

RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

Children's Futures Today in Chile

Professor Michael Singh, Associate Professor Christine Woodrow and Associate Professor Steve Wilson from the School of Education, and Dr Juan Salazar from the School of Communication Arts are working in Chile to investigate the effectiveness of an innovative intervention in early childhood education and community capacity building in an area of extreme poverty and disadvantage. This project is funded and supported by the Fundacion Minera Escondida of Chile, a social foundation linked to a global mining company. Chile's National Board of Early Childhood and INTEGRA Foundation are also partners in this project.

'It is widely accepted now that learning in early childhood can have a profound effect on life outcomes when children grow older,' says Professor Singh. 'It is also becoming clear that strengthening the capacity of early childhood educators to support and engage families and communities in the education of their children significantly benefits young children's learning and establishes strong foundations for their subsequent schooling.' Associate Professor Woodrow explains, 'In Chile, the National Board of Early Childhood, (early childhood education provider), has recognised the importance of building children's learning on the basis of families' experiential knowledge and sees the significance of educators adopting a socio-cultural framework for their work. They have teamed up with UWS and Fundacion Minera Escondida to introduce a program called 'Futuro Infantil Hoy' (Children's Future's Now) to stimulate positive change in the quality of their educational services'.

Through interviews and focus groups with early childhood educators and parents, the team will explore the impact of the professional learning and leadership development. An environmental literacy rating scale and visual research methods, including digital story telling will also be trialled. A significant innovation involves the use of contemporary digital



technologies in both the professional learning program provided for educators and in the curriculum and learning experiences of the children.

Kits, DVDs and other resources produced as part of this project will assist Chilean policy makers to improve the future lives of Chilean children through their actions today. This research will build capacity and teaching skills among Early Childhood Educators in Chile and in the communities that they serve. Integral to this process is the two-way exchange of valuable conceptual and theoretical knowledge between Australia and Chile.

Project Title: Futuro Infantil Hoy and the professional development of leaders in Early Childhood Education: A sociological study of transnational knowledge exchange between Australia and Chile.

Funding has been set at: \$226,259

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February 2011