks carried out by all TAFE WA staff who have had responsibilities relating to the provision of technical and vocational education and training or this student cohort?

Also, as previously pointed out in the case of the first research question, such guiding questions are not specific questions to be answered. Rather, they are those that suggest themselves at the commencement of the study as being the most productive guides to generate data pertinent to the central area of interest. Accordingly, Guiding Question 2.1, for example, was translated into a set of subordinate guiding questions in the initial *aide memoire*, as shown below:

GUIDING QUESTION	EXAMPLES OF QUESTIONS IN THE INITIAL AIDE MEMOIRE
2.1 What systems have been established by TAFE WA to deal with the sojourn of overseas students at its colleges?	1. What, if any, special arrangements were made in the college for overseas students?  2. What was done to plan and prepare for having overseas students in the institution?

Similar *aide-memoire* questions were developed for the other guiding questions.



## Data Analysis

Using the ‘grounded theory’ methods described earlier in this chapter, the researcher systematically and logically analysed the total body of both the transcripts of interviews with TAFE WA personnel as well as written documents and records obtained in the course of the research. In doing this, the aim was to interpret how those personnel interpret the functions they carry out in their involvement with overseas students. In particular, general ideas, themes or concepts were sought as analytical tools for making generalisations. This process is demonstrated in the following example:

**Open coding of an extract from a transcript of an interview with the Overseas Student Co-ordinator located at one regional college of TAFE WA:**

INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT	CODING
Well, when I started this job I didn't actually have a formal JDF [Job Description Form] – I've really worked out the job myself as I've gone along. Of course, I had a few hints from [the previous occupant of the position], but when I asked both her and my manager for a JDF I was told that there actually wasn't one. My predecessor was originally asked to look after the overseas students as part of her work in the college's Business Centre; the job wasn't really 'advertised'. In fact, I was asked to make up a JDF for myself which as far as I know is the one Human Resources uses now. It should really be updated now because when I prepared it I was only working as a 0.6 time person in this position but now it's a full-time role.	No formal statement of duties; inadequate induction to the role. Staff member determines own functions. Advice from previous position-holder. Limited guidance from the executive level of the college. No JDF available.  Duties originally seen as part of another function.  Staff member 'created' JDF based on her view of her functions.  Need to update original JDF.  Functions have expanded over time.

This transcript suggests that in this particular college, the functions of the overseas student co-ordinator were not developed as a directed, systematic approach to the presence of overseas students in TAFE WA colleges in Western Australia. Rather, those functions that are in place were developed largely in an *ad-hoc* fashion by a

limited number of individuals after overseas students first started to attend this college.

### **The Third Research Question**

The third research question of the study reported in this dissertation was aimed at developing an understanding of the concerns of TAFE WA personnel who have had responsibilities relating to the provision of technical and vocational education and training for the cohort of overseas students studying at TAFE colleges in Western Australia. In this context, ‘concerns’ are taken to be matters that affect or touch someone; they are subjects that occupy a person’s interest, attention, or care.

### **Data Gathering**

In order to address the third research question, the researcher relied on data that came from the same body of interviews and documents as that referred to earlier in connection with the second research question. Again, as the study was exploratory, it was not possible from the outset to know the sum total of sub-research questions needed to guide the research with regard to this third research question. However, some guiding questions were deduced from it and were laid out as follows:

CENTRAL RESEARCH QUESTION	GUIDING QUESTIONS
3. What are the concerns of TAFE WA personnel who have had responsibilities relating to the provision of technical and vocational education and training for this student cohort?	3.1 What issues and concerns have arisen in connection with the presence of overseas students at TAFE institutions in Western Australia?  3.2 What are the formal systems and procedures in place to deal with these issues and concerns?  3.3 How are issues and concerns dealt with in practice?

The following now illustrates how Guiding Question 3.1 was translated into a set of subordinate guiding questions in the initial *aide memoire*:

GUIDING QUESTION	EXAMPLES OF QUESTIONS IN THE INITIAL <i>AIDE MEMOIRE</i>
3.1 What issues and concerns have arisen in connection with the presence of overseas students in TAFE institutions in Western Australia?	1. How has having overseas students in the institution caused concern to TAFE WA personnel in their work?  2. How have these concerns been dealt with in the institutions?

Similar *aide-memoire* questions were developed for the other guiding questions.

### Data Analysis

The researcher revisited and analysed again the transcripts of the interviews used and referred to earlier in connection with the second research aim, but this time the analysis was guided by the third research question. Again, ‘grounded theory’ methods were used in order to discover general ideas, themes or concepts as analytical tools for making generalisations about the data. The following example indicates the nature of this analysis:

**Open coding of an extract from a document gathered in the course of an interview with the Managing Director of a regional TAFE college. The document was in the form of the minutes of a meeting of the TAFE International Advisory Board, held on 17th November 1997:**

DOCUMENT	CODING
<p>[The Managing Director] stated his concern that there was a lot of duplication between TIWA and colleges regarding the provision of pastoral care services and quoted substantial costs for [his college] in providing an overseas student co-ordinator’s salary, overtime, vehicle maintenance and petrol. [The Managing Director] stated his concerns that the college cannot afford to carry out all the services for overseas students expected of it. No money is provided by TIWA to cover the costs of pastoral care. Extra staff resources are needed but need to be funded.</p>	<p>Same services provided by TIWA and colleges.</p> <p>This is not cost effective. Who should pay for the overseas student co-ordinator?</p> <p>Who should pay for college services provided for overseas students?</p> <p>Inadequate support from TIWA to fund pastoral care for overseas students. Additional funds required for support.</p>

This extract provides possible insights into the concerns of college directors about insufficient support for overseas students. It also indicates that the amount of support that is provided is insufficient and also inefficiently delivered.

### **The Quality of the Data**

For the positivist, “unambiguous and precise, rigorous quantitative research reduces subjective influence and minimises the way in which information might be interpreted” (Kincheloe, 1991: 129). Qualitative research of the type outlined in this dissertation, however, has different techniques for ensuring ‘trustworthiness’. In particular, it has procedures for enhancing the validity and reliability of studies.

The issue of the validity of the research may be considered under two headings, namely, internal validity and external validity. Internal validity deals with the

question of how the findings of a study capture reality (Merriam, 1988: 166). Reality, according to a general interpretivist researcher's understanding, is not an objective phenomenon but is, on the contrary, defined by individuals within any given situation. It is, therefore, incumbent upon the present researcher to demonstrate that what is presented in the final report is an honest portrayal of how the informants experienced and understood their functions and the concerns that arose for them in their involvement with overseas students in TAFE institutions in Western Australia.

Lincoln and Guba (1985) have provided a useful framework for describing procedures to promote validity. To begin with, there is more than one method of data collection. In this study, it was deemed that the combination of 'thick description', semi-structured interviews and close analysis of relevant documents, would be likely to result in a holistic understanding of the phenomenon. Such 'triangulation' is particularly appropriate for a study such as this that sought to respond to the multiplicity of perspectives present in a highly complex social situation (Cohen and Manion, 1989: 277).

Another practice that promotes the internal validity of a study is 'member checking'. This is the procedure of taking data and interpretations back to the people from whom they were derived and asking them if the results are plausible (Merriam, 1988: 169). If a recognisable reality has been produced in the view of the research participants, the trustworthiness of the work is enhanced. To this end, key informants in the study were consulted about the concepts as they emerged from the analysis of the data so that their validity could be corroborated.

The matter of external validity was also given consideration. External validity has been defined as the degree to which a researcher's observations can be accurately compared to those of other groups (Kincheloe, 1991: 135). Given that the aim of the study was to investigate the functions and concerns of personnel in TAFE colleges in Western Australia involved with overseas students, the production of knowledge that could be generalised was not a consideration. Indeed, it could be argued that interpretivist investigations such as this that aim to find the background, functions and concerns of certain groups of people are unique to their respective settings, making it impossible to transfer findings from one situation to another. Therefore, because circumstantial uniqueness is a major characteristic of an interpretivist study, the traditional notion of external validity was rendered meaningless.

Another way of viewing external validity relates to the proposition that the reader or user is able to 'generalise'. In other words, it relates to the extent to which the study's findings relates to the reader's own situation. In this sense, the researcher is attempting to facilitate the reader's own analysis rather than deliver 'generalisable' statements (Burns, 1994). In order to enhance the possibility of this kind of 'generalisability', it was imperative that the study would provide rich, 'thick' description of the phenomenon in question. Readers' judgements about the appropriateness of transferability of findings to other contexts can, thereby, be based on sufficient information.

It is also important to consider the 'reliability' of the study. This often refers to the capacity for the study's findings to be replicated. In other words, if the study were

to be repeated, would the same results be generated? Reliability is based on the assumption that there is a single objective reality that can be observed, known and measured. It is, however, a problematic concept when applied to a study founded on the premise that reality is a function of personal experiences and interpretations. Accordingly, within the present study, it was deemed more appropriate to adopt Lincoln and Guba's (1985: 316) notion of 'dependability'.

To adopt the notion of 'dependability' demands that the reader should concur with the research findings, taking into consideration the data collected. The main technique used to enable the dependability of results is the 'audit trail'. This allows the researcher to take the reader through the work from the beginning to the end so that the process by which conclusions have been drawn is made apparent. People are thereby able to judge the dependability or trustworthiness of the outcomes (Maykut and Morehouse, 1994: 146).

According to Lincoln and Guba (1985: 319), an audit trail "cannot be conducted without a residue of records stemming from the inquiry". Therefore, in keeping with audit requirements, the following information was collected and stored from the present study: raw data, such as interview tapes, transcripts, documents provided by TAFE WA personnel, and written field notes; data reduction and analysis products, such as write-ups of field notes, unitised information on report cards, and theoretical memos; and data reconstruction and synthesis products, such as integrative diagrams connecting categories. It will be noticed that these audit trail categories are those adopted by Lincoln and Guba (1985: 319).

## **Ethical Issues**

Education is an integral aspect in the life of any society. Research in education, whether quantitative or qualitative, is primarily applied research. The results of such research almost always have immediate or potential practical applications or implications. By its very nature, the fieldwork involved in this research placed the researcher in intimate contact with the lives of the observed. Decisions such as what to record, how to handle privileged information, what types of relationships are appropriate, and how to handle value conflicts sometimes occurred. Reflecting on these issues was both an important part of the ‘story’ and a way of working out concerns.

The main concern in reporting the present study was to preserve privacy, anonymity and confidentiality. To this end the researcher has been careful not to jeopardise careers in TAFE WA or elsewhere in the fairly confined education sector in Western Australia by naming any participants in the study. All participants were advised that there would be anonymity in the final ‘write-up’ or any subsequent publications. Also, the purpose of the interviews and the relevance of documents to the study were explained to all participants.

Interviews were only conducted after prospective participants had been contacted, the reasons for approaching them outlined, the purpose of the research and the interview established, and their permission to be interviewed obtained. Also, documents were only consulted after consent to do so had been given by those who were custodians of the documents.



## **Summary and Conclusion**

This chapter was concerned with the research design and methodology of the study. First, the nature of the interpretivist paradigm was outlined. This constituted the theoretical framework used to underpin the research carried out in regard to the three central research questions. Secondly, the manner in which interpretivism was adopted in relation to each of the three research questions was considered. This incorporated commentary on the methods used to gather and analyse data in order to address those questions. Thirdly, the provisions that were made to ensure the quality of the data were noted. Finally, a very brief review of the ethical issues that were considered in conducting the study was outlined. Chapter Five, the next chapter, will now present the results of the research on the first research question. Chapters Six and Seven will then consider the results in relation to the second and third research questions respectively. The final chapter, Chapter Eight, will contain a summary of the study, a discussion of the findings of the research, the implications they have for TAFE WA personnel involved with overseas students, and recommendations for further research.

Blumer's principles of (interpretivism) are fundamental to the three major research questions of this study. His concept of.....is central to the first research question, namely, what is the background to Indonesian students studying at TAFE

institutions in Western Australia? Also, his principle that human beings act towards 'things' on the basis of the meanings that the 'things' have for them, is central to the second research question, namely, what are the functions of TAFE involved in the presence of Indonesian students in its institutions? 'Things' covers a range of phenomena, from the concrete (people, material objects, institutions) to the abstract, which includes the situations in which people find themselves and the principles that guide human life. The third research question, namely, what are the concerns of TAFE personnel who have had responsibilities relating to the provision of VET for the Indonesian student cohort?, is based on the notion that such conditions as "time, space, culture, economic status, technological status, career, history and individual biography" (Strauss and Corbin, 1990:103) can act to either facilitate or constrain the action/interactional strategies taken within a specific context by an individual or group. Coupled with this is the assumption within interpretivism that where these conditions do act to facilitate action/interactional strategies they have to be managed by the individual or group (Strauss and Corbin, 1990:103).

Nowadays, TAFE personnel are firmly involved with Indonesian students in TAFE institutions, with the likelihood of increased involvement over the next decade. It is important that the background, functions and concerns of TAFE personnel be revealed for those who are concerned about the education of Indonesian students in TAFE. In taking up an interpretivist position, however, it is possible to unearth the meanings that individual workers in TAFE have constructed regarding the phenomenon.

The study was located in Western Australia (WA). To focus on a particular state is justified since under the Australian Constitution, responsibility for TAFE lies within States' jurisdictions, rather than being a unitary, Commonwealth/Federal responsibility. Moreover, it was restricted to institutions, now autonomous, formerly known as TAFE colleges acting under the auspices of the WA Department of Training, and does not incorporate private vocational education and training (VET) providers. TAFE institutions are located in both metropolitan and country areas. However, almost exclusively since the advent of overseas students in TAFE in WA, these students attend only metropolitan colleges. In any event, the constraints of time, finance and accessibility meant that the study was further limited to the Perth metropolitan area.

#### \*Institutions

Six TAFE institutions, involving 16 campuses, including the central coordinating body overseeing overseas students in WA, TAFE International, participated in the study. These institutions were located in the centre of the Western Australian capital city of Perth, as well as in major northern, eastern, southern and western suburbs.

## Data Collection

Attention must now be given to the data collection techniques used. In this connection, it was deemed appropriate that qualitative research methods of data collection be employed because of their concern for the empirical social world and their suitability for fieldwork. In particular, grounded theory methods, that are consistent with the interpretivist approach, (Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Glaser, 1978; Strauss, 1987) were used as a guide in collecting, coding and analysing the data generated by using the *aide memoire* developed from the three central research questions and guiding questions. The study used three major data gathering approaches of qualitative research, namely, thick description, interviews and document study.

FROM SIMON, p.65 (IS IT NECESSARY TO SAY SOME OR ALL OF THIS?)

Participant observation is a major method of data gathering within the qualitative repertoire that enables the experiences of those inside the group to be penetrated. Assuming that entrée could have been gained to a setting where sensitive information was being discussed, it would have been appropriate for the researcher to observe.....(meetings, counselling sessions, classes, practical work, etc involving Indonesian students in both Indonesia and WA) in order to record behaviour as it is occurring. A first hand account of the interactions (between Indonesian students and WA TAFE personnel) would provide a useful supplement to other forms of data in the interpretation of background, functions and concerns regarding Indonesian students at TAFE institutions in WA. However, in view of the fact that the institutions and people that have been selected for the research had already concluded aspects of their work, the study had to be mainly retrospective in nature. This feature of the research design automatically denied the

appropriateness of participant observation in the collection of data and determined that there should be a reliance on the three other main qualitative techniques for obtaining data, namely, the thick description, the interview and document analysis. Each of these data gathering approaches is now described, along with a consideration of the provision that was made to enhance validity and reliability.

### Thick Description

For the naturalistic (WHAT OTHER WORD TO USE?) investigator, truths are usually local rather than universal. Research conclusions apply with confidence only to the particular group now under study and only at that particular moment. In order to judge how trustworthy would be any extension of those research conclusions to other, apparently similar groups, one must know in great detail the precise similarities and differences between these other groups and the group that has been studied. This knowledge requires a very detailed account of the context and the subjects of the study. [CRABTREE (p.178)]

The question of which one of many larger contexts best makes sense of an action is now a question of interpretation: which of the various features of the action makes it intelligible to those performing it? How can we decide in any particular case, if those same features may have a different significance in a different context? Such multiplicity and indeterminacy demands that actions be constantly interpreted and reinterpreted as they unfold. Observers and participants alike constantly 'make sense' with the multiple features of the contexts that they produce, find themselves in, and reshape. [FROM BOHMAN, p.103. (my book)]

Besides such multiple possibilities of indeterminate contexts and features, another reason that interpretation is necessary is the reflexivity of social action. Reflexivity permits thick, as opposed to thin, description. Actions are intentional acts fraught with significance and are equivocal and easily misunderstood. This same indeterminacy multiplies when the social scientist also turns his/her attention to interpreting the gestures and expressions of members of alien cultures. In this case, the interpreter has to establish what these multiple possibilities are and hence 'thickly' describe the action; that is, the qualitative research carried out should provide 'thick description' of social life (Geertz, 1983). Guba and Lincoln (cited in Kuzel and Like, 1991:153) describe thick description as 'a thorough description of the context or setting within which the inquiry took place and with which the inquiry was concerned....[and] a thorough description of the transactions or processes observed in that context that are relevant to the problem, evaluand, or policy option'. This description should use 'native language' and describe not only the final analysis of the study but also how that analysis was obtained. [FROM CRABTREE, pp.87-88, 177-179 (my book)] Emerson (1983:24) describes the method in this way, when he writes that "Thick descriptions present in close detail the context and meanings of events and scenes that are relevant to those involved in them."

### The Interviews

Semi-structured interviews (Taylor and Bogdan, 1998:87-116) with the TAFE personnel mentioned in Table 1 above were used as the primary means of data collection. This method is concerned with creating the environment to encourage participants to discuss their lives and experiences in free-flowing, open-ended

discussions and enables the researcher to interpret their lives. In conducting the interviews general principles as outlined by Measor (1985: 63-73) OR Bogdan and Taylor (1998: 87-116) were followed. [CHECK THAT WHAT FOLLOWS DOES FOLLOW MEASOR'S PRINCIPLES, OR TAYLOR AND BOGDAN PERHAPS)

Initial contact was made with each informant by telephone in order to obtain at least a provisional agreement to participate in the research project. This was confirmed shortly afterwards by a letter outlining the main purpose of the study and explaining the proposed format and function of the interview that would be undertaken. The participants were also sent at this time an aide-memoire or semi-structured interview guide to the interviews to allow them to reflect on the headings. Consideration was also given to the necessity for interviews to be held more than once, enabling particular topics to be pursued further. Enclosed with the letter was a code of conduct for the responsible practice of research that had been devised in collaboration with the Managing Directors of each TAFE institution. According to this protocol, three main procedures were stipulated. It was made clear that the principles of anonymity and confidentiality were to be observed at all times. Interview transcripts and research findings could be scrutinised by participants for accuracy, relevance and fairness, and that each Managing Director would be consulted on the final results of the study prior to the submission of the dissertation to the University. (SIMON, p.67)

Interviews were structured to the extent that the aide memoire consisted of questions based on the expected headings for a situation of this nature (NOT



GOOD ENOUGH – NEEDS TO BE TIGHTER AND BACKED UP WITH REFERENCES). However, the exact wording or the order of questions changed in the interview situation. As themes arose, they were pursued with the participants in a “lengthy conversation piece” (Simons, 1982:37). This format enabled the researcher to respond to the situation at hand and to gain new ideas on the topic. All the interviews were transcribed in a form suitable for analysis and were then ‘checked back’ with the participants until they became accepted as representative of their positions.

The interviews were conducted between April and July 1999, during which the researcher visited all the chosen institutions. The main function of the interview within the research agenda was to reveal the informants’ perspectives in relation to their own roles as senior and middle-level administrators, lecturers and academic support staff as part of their involvement with Indonesian students. It was therefore necessary to provide the opportunity for a discussion to take place between interviewer and interviewee that ‘moves beyond surface talk to a rich discussion of thoughts and feelings’ (Maykut and Morehouse, 1994:80)

In order to elicit this depth of response from the informants, two important elements of interview technique were adopted. First, each interview was sufficiently long for rapport to be established between the two parties, usually between one to one-and-a-half hours. Secondly, because of the need for interviews to allow informants the freedom to recall and expound on events from their perspective, there was no reliance on a standardised list of questions. Instead, initial questions were more loosely based on the guiding questions and *aide*

*memoire* already noted, and subsequent questions were asked that were deemed pertinent to the study as the opportunities arose.

The nature of the responses provided the direction that the interview should take next. In this way, it could be claimed that questions on the *aide memoire* (Burgess, 1984:108) served three main purposes: assistance with the preparation of the interview (McHugh, 1994:59); ensuring that similar issues were covered in all of the interviews; providing guidance in the conducting of the interview while still permitting the kind of flexibility required for the interviewer to respond to the emerging ‘world view’ of the informant as well as the new ideas on the topic (Merriam, 1988:74). Hence, the type of interview adopted in the study conformed to the notion that an interview may be constructed as a ‘conversation with a purpose’ (Maykut and Morehouse, 1994:79)

Throughout all of the interviews, cognizance was taken of Woods’ (1992:372) enumeration of the skills that are necessary to ensure that the interview is as productive as possible. These include active listening, that demonstrates that the interviewer is hearing, reacting, and occasionally constructing interpretations; focusing, or keeping the interview on the subject; explicating where material is incomplete or ambiguous; and checking for accuracy by pressing points, rephrasing and summarising. In this way, the researcher became a partner with the informant, with both of them working together to ‘get the story straight’ (Wilson and Hutchinson, 1991:270). The decision to employ semi-structured interviews was therefore determined by the need to probe as deeply as possible into the individual’s subjective experiences of the phenomenon in question. The use of

semi-structured interviews also facilitated access to events that could not be observed directly because of the retrospective nature of the study (Burns, 1994:280).

The interviews were tape-recorded with the consent of the respondents and notes were also taken during the conversations in order to capture the things that the tape recorder was unable to record, yet which are necessary to further enhance the sense that the researcher makes of the interviewee's perspective (Maykut and Morehouse, 1993:99) The recorded interviews were then transcribed verbatim by the researcher on the grounds that the verbatim transcription of interviews provides the best data base for analysis (Merriam, 1988:82) and that involvement in the actual process of transcribing would bring the researcher closer to the data. Transcribing the interviews verbatim was also considered important to enable the use of quotations in the descriptive and analytical sections of the dissertation for, as Ruddock (1993:19) has indicated, 'some statements carry a remarkably rich density of meaning in a few words'. The use of quotations also made it necessary to develop a system of codes in an attempt to maintain the anonymity of those people who were interviewed. A copy of the transcript was sent to each respondent with an invitation to make any amendments considered necessary to enhance the representation of individuals' positions. At the end to this procedure the transcripts were ready for analysis.

#### \* Document Study

The second major technique employed for data collection was document analysis. Goetz and LeCompte (1984:153) have used the term 'artifact' to describe the

assortment of written and symbolic records that have been kept and used by the participants in a social group. Such artifacts, as Merriam (1998:109) has indicated, have both limitations as well as advantages. In view of the fact that they are generated independently of the research, artifacts can be fragmentary and may not fit the conceptual framework. However, their independence from the research agenda can also be considered an advantage because they are thereby non-reactive. As such, they are a product of a given context and are grounded in the 'real world'. This characteristic makes it highly likely that an analysis of a diversity of artifacts will help to develop insights relevant to the research problem.

The artifacts used in this study were exclusively printed material of various sorts. In this connection, Borg and Gall (1989:813) have made a useful distinction between 'intentional documents' and 'unpremeditated documents'. According to this classification, intentional documents are those that serve primarily as a record of what happened, whereas unpremeditated documents are intended to serve an immediate purpose without any thought being given to their future use in the recording of an event. For the purpose of this study, it was possible to obtain documents that fall within both of these categories (Egawa's and Simon's)

### Data analysis

From considerations so far, it is clear that the approach being advocated for this project on the background to Indonesian students who have studied at TAFE institutions in Western Australia and the functions and concerns of the staff and

institutions involved in their presence is heavily theory laden. Silver (1980:267) has gone some way towards arguing for such an approach in studying the lives of teachers when he argued for “ the history of opinion”, which he defined as “the history of how people, groups of people, people in action, have interpreted and reinterpreted their world.”. The approach being advocated here, however, is much more explicit in terms of clarifying theoretical assumptions. In this way, it reflects contemporary trends in the writing of educational biography as recently considered by Kridel (1998).

Early seminal works based on grounded theory were produced by Glaser and Strauss (1965; 1968), and

Code notes are a specific type of memo prepared by the researcher to describe and explain the conceptual labels that emerge from the data (Strauss and Corbin, 1990.)

In spite of the multiplicity of data sources and the necessary rigour involved in the collection and analysis of data, qualitative research has various limitations. As far back as 1980, Rist (1980:8) was extremely critical in his assertion that qualitative research is ‘becoming a mantle to legitimate much work that is shoddy, poorly conducted, and ill-conceived’. The traditional criticisms of the research design adopted, that is predicated on a concern for the essence of social life as perceived by the actors themselves, are easy to identify. The first charge relates to the subjectivity and bias of the researcher and the difficulty of preventing these orientations from impinging on the data being collected. Accompanying this reservation is the concern expressed about the presence of the researcher in the

field affecting interpretations of the phenomenon under study that could seriously distort the conclusions drawn.

Another frequent anxiety relates to the alleged lack of generalisation possible in such research, or the extent to which the findings of the study hold up beyond the specific research subjects and the context involved. These concerns reflect an underlying belief that the methods of the ‘interpretive’ researcher do not contain the precision of quantifiable measurement and experimentation that provide the hallmarks of the positivist approach.

By way of illustration of this process, documents provided by administrators and teachers were sometimes the subject of open coding procedures. An example follows of open coding of a document made available to the researcher in the course of an interview with a member of TAFE International Western Australia:

**Open Coding of a Document Gathered in the Course of an Interview**

**Institution G – General Admin 3 - Int – 18.07.99**

**Extract from a letter from an Indonesian student to TAFE International WA**

<b>Document</b>	<b>Coding</b>
<p>Now I am enrolled in the Diploma of Business, course number 8105 at South Metropolitan College of TAFE. I want to transfer to Central Metropolitan College of TAFE in Perth city because it is near to my homestay in Mt. Lawley. I have checked with the Overseas Student Co-ordinator at CMC and I have been advised that there is a place I can have there in second semester. I have paid my fees for the full year at SMC and am not sure of the procedure about transferring between colleges once I have paid my money. Will</p>	<p>Present enrolment  Present enrolment; location  Transfer between colleges  ?  Distance from accommodation  Focal point for inquiry  Advice  ?  Administrative concern  Uncertainty  Payment of money</p>

you please advise me what I can do? It is too difficult for me to travel from Mt. Lawley to Fremantle for 2 hours every day when it would only take me 20 minutes to Perth.	Seeking advice Difficult to travel to college ? ?
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As noted, documents examined in the course of the research were frequently provided in the course of interviews with TAFE personnel connected with the education and training of Indonesian students. These interviews were undertaken to gather information to respond in particular to the second and third research aims. These were to develop an understanding, firstly of the present functions of TAFE in providing for Indonesian students, and secondly of the concerns of TAFE personnel who have had responsibilities relating to the provision of technical education and training for this student cohort. The analysis of each interview began with its transcription. After the transcribing process, each interview was re-read several times to identify major concepts contained in the transcripts. Each of the transcripts from all of the participant interviews was coded on a line-by-line basis. Code words were written in the right hand margins of the interview transcript sheets (Schatzman and Strauss, 1973), as illustrated below, taken from the 10th transcribed interview. Incidents and facts were marked with the use of a highlighter and re-written in the form of a concept. The first interviews and accompanying field notes were provisionally analysed before progressing to the next interviews.

After completion of the interviews, cross-interview analysis was then undertaken to locate those concepts relating to phenomena that occurred regularly within the interviews and to make comparisons with those concepts that had already emerged from the other documents. In this way, the concepts underpinning most of the data

began to be developed. More than ## substantive concepts were identified. Below is an example of open coding of an interview conducted by the researcher:

**Open Coding of Interview Transcript**

**Institution B – Lect HS 1 - Int – 06.05.99**

**Researcher: Question:**

What did you do to plan and prepare for having Indonesian students as members of your class? AND/OR

What changes, if any, did you make to your regular teaching routine in response to having Indonesian students as members of your class?

Interview Transcript	Coding
<p><i>Respondent's Answer:</i></p> <p>At first, I found it a bit of a struggle having Indonesian students in my classroom. I knew nothing about their background, either general or particular. I've never been to Indonesia, not even to Bali, and I have not had any interest in finding out about the country. Anyway, I did nothing special to prepare for them. I presumed that if they were coming, they had met the same entrance requirements as the local students. However, I found that I spoke too fast for the Indonesians to understand what I was saying, both in delivering subject content and in giving instructions, for example of which exercises to do. Moreover, when I questioned them about their understanding, they would say that they did understand. Also, I found it hard to understand why they were not proactive in asking me to repeat the instructions at least, and perhaps ask me to explain again the essential parts of the content. I was confused about whether this was because they had lower entrance qualifications than they ought to have had, or if it was a language problem or what. Even if I learned about this I didn't know what I was going to do about it. I found out all my colleagues were in the same boat and we felt that we had nowhere to go and were not supported by structures within the college.</p>	<p>Difficulties in having Indonesian students in class  Lack of TAFE WA staff knowledge of Indonesian students  Not interested in Indonesia  No action taken to learn  No special preparations  Assumptions</p> <p>Communication difficulties  Teaching/Instructing</p> <p>Puzzled about responses by students that they did understand  Puzzled about why students did not ask for further assistance or explanation  Assumptions  Confusion about students  Uncertainty</p> <p>No solution apparent  Insecure because of lack of support by college</p>



Theoretical memos, written throughout the data analysis and propositions-development phases of the study, were used to document rudimentary thoughts as they occurred, to keep track of coding results and to stimulate further coding (Strauss, 1987). These memos were typed into the computer and identified by interview number, code name and date. They enabled the researcher to record hypotheses that were compared, verified, modified or changed as new data became available (Corbin, 1986:108). They also contained the products of inductive and deductive thinking about relevant and potentially relevant categories of concepts (Strauss and Corbin, 1990). The following theoretical memo, written after the first interview, is an example of what was undertaken:

**28th April 1999**

### **Theoretical Memo**

#### **The first cohort of full-fee paying Indonesian students**

**Institution A – Asst Dir Acad - Int – 30.04.99**

The respondent was the Assistant Director Academic of a TAFE college when the college took in its first cohort of full-fee paying overseas students. He was pleased to be appointed to this position and eager to learn of the effect of the presence of Indonesian students in the college. The respondent realised that there was no adequate policy in place nor sufficient guidelines to follow about how to cater for Indonesian students and that he would need to develop these, or at least some short-term tactics, in order to overcome this gap. He claims to have learned that Indonesian students had special needs, for example, the wish to pray at about 11-12 am on Fridays, the Muslim Sabbath. He was made aware by a colleague who had lived in Indonesia to be careful of handing items to Indonesians using his left hand, something offensive to Muslims. He realised that he needed to convey this sort of intelligence to other personnel in the college, such as lecturers, who would need to facilitate the students to interrupt their class work to pray. He also recognised from his experience and other anecdotal feedback in the college that he was confronted with a new educational experience to administer.

Such theoretical memos were developed throughout the study to capture the “frontier of the analyst’s thinking” (Glaser, 1978:83) in relation to the data, concepts, codes and categories. Strauss (1987) shows that there is a triadic relationship between data collection, coding and preparing memoranda. In doing this, the researcher examined and re-examined all data throughout the life of the study. This involved moving back and forth between collecting data, coding and preparing memoranda. In this way, the researcher arrived at a coherent proposition.

NO EXAMPLE OF DIAGRAM – DO I NEED TO SHOW ONE?

By way of conclusion to this overview of the methods of data gathering and analysis used in the study reported in this dissertation, it is useful to recall that analysing data by the grounded theory method is an intricate process of reducing raw data into concepts that are designated to stand for categories. The categories are then developed and integrated into a theory (Corbin, 1986). This process is achieved by coding data, writing memos and diagramming. In this study, the data were coded and analysed using coding methods of the grounded theory model (Glaser, 1992).

The documents reviewed for this study can be considered in two ways. They can be referred to as ‘secondary material’ and the analysis drawn from them can be termed ‘secondary analysis’ (Sarantakos, 1996:206). This is because the documents were not primarily developed for the study. However, with respect to the closeness of the documents studied to the event they describe, they can be

distinguished between: contemporary documents, that is, those compiled at the time the events took place; retrospective documents, which were produced after the event took place; primary documents, which are sources compiled by eye witnesses of the described events; and secondary documents, that is, sources derived from primary documents (Becker, 1989; Stergios, 1981).

I BELIEVE I SCRUTINISED EXAMPLES OF EACH OF THESE TYPES IN THE ARCHIVED FILES AND CONTEMPORARY RECORDS I SAW. DO I NEED TO GIVE AN EXAMPLE OF EACH?

Garfinkel (1967) argues that organisational records are produced for the purpose of documenting satisfactory performance of the organisation's responsibilities towards its clients.

Data from all these records were analysed to learn about the people who wrote and maintained them and to develop an understanding of their perspectives, assumptions, concerns and activities.

As noted earlier, in order to more completely describe their functions, lecturers and administrative staff frequently provided examples in the interviews of documents prepared in the course of their work. These records were also analysed by the researcher in order to respond to the second research question.

gathering information from these sources, the researcher made detailed notes of relevant data contained in them, and in some cases, with permission, took copies of extracts from the official records. As an example of these kinds of records, the

researcher scrutinised several memoranda that were sent by the Principal of the Leederville Technical College to the Commonwealth Office of Education outlining the strategies devised and implemented in the College to assist Indonesian students to overcome limited English language competency.

The researcher carefully examined the empirical information and looked for general ideas, themes or concepts as analytical tools for making generalisations. The data were organised into categories on the basis of themes, concepts or similar features. New concepts were developed and the relations among concepts examined. While immersed in taking notes, the researcher began analysing them. He moved back and forth between noting in writing relevant data, analysing it, reflecting on it and going back to primary sources for more information in a way that cannot be laid out or predicted in advance.

Furthermore, it may be noteworthy that a staff member from the college's Business Centre, was chosen to look after these students. This may point to an attitude on behalf of The Business Centre's principal role in the college is to look for opportunities to provide specialised courses, outside the conventional full-time offerings, for external commercial enterprises.....

Crabtree and Miller (1992:234) and Lincoln and Guba (1985) consider that equivalent terms for validity and reliability in relation to qualitative data are credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability. Crabtree (1992: 86-88, 177), a public health researcher, advocates five methods for seeking trustworthiness in qualitative research. These are: triangulation, thick description,

reflexivity, member checking and searching for disconfirmations. Where convergence exists in understanding between different methods, the data are viewed as being more valid and reliable.