Quality assurance in Aboriginal early childhood education: a participatory action research study

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Certificate of Originality

I certify that the substance of this thesis has not already been submitted for any degree and is not currently being submitted for any other degree or qualification.

I certify that to the best of my knowledge any help received in preparing this thesis and all sources used have been acknowledged in this thesis.

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Abstract

This research explores the implementation of an external quality assurance process with the people of Kulai Aboriginal Preschool. A participatory action research approach was used to examine the process. The impact of this quality assurance process on learning and change in the workplace was the focus of the study.

Putting Children First: Quality Improvement and Accreditation System (NCAC 1993) was the initial impetus for organisational change at the preschool, however establishing trust and engaged relationships emerged as critical to meaning making and to changing workplace practices. Metaphors aided communication by bridging cultural boundaries and enacting transformations in thinking. Metaphor and quality assurance were seen as fluid terms, generating energy by moving between possible understandings. Meaning making comes about as a consequence of this movement.

Data was collected through participant observations and interviews. This information was recorded using written and visual narrative forms. Maps enabled a macro and micro-analysis of participation in meaning making and organisational change in the context of this Aboriginal early childhood centre. This analysis brought alive the space-in-between, also known as the third space or m-i-n-d field where meaning making was found to occur. Maps enabled the visualisation of meaning making to occur as a consequence of shared action. Analysis of these maps illuminated the complexity of participation in the quality assurance process.