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**BECOMING A TEACHER: EXPERIENCES AND PERCEPTIONS OF BEGINNING  
TEACHERS IN VANUATU SECONDARY SCHOOLS**

A thesis submitted in fulfilment

of the requirements for the degree

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by

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## ABSTRACT

Entering into the teaching profession as a beginning teacher can be a complex and challenging experience. Research highlights that beginning teachers are more effective when they are supported in their roles as new teachers (Tickle, 1994; Hattie, 2003; Cameron, Lovett, & Berger, 2007; Kearney, 2014) and consideration must be given to the ways in which they are inducted into their formal teaching positions.

Much of the literature associated with induction of beginning teachers is framed from a Western world view in which some experiences are prioritised over others. In the context of the Republic of Vanuatu - a small island state in the South West Pacific, the professional support and induction experiences of beginning teachers remain under-researched.

This qualitative study sought to address this lack of attention and examined the induction and early career experiences of beginning secondary teachers as they entered into the school context as qualified teachers. The research approach was designed to include semi-structured interviews, reflective journals, and documentation analysis as core data sources. The participants were seven beginning secondary teachers and four secondary school principals.

Findings from the research highlighted the importance of understanding what motivated these beginning teachers to enter into the teaching profession and how this impacted on their perceptions of themselves as teachers. Further, contrary to formalised and documented policies, it was also significant that informal pathways to employment into schools, while they were varied, were numerous.

Once appointed to a position, the induction experiences of the beginning teachers highlighted high levels of anxiety as they entered their schools and were given charge of their classes. However, as the year progressed the beginning teachers demonstrated agency and resilience, encountering diverse problems, and seeking their own solutions to both pedagogical issues and gaps in their content

knowledge. Interestingly, elements of induction that have been identified as important in other educational contexts were not necessarily identified by principals as being relevant to support their beginning teachers, and were thus missing from the induction experiences of the participants.

To theorise the research findings, Bronfenbrenner's (1979) Ecological Systems Theory is drawn on. In seeking to further understand how beginning teachers in this context, Vanuatu, can be supported in their induction to the teaching profession, a contextualised model has emerged from the findings of this study. Understanding the induction experiences of beginning teachers as they become part of the profession of teaching is an important step in developing the necessary conditions which will enable them to be effective in their roles as educators. Developing contextualized induction programmes which can be sustained to enhance teachers' professional learning and ultimately impact children's learning positively in the future is an important recommendation. Thus, this research will add to the body of literature regarding the beginning teachers' learning and development, induction, and the formation of professional teacher identity within the context of Vanuatu.

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*I can do all things through Christ who gives me strength*

*Philippians 4:13*

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## DEDICATIONS

To my family: Navat and Tarosa- younger generations, sky is the limit!

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

|  |             |
|--|-------------|
| <b>ABSTRACT</b> .....  | <b>ii</b>   |
| <b>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</b> .....  | <b>iv</b>   |
| <b>DEDICATIONS</b> .....   | <b>vii</b>  |
| <b>TABLE OF CONTENTS</b> .....   | <b>viii</b> |
| <b>LIST OF FIGURES</b> .....   | <b>xii</b>  |
| <b>LIST OF TABLES</b> .....  | <b>xiii</b> |
| <b>CHAPTER ONE - INTRODUCTION</b> .....  | <b>1</b>    |
| 1.1 Introduction .....   | 1           |
| 1.2 Research interest and background to the study .....                        | 3           |
| 1.3 The research focus.....  | 6           |
| 1.4 The context of Vanuatu .....   | 7           |
| 1.5 Background to Vanuatu’s education system .....                             | 10          |
| 1.5.1 Vanuatu Institute of Teacher Education.....                              | 17          |
| 1.5.2 The VITE intake process .....  | 19          |
| 1.5.3 The VITE Programme 2010 -2019 .....                                      | 22          |
| 1.6 Education Governance in Vanuatu .....                                      | 24          |
| 1.6.1 Employment as a teacher in Vanuatu: Recruitment and<br>Remuneration..... | 26          |
| 1.6.2 Vanuatu’s Inspectorate system.....                                       | 30          |
| 1.6.3 The School-Based Management 2012 - Present .....                         | 30          |
| 1.6.4 National Teachers’ Development Plan.....                                 | 32          |
| 1.7 Summary of key events in education.....                                    | 34          |
| 1.8 The thesis structure.....  | 35          |
| <b>CHAPTER TWO - LITERATURE REVIEW</b> .....                                   | <b>38</b>   |
| 2.1 Introduction .....   | 38          |
| 2.2 Becoming a teacher .....   | 40          |
| 2.2.1 Motivations for becoming a teacher.....                                  | 42          |
| 2.2.2 Apprenticeship of observation .....                                      | 44          |
| 2.2.3 Teacher identity development.....  | 47          |
| 2.2.4 Pedagogical content knowledge.....                                       | 48          |
| 2.3 Stage theories of teacher development .....                                | 52          |
| 2.4 Problems and challenges encountered by beginning teachers.....             | 55          |
| 2.4.1 Work related Challenges .....  | 56          |
| 2.4.2 Social challenges .....  | 59          |
| 2.5 School culture and leadership.....   | 61          |
| 2.6 Teacher induction .....  | 62          |
| 2.6.1 Functions of induction .....   | 64          |
| 2.6.2 The relationship between initial teacher education and induction         | 65          |

|   |  |            |
|---|--|------------|
| 2.6.3   | Coaching and mentoring as induction strategies .....   | 67         |
| 2.6.4   | Induction programmes .....   | 68         |
| 2.7   | Summary .....  | 74         |
| <b>CHAPTER THREE - THE RESEARCH METHODOLOGY.....</b>      |  | <b>75</b>  |
| 3.1   | Introduction .....   | 75         |
| 3.2   | The Research Paradigm.....   | 77         |
| 3.2.1   | Research Methodology .....   | 79         |
| 3.2.2   | Qualitative case study methodology .....   | 81         |
| 3.2.3   | The application of the Ecological Systems Theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) to teacher induction .....                 | 84         |
| 3.3   | Research Methods & Processes .....   | 88         |
| 3.3.1   | Using Interviews in educational research.....  | 89         |
| 3.3.2   | Reflective Journals .....  | 95         |
| 3.3.3   | Documentation Analysis .....   | 97         |
| 3.4   | Analysis of project data.....  | 99         |
| 3.5   | Maintaining quality in educational research .....  | 102        |
| 3.6   | Ethical Considerations .....   | 104        |
| 3.6.1   | No harm to participants.....   | 105        |
| 3.6.2   | Informed consent .....   | 106        |
| 3.7   | The Research Process.....  | 108        |
| 3.7.1   | Participant Selection.....   | 108        |
| 3.7.2   | School involvement in this research .....  | 111        |
| 3.7.3   | About the participants .....   | 112        |
| <b>CHAPTER FOUR - BECOMING A TEACHER IN VANUATU .....</b> |  | <b>114</b> |
| 4.1   | Introduction .....   | 114        |
| 4.2   | Entering into Initial Teacher Education: Choosing teaching as a career<br>115                                      |            |
| 4.2.1   | Deciding to become a teacher .....   | 115        |
| 4.2.2   | Beginning Secondary Teachers' perspectives on the challenges of becoming a teacher .....                           | 118        |
| 4.2.3   | Principals' perspective of beginning teachers' preparedness for teaching .....                                     | 122        |
| 4.3   | Entering the Teaching Profession: Pathways to employment.....  | 125        |
| 4.3.1   | Formal pathway to teaching- Government recruitment.....  | 126        |
| 4.3.2   | Informal pathways to teaching - schools' recruitment.....  | 128        |
| 4.3.3   | Informal pathways to teaching - Principals' perspectives.....  | 130        |
| 4.3.4   | Informal pathways to teaching - consequences for beginning secondary teachers and secondary school principals..... | 132        |
| 4.4   | Entering into the School Context: Beginning Teacher Induction.....   | 136        |

|   |   |            |
|---|---|------------|
| 4.4.1   | Beginning secondary teachers' perceptions: Stepping into the physical space.....  | 137        |
| 4.4.2   | Beginning secondary teachers' perceptions: Expectations versus the reality of the first day in class .....                            | 140        |
| 4.4.3   | Principals' perceptions: First day orientation.....   | 142        |
| 4.5   | Summary .....   | 146        |
| <b>CHAPTER FIVE - BECOMING A TEACHER: CONSTRAINTS AND ENABLERS OF SUCCESSFUL TRANSITION INTO TEACHING .....</b> |   | <b>148</b> |
| 5.1   | Introduction .....  | 148        |
| 5.2   | Challenges experienced by beginning teachers.....   | 149        |
| 5.2.1   | Accessing teaching resources.....   | 149        |
| 5.2.2   | Time Constraints.....   | 152        |
| 5.2.3   | Feelings and experiences of isolation .....   | 154        |
| 5.2.4   | Student learning and behaviour management.....  | 156        |
| 5.2.5   | Managing administrative duties alongside teaching .....   | 159        |
| 5.3   | Surviving as a beginning teacher: Enablers .....  | 163        |
| 5.3.1   | Accessing and forming effective professional relationships.....   | 163        |
| 5.3.2   | Individual professional learning and development.....   | 165        |
| 5.3.3   | Engaging with colleagues through multiple means.....  | 166        |
| 5.3.4   | Using Reflective Journals.....  | 169        |
| 5.3.5   | Using the Internet .....  | 171        |
| 5.3.6   | Other enablers .....  | 172        |
| 5.4   | Summary .....   | 175        |
| <b>CHAPTER SIX - INTERPRETATION AND DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS .....</b>  |   | <b>176</b> |
| 6.1   | Introduction .....  | 176        |
| 6.2   | The reproduction of socio-cultural norms in education: the influence of prior experiences and the Apprenticeship of Observation ..... | 177        |
| 6.2.1   | The importance of prior educational experiences .....   | 177        |
| 6.2.2   | The influence of family members.....  | 179        |
| 6.2.3   | Early professional identity formation and the Microsystem (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) .....  | 180        |
| 6.3   | The complexities of entering into the teaching profession .....   | 182        |
| 6.3.1   | The importance of developing and maintaining professional relationships .....   | 182        |
| 6.3.2   | Accepting the challenges of the first years of teaching .....   | 185        |
| 6.3.3   | Additional responsibilities as a contextual reality .....   | 188        |
| 6.3.4   | Agency and resilience as a personal response to professional challenges.....  | 189        |

|  |  |            |
|--|--|------------|
| 6.4  | Beginning secondary teachers' experiences through the lens of the Ecological Systems Theory .....  | 190        |
| 6.5  | The role of induction in supporting beginning secondary teachers....   | 194        |
| 6.5.1  | Mentors as key figures in beginning secondary teacher induction  | 197        |
| 6.6  | Reconceptualising Beginning Teachers' Experiences with a contextually appropriate metaphor inspired by the Ecological Systems Theory ..... | 200        |
| 6.6.1  | Level 1- Planter Yams/Newak ne Geka.....   | 204        |
| 6.6.2  | Level 2- Yam Garden/Not ne Geka.....   | 205        |
| 6.6.3  | Level 3- Place/Nevenu .....  | 207        |
| 6.6.4  | Level 4- Traditions/bekelo.....  | 209        |
| <b>CHAPTER SEVEN - CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS .....</b> |  | <b>210</b> |
| 7.1  | Purpose of the research .....  | 210        |
| 7.2  | Research design and methodology .....  | 210        |
| 7.3  | Possible limitations of this research .....  | 211        |
| 7.4  | Key research findings .....  | 213        |
| 7.5  | Recommendations.....   | 216        |
| 7.6  | Contribution of the research.....  | 218        |
| 7.7  | Directions for further research .....  | 219        |
| <b>REFERENCES.....</b>                                       |  | <b>221</b> |
| <b>APPENDICES.....</b>                                       |  | <b>241</b> |

## LIST OF FIGURES

|  |     |
|--|-----|
| <b>Figure 1.1:</b> Map of the Republic of Vanuatu.....   | 8   |
| <b>Figure 1.2:</b> Schooling system in Vanuatu (Adapted from the Annual Statistical Digest for MoET, 2015) .....         | 11  |
| <b>Figure 1.3:</b> Vanuatu Ministry of Education and Training structure, 2014 .....                                      | 25  |
| <b>Figure 2.1:</b> Professional learning for teachers (From Ingersoll and Strong, 2011, p. 203, circle added) .....      | 39  |
| <b>Figure 3.1:</b> Ecological Systems Model (Based on Bronfenbrenner, 1979).....   | 86  |
| <b>Figure 6.1:</b> Beginning Teachers in the Microsystem. Adapted from Bronfenbrenner (1979).....                        | 181 |
| <b>Figure 6.2:</b> Ecological Systems Model (Repeated from figure 3.1).....  | 191 |
| <b>Figure 6.3:</b> Ecological Systems Model of Beginning Teachers' Support in Vanuatu (2017) .....                       | 193 |
| <b>Figure 6.4:</b> A growing yam, by Tasau Tarosa. Used with permission.....   | 202 |
| <b>Figure 6.5:</b> The geka 'yam' model of Vanuatu beginning teacher induction ...                                       | 203 |
| <b>Figure 6.6:</b> Planter yams. ....  | 204 |
| <b>Figure 6.7:</b> Yam mounds in a new yam garden. Image © Malekula Languages Project, used with permission.....         | 205 |
| <b>Figure 6.8:</b> Yam vines growing in a yam garden. Image © Malekula Languages Project, used with permission.....      | 205 |
| <b>Figure 6.9:</b> Mature yam vines. Image © Griffith Harrison. Used with permission. ....                               | 207 |
| <b>Figure 6.10:</b> Mature yams as part of a bridal gift. Image © Malekula Languages Project. Used with permission. .... | 209 |

## LIST OF TABLES

|   |     |
|---|-----|
| <b>Table 1.1:</b> Demography of languages in schools .....  | 12  |
| <b>Table 1.2:</b> Vanuatu Secondary School Educational Statistics Summary from 2011<br>- 2018 ..... | 15  |
| <b>Table 3.1:</b> Beginning teacher participants.....   | 113 |
| <b>Table 3.2:</b> Principal Participants.....   | 113 |

# CHAPTER ONE - INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Introduction

This research project provides a contextualised exploration of the induction experiences of beginning secondary teachers in the Republic of Vanuatu. With the first objective of Vanuatu's Ministry of Education and Training Corporate Plan 2013-2017 being to "improve the quality of education" (Vanuatu Ministry of Education and Training, 2013), many aspects of Vanuatu's education system impact on educational quality and could be considered for research. It is the transition of beginning teachers into secondary schools, and their early formative experiences as they develop as professionals in their chosen career, which is the focus of this project.

Beginning teachers are understood to play a significant role in the educational landscape, bringing with them formative experiences that have an impact on a) personal identity, and b) professional identity, as well as c) pedagogical knowledge learned from their initial teacher education (Palmer & Scribner, 2007). Teacher identity involves understanding oneself and involves seeking, constructing, and reconstructing meanings about oneself and how one can be interconnected with others (Gibbs, 2006; Palmer & Scribner, 2007). While beginning teachers bring with them the above three characteristics, they also bring life experiences into their teaching roles, and they are expected to learn from their new setting. Thus, the shift from pre-service education into a teaching role in a school is known to be extremely complex and challenging (Kearney, 2014; Langdon, 2010), as beginning teachers seek to make sense of themselves, their new context, and find ways to apply and extend their knowledge. Internationally, many countries have established induction programmes to support beginning teachers through this complex time, and help them to address the challenges they face. These induction programmes are continually being reviewed to ensure they are fit for purpose. This is because many researchers believe that induction of beginning teachers is a core element in achieving quality education (Cameron, Lovett, & Berger, 2007; Hattie, 2003; Kearney, 2014).

Equally, Cameron et al. (2007) argue that the continuation of training of teachers is vital and that authorities concerned should make ongoing professional development a priority for quality to be achieved in education. The established understanding is that the appropriate preparation of teachers, participation in an induction programme, along with continuous professional development, are all essential to improve the quality of education (Ingersoll & Kralik, 2004).

To date, Vanuatu's Ministry of Education and Training has not implemented a formal induction programme of the kind found in neighbouring Pacific countries like New Zealand, Australia, and Papua New Guinea (see section 2.6.4 for a description of these programmes). There appears to be no publicly available research on the school-specific induction of beginning teachers in the Vanuatu context. In terms of preservice preparation, beginning teachers enter schools with curriculum content and some pedagogical content knowledge acquired during their three years training at the Vanuatu Institute of Teacher Education (VITE). With an initial four weeks of observation in schools at VITE, followed by only eight weeks of teaching practicum, when beginning teachers take up a teaching post, this will be the first time they will independently put their professional knowledge into practice in a secondary classroom. It may be the case that individual principals have developed guidelines to support their beginning teachers, but it is not known to what extent informal induction practices are occurring in Vanuatu secondary schools.

To date, there is no formal registration and licensing of teachers in the Vanuatu context. The development of a formal registration process for Vanuatu teachers has been in progress since 2015. All teachers were asked to apply for registration in 2016. In 2017 the new Teacher Registration and Licensing Policy was launched (VESP, 2018); however, no formal procedures and guidelines could be located for beginning teachers (or indeed any teachers) to attain a license, and/or renew a licence. These official documents may have become available since the time of writing.

In the absence of formal processes and procedures related to the entry into the teaching profession, and with no identified research into beginning secondary teachers' early experiences in schools, the research reported in this doctoral thesis explores the induction experiences and perceptions of beginning teachers and their principals.

This introductory chapter is organised in seven sections. Section 1.2 offers insights into my personal and professional experiences that have led to my interest in pursuing this research. Section 1.3 introduces the overarching question and sub-questions that have guided the exploration undertaken in this research. Section 1.4 briefly outlines the core contextual features in Vanuatu: geographical; social; environmental; and economic, to demonstrate their real and potential impact on the education system. In Section 1.5, an overview of the education system is offered, which includes a brief history of Vanuatu's formal education, and a description of teacher training. Section 1.6 considers governance of education in Vanuatu by the Ministry of Education and Training, with an explanation of the documented role of the Teaching Service Commission in the recruitment and remuneration of teachers. There is a small but growing field of literature focusing specifically on education in Vanuatu; however, little has been written by Ni-Vanuatu (indigenous citizens of Vanuatu). Information collected from Vanuatu's Ministry of Education and Training (MoET), and literature by expatriates, is analysed to provide an overview of the unique educational circumstances in which this research took place. Section 1.7 provides a summary of key events in Vanuatu's educational history. Finally, section 1.8 outlines the structure of the thesis.

## **1.2 Research interest and background to the study**

My personal interest in this research focus stems from my educational background and my experiences of working in the Vanuatu education system for over twenty years. As a child, I completed year 1 to year 10 in Vanuatu schools. I then spent two years in Fiji for senior high school – years 11 and 12. I joined the teaching service in the 1990s following tertiary education in Papua New Guinea,

where I earned a Teaching Diploma. At that time, there was an inspectorate system in operation in Papua New Guinea's education system. As a returning scholar to my own Vanuatu education system, I felt like a stranger in my homeland. After my years abroad in Fiji and then Papua New Guinea, the Vanuatu school setting was new to me and so were the staff. Having seen the inspectorate system in Papua New Guinea, I was looking forward to being guided by someone as I began my teaching career. On my first day of employment, I was received by one of my two Heads of Department, who made me feel welcomed. I was expecting to be provided with professional support but there was no system of professional support in Vanuatu at that time. Instead, I was shown to my table, assigned my duties, and then left to do my job. As a novice teacher, I did not question the system or my authorities directly, but I began to wonder why I had to take up responsibilities in my first year of teaching which were equal to those of experienced teachers, and without any assistance or mentoring. I depended on my own observations and as I built relationships with my colleagues, I was able to turn to them for support.

When I first began teaching in the mid-1990s, the Teaching Service Commission (TSC) appointed me on a probationary year. This year stretched out to six years on probation with no contact from the Teaching Service Commission. I returned to Papua New Guinea for a further two years to complete a Bachelor of Teaching. During my time away in Papua New Guinea, my status as a teacher in Vanuatu changed to permanent. That experience led me to re-think Vanuatu's education system in terms of teacher support and development. I wanted to know more about how teachers could be supported. When the inspectorate system was finally introduced in Vanuatu's secondary education sector in 2002 (see section 1.6.2.), I was excited to hear of the development. How the inspectorate worked was not known to me until an inspector visited my school and observed my teaching on a number of occasions. The inspector reviewed my work plans and gave me general feedback on my teaching practice. I wanted to find out a little about what the inspector did with his notes after observing me. When I inquired

about this, the inspector told me that he wrote a report after each observation, and submitted it to his office, but he did not know what happened to the report after that. Certainly, the reports did not appear to be used for promotion purposes or to assess quality beyond the work of an individual teacher.

I moved into school administration and leadership in 2003. I recall having an experience while working as the Deputy Principal at a secondary school, when the school recruited a beginning teacher to fill a vacant position. I deliberately arranged to give the beginning teacher a lighter workload. I suspected my decision would cause problems because it has been a normal practice in Vanuatu to assign beginning teachers a full teaching load. Indeed, after planning a lighter load for the beginning teacher, I was confronted by colleague who complained about my decision. This teacher would have to do more teaching, while the beginning teacher did less. I tried to explain about the challenges of being a beginning teacher, but my colleague argued, saying something like: “It is true, the beginning teacher is new but he must not be given fewer hours to teach because he will be paid the same as me. Besides, I was not given fewer hours when I started teaching, and I am still on probation.” I did understand the perspective of my colleague – for a long time in Vanuatu there was no difference in the salaries paid to beginning and experienced teachers.<sup>1</sup>

In 2011, I took leave from teaching to undertake a Masters degree in educational leadership, and I returned to the profession as teacher educator at the Vanuatu Institute of Teacher Education (VITE) in 2013. As my first classes of students graduated and headed out into the work place, I realised there was no follow up with VITE graduates. I was unable to find any research into the experiences of VITE graduates in secondary schools. Even basic details, such as if and where VITE graduates were working were not being recorded.

---

<sup>1</sup> In 2018, Vanuatu’s Ministry of Education and Training announced a Government Remuneration Tribunal which considers years of experience and merit in paying teachers’ salaries. Colleagues have advised me that the new salary scales have been implemented, with experienced teachers receiving a salary increase.

My personal experiences and observations from my time as a teacher and teacher educator highlighted to me the challenges of the transition between initial teacher education and a classroom role as a professional teacher in a secondary school. Like me, when I first started my teaching journey, my VITE graduates were struggling with the transition into the profession. I began to see the importance of supporting beginning teachers within the education system.

Coming to know the experiences and perceptions that beginning secondary teachers in Vanuatu have of informal induction will be extremely useful to develop structures which can support beginning teachers in the first years of their career, and perhaps contribute towards their licensing and registration when the formal processes are fully in place. This research project is timely in that it will aid secondary school leaders and policy makers to understand the experiences and perceptions of beginning secondary teachers, and enable them to design and implement effective induction programmes to support these teachers into the teaching profession. Ultimately, this research seeks to contribute to the Republic of Vanuatu's aspiration for improved educational quality as stated in their corporate plans (Vanuatu Ministry of Education and Training, 2013, 2018a).

### **1.3 The research focus**

This research was a qualitative case study which examined the induction experiences of seven beginning secondary school teachers and their principals in Vanuatu. The research was designed with a case study approach and framed around a main research question and three sub-questions, presented below:

*What are the induction experiences and perceptions of beginning secondary teachers in Vanuatu schools?*

- i. How are beginning secondary teachers inducted into the teaching profession in Vanuatu schools?
- ii. What are the challenges/barriers/enablers to successful induction into the secondary teaching profession in Vanuatu schools?

- iii. In what ways do Vanuatu schools, particularly through their school leadership systems, support beginning secondary teachers into the teaching profession?

By asking these questions of beginning secondary teachers, I hope to understand and make sense of beginning teachers' experiences, with regards to the meanings that they bring with them, and to present findings that represent their full experience of what it means to be inducted as a beginning teacher in a Vanuatu secondary school.

I have also chosen to involve school principals in this research. This will allow me to examine the contexts into which the beginning teachers are stepping, and will provide me with contextual information which the beginning teachers may not consider or encounter in their initial career steps. A second rationale for the inclusion of principals in this study is to find out how principals currently support beginning teachers professionally, and to explore evidence of induction within the participating schools in the study. Consequently, using both beginning teachers and principals is expected to be more beneficial in the sense that more nuanced recommendations can be made at the completion of this research, taking into account the contextualized nature of induction. The research context in Vanuatu is considered in the next section.

#### **1.4 The context of Vanuatu**

The Republic of Vanuatu, formally known as the New Hebrides, is a small Pacific archipelago comprising 83 islands (Figure 1.1). The most recent census records a total population of 272,459 (Vanuatu National Statistic Office, 2016). This population is spread widely over Vanuatu's six provincial regions. Port Vila, Vanuatu's capital on Efate Island, and Luganville on the island of Espiritu Santo are the two largest towns. Vanuatu is culturally and linguistically diverse, with over 113 languages (Simons & Fenning, 2017). There are three official languages, including the colonial English and French languages, and the local Bislama language, which is a dialect of Melanesian Pidgin. There are also other languages

spoken by different ethnic groups residing in Vanuatu, including Chinese (Simons & Fenning, 2017).

Vanuatu is described as the most vulnerable place on earth because of its location, and small land mass in relation to natural hazards (Wele, 2015; Dillon, 2015). Climate events, including drought, coastal erosion and flooding occur in the Vanuatu islands and affect the citizens adversely. Most recently, Vanuatu has been described as “having the highest disaster risk worldwide” in the *World Risk Report 2019* (Day et al., 2019, p. 6).



*Figure 1.1: Map of the Republic of Vanuatu.*  
Retrieved from: <https://www.lonelyplanet.com/vanuatu>.

The islands which comprise Vanuatu lie on the Pacific Plate with a subduction zone on its west (Vanuatu Ministry of Lands and Natural Resources, 2014). These islands include six active volcanoes, from Mt Suretamatai on Vanua Lava in the north of the archipelago, to Mt Yasur on Tanna Island in the south (Vanuatu Meterology & Geohazards Department, 2020). These volcanoes have caused mass evacuations and relocations, impacting local communities, business, health services and education providers. For example, the volcanic activity of Mt Lombenben on Ambae Island caused the whole population of 11,000 to be

evacuated in 2017, and again in 2018 (Fogarty & Graue, 2018). Following the evacuations, secondary students were relocated to new schools, and they stayed in their new schools off Ambae Island to complete the school year.

It is therefore understandable that natural events are highly disruptive in the Vanuatu context, and have a considerable effect on the provision of education. During the annual cyclone season from November to April, it is not uncommon for schools to be told to close. The Ministry of Education and Training sends students home, and teachers must work to protect their teaching resources and classroom buildings before a cyclone arrives. After the cyclone has passed, further time is required to clean up school facilities before students can return. Schools are mostly placed within small communities, and when natural disasters strike, the impact on the communities is significant. Community members may need to rebuild their own homes before they can support the repair of schools. When events are severe, such as Tropical Cyclone Pam in 2015, assistance from overseas is relied upon for the rebuilding of schools.

Natural events have an impact on the local economy in Vanuatu, which in turn can affect access to education. The majority of the Ni-Vanuatu population depends on subsistence farming. The main sources of income derive from horticulture, including selling garden produce at local markets, copra production (harvesting and drying coconut flesh, which is later pressed for oil), and the sale of kava (*Piper methysticum*) for recreational consumption. During a cyclone, gardens can be damaged by strong winds, and crops can be washed away by flooding. People always replant after a cyclone, but it takes at least three months for new crops to mature. This means people have to rely on store-bought food, and their income sources from copra and kava may also be affected by cyclones, leading to financial hardship. At such times, it is very difficult for parents to manage any financial contributions to their children's schools, and children may be withdrawn from school.

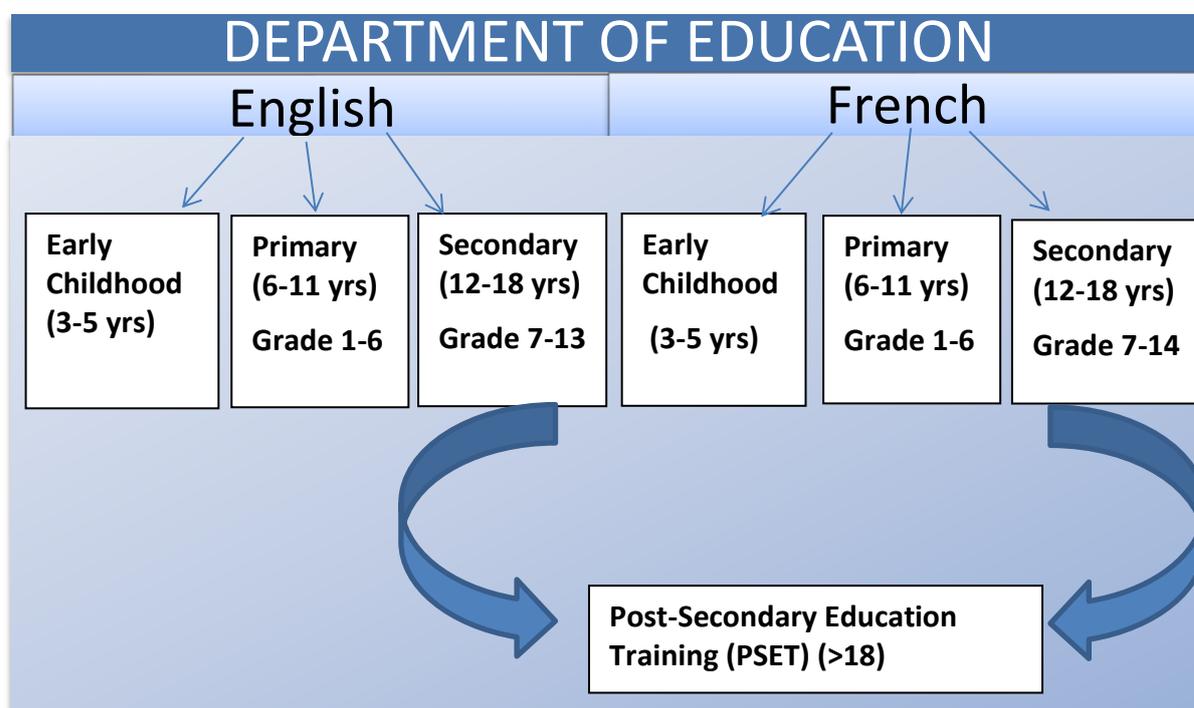
Regardless of the natural events that occur during the course of the school year, teachers must ensure that they complete the syllabus each year, as all students have to sit an examination at the end of the school year to move on to the next level of study. The following section provides insights into the education system in Vanuatu.

### **1.5 Background to Vanuatu's education system**

Like other Pacific Island countries, formal classroom-based education for the indigenous Ni-Vanuatu began with the arrival of Church Missionaries in the 1800s (Siegel, 1996, p. 99). The first curriculum that was used in Vanuatu was aimed at basic literacy and numeracy. It was Western-oriented and was meant to accomplish Bible reading so the conversion to Christianity would be easier (Hindson, 1995; Sanga, 2004). In 1906, governance of Vanuatu fell under the joint control of France and England, with the formation of the New Hebrides Condominium (Crowley, 1990, p. 4). The joint colonial governments extended the curriculum (Lingam, Burnett, Lilo, & Lingam, 2014). In 1980, Vanuatu gained political independence, forming the modern Republic of Vanuatu. It does not appear that the country had an Education Act on gaining political independence in 1980, but in 1983 the Ministry of Education began using the School Administration Act to administer schools (Tarosa, 2013). The education system is currently administered under the 2014 Education Act No. 9 of the Republic of Vanuatu.

After gaining political independence from France and Britain in 1980, Vanuatu inherited a dual system of education from the period of French and English colonial rule (Siegel, 1996, p. 99), and retained most of the philosophies and ideologies of governance and education from the former colonial system. Religious practices and leadership remain closely connected to school practices and leadership, and it is often the case that school teachers support or lead community and Church activities. The population of Vanuatu is now almost entirely Christian in faith, and religion is very important in community life. French and English have remained the two languages of education, and have

been used in schools until very recently. Figure 1.2 summarises the current schooling system in Vanuatu.



*Figure 1.2: Schooling system in Vanuatu (Adapted from the Annual Statistical Digest for MoET, 2015)*

As seen in figure 1.2, the schooling system consists of Early Childhood, Primary, and Secondary education in English and French languages. According to the Vanuatu Ministry of Education and Training (2015), the primary level comprises years one to six, and the secondary level comprises years seven to thirteen or fourteen, depending on the medium of instruction. The official school age begins at 3 years old for both English and French, with children attending early child care centres. Students can continue until they are approximately 18 years old in English-medium schools. For French-medium schools, there is an extra year of senior high school, so students go on until they are approximately 19 years of age.

Bislama, a dialect of Melanesian Pidgin, is the main language that is spoken nationally throughout Vanuatu. In 2016, Bislama was introduced as an option for education in years one to three of primary school. The Vanuatu National

Language Policy (2012) allows for the use of indigenous (or vernacular) languages in years one to three of primary schools, just like Bislama. Table 1.1 presents the demography of languages recorded as used in schools between 2016 and 2018. While there are increasing numbers of indigenous languages used in early child care centres, it does not appear that any are being used at higher levels.

**Table 1.1: Demography of languages in schools**

| Language   | ECCE (Early Child Care Education) |      |      | Primary (1- 6) |      |      | Secondary (7+) |      |      |
|------------|-----------------------------------|------|------|----------------|------|------|----------------|------|------|
|            | 2017                              | 2018 | 2019 | 2017           | 2018 | 2019 | 2017           | 2018 | 2019 |
| Bilingual  |                                   |      |      |                |      |      | 1              |      |      |
| Bislama    | 26                                | 74   | 71   |                |      |      |                |      |      |
| English    | 315                               | 364  | 366  | 286            | 303  | 325  | 63             | 71   | 77   |
| French     | 65                                | 81   | 81   | 150            | 152  | 154  | 29             | 33   | 34   |
| Vernacular | 114                               | 319  | 333  |                |      |      |                |      |      |
| Vanuatu    | 520                               | 838  | 863  | 436            | 455  | 479  | 93             | 104  | 111  |

*Source: Annual Statistical Digest for the MoET, 2019*

Table 1.1 shows the main language of instruction in schools in Vanuatu, along with the number of schools in the Vanuatu system at early childhood, primary and secondary level. As noted above, Bislama and the vernacular languages have most recently been introduced to Vanuatu’s education system, although by 2019, vernacular languages were still only being used in early child care education. The development of vernacular language resources in 2015-2016 at workshops around Vanuatu means that at least some primary schools are now able to use vernacular languages in primary education (J. Barbour, Personal Communication, February 7, 2020), although the most recent Statistics Digest does not provide

evidence yet of vernacular or Bislama primary schools (Vanuatu Ministry of Education and Training, 2019).

Table 1.1 also shows that there were almost five times more English-medium early child care centres than French-medium in 2019. Looking at the number of secondary schools in Vanuatu, there were more than twice as many English-medium schools than French-medium in 2019, with a total of 111 secondary schools across both languages. The figures indicate that there are likely more English speakers (Anglophones) in the country than French speakers (Francophones).

Because Vanuatu's primary and secondary schools are taught through the medium of French or English, Ni-Vanuatu teachers have to deliver education in a non-dominant language. Teachers may not speak any of the indigenous languages spoken by the students in their classes, and there may not be speakers of the teacher's language present in the school or community context. This situation is challenging for teachers, as well as for students. Not only do students have to learn content at school, they also have to learn the language of instruction. When education is delivered in a non-dominant language, there are recognised consequences for educational success. In the 2016 Global Education Monitoring Report from the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, it is observed that "speaking a language that is not spoken in the classroom frequently holds back a child's learning" (Global Education Monitoring Report Team, 2016, p. 1). In spite of this, Vanuatu's dual system of Anglo-French education persists.

Vanuatu's dual education system is unique in the Pacific. At primary level, schools are not required to teach the 'other' language, although one or two English schools reportedly offer French in their upper primary classes. At secondary level, French is a compulsory subject in all English secondary schools, and English is a compulsory subject in all French secondary schools. The Vanuatu Ministry of Education and Training has worked hard since independence to turn

the dual education system into a unified system. This has resulted in many changes including the Vanuatu National Curriculum Statement (Vanuatu Ministry of Education, 2010), and common curriculum for Vanuatu secondary schools. The common curriculum allows French and English schools to teach the same syllabus and use the same teaching resources provided by the Curriculum Development Unit. In turn, this has led to common national examinations in year 8, year 10, and year 12.

Students encounter barriers during their schooling years as they proceed beyond primary school in the Vanuatu education system. One key barrier is national examinations. Students move from early childhood education to primary education, where they have to sit examinations at the end of each primary year to determine their level of performance. Some students are required to repeat years if they do not perform well. When students get to year eight, they take a national examination to determine who can go on to year nine. Again, at the end of year ten, students take a national examination and only the ones who achieve high grades are selected and move on to year eleven. According to the (Vanuatu Ministry of Education and Training, 2014), there is a placement process for year eight and year ten students who sit the national examinations. Limited numbers of places are available in existing year nine and eleven classes in secondary schools throughout the country. Not all students can be placed. Students who make it to year twelve then take a further national examination and only the best are placed in year thirteen. After year thirteen, again only the very best are able to continue their studies. Successful students are awarded scholarships by the Vanuatu Government to go to universities in the region, in Port Vila or further afield in Fiji or Papua New Guinea. French schools work in the same way as English schools, except that there is the additional year fourteen.

If students get through their final examinations successfully, then they will be able to attend post-secondary institutions domestically or higher education institutions internationally. Table 1.2 shows summary rates of net enrolments for

the population of secondary school aged children, average dropout rates during secondary school, and the rate of survival through to the end of year thirteen.

**Table 1.2:** *Vanuatu Secondary School Educational Statistics Summary from 2011 – 2018*

|                        |                                | 2011  | 2012  | 2013  | 2014  | 2015  | 2016  | 2017  | 2018  |
|------------------------|--------------------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| Secondary<br>(Year 7+) | Net Enrolment Rate             | 30%   | 31%   | 33%   | 34.9% | 34.9% | 42.2% | 43.2% | 42.4% |
|                        | Average Dropout Rate (Year 7+) | 44.2% | 33.5% | 33.2% | 34%   | 28%   | 20%   | 18%   | 18%   |
|                        | Survival rate to Year 13       | 7.3%  | 11.7% | 9.5%  | 22%   | 20%   | 21%   | 23%   | 23%   |

**Source:** Data extracted from annual statistical digests (Vanuatu Ministry of Education and Training, 2014, 2015, 2019)

The information on Table 1.2 shows fewer than half of Vanuatu’s secondary school aged students are enrolled in schools. In 2018, only 42.2% of students were enrolled, with a further 18% starting but dropping out. The success (or survival) rate to year thirteen has gradually increased from just 7.3% in 2011, to 23% in 2018. While it is difficult to locate comparable data, it does seem that Vanuatu’s success rate is very low. In New Zealand for example, where education is compulsory until students reach 16 years of age, 73% of students successfully graduate after 3 years of senior secondary school (years 11 to 13), and a further 18% remain enrolled and working towards graduation (Norgrove & Scott, 2017). These graduation statistics show that New Zealand’s education system facilitates completion, and that success rates for secondary students are far higher than in Vanuatu.

Table 1.2 indicates that dropout rates are improving in Vanuatu, but combined with low enrolments to begin with, the figures show that many of Vanuatu's young people are either not participating in, or not completing secondary education. Students do not enrol, or begin secondary school but later drop out of school, for a number of different reasons. Anecdotally<sup>2</sup>, these reasons include: a lack of success with school-based examinations, national examinations, or regional examinations; the distance from home to school; a lack of lunch money; the cost of uniforms; peer pressure; teenage pregnancy; the inability to pay school contributions; and the inability to pay school fees. The low success rate through to year thirteen shown in Table 1.2 is a well-known problem in the Vanuatu education system. The Government is attempting to address participation levels. They have begun this process by providing more funds to the MoET for 'free education', to encourage students to attend formal education at least from early child care education through to year six.

The examination driven education system of Vanuatu creates barriers to student participation in formal education, resulting in many students who do not succeed. These students may do any of the following:

- go home and not engage in any further form of schooling;
- take up preliminary courses if they drop out from year 10, and foundation courses if they drop out from year 12, at the University of the South Pacific, Emalus Campus, in Port Vila.
- proceed to Post-Secondary Education Training. Post-Secondary Education Training includes training at Rural Training Centres, Vanuatu Institute of Technology, Vanuatu Institute of Teacher Education, Vanuatu

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<sup>2</sup> Anecdotal comments included in this thesis arise from my personal experiences as an educator in Vanuatu over 20+ years period, and from experiences shared by my fellow educators.

Nursing College, Vanuatu Police College, Vanuatu Agricultural College, Australian Pacific Training College, and Vanuatu Maritime College.

Students who do not complete secondary school can only attend the University of the South Pacific or Post-Secondary Education Training if parents can afford to pay for their fees. Sometimes students from the University of the South Pacific (Emalus Campus in Port Vila) complete their Bachelors programme there. Others find jobs, and a few apply for scholarships to further their studies either domestically or internationally. Students who attend some form of Post-Secondary Education Training use their certificates to find jobs or create their own employment with the skills learnt. After gaining some experience in the job, they can also further their studies abroad.

One of the options for Post-Secondary Education Training in Vanuatu listed above is the Vanuatu Institution of Teacher Education. The activities of this education provider will be described in the next section.

### **1.5.1 Vanuatu Institute of Teacher Education**

The Vanuatu Institute of Teacher Education (VITE) is Vanuatu's only teacher training institution. Since Vanuatu gained political independence in 1980, schools have been receiving teachers from VITE to feed primary schools at first, with secondary school teachers' training starting in 1991. As a result of the inherited dual language education system, VITE has English and French tutors/lecturers to teach student teachers who will go into either French or English primary and secondary schools to teach.

The Vanuatu Institute of Teacher Education (VITE), along with the Law Faculty of the University of the South Pacific (USP), offer Vanuatu's highest formal education qualifications. VITE is owned by the Vanuatu Government and USP is co-owned by 12 Pacific Island countries, including Vanuatu. More importantly, because VITE is the only institute that trains primary and secondary teachers in the country, it is where the majority of teachers in Vanuatu receive their initial

teacher training. A small number of teachers are trained through colleges and universities abroad such as Fiji's USP Laucala Campus or Fulton College in Fiji, or Papua New Guinea's University of Goroka, the Holy Trinity College, or the Sonoma Adventist College. It is important to acknowledge that there are also a number of untrained teachers working in secondary schools. These untrained teachers are asked to fill in teaching gaps in schools when there are teacher shortages.<sup>3</sup>

VITE was officially opened in 1962 by the British Administration of the New Hebrides Condominium in Port Vila (VITE, 2013). At that time, it was named Kawenu Teacher Training College. The college offered a two year course for English primary teachers. At this time, French teachers were trained at the French Embassy in Port Vila. In 1983, there was amalgamation of languages, so French and English primary teachers began training at the same campus. A two-year certificate for primary teaching continued until 2010 (VITE, 2013). The college name changed several more times until it was named Vanuatu Institute of Teacher Education. In 1991, the first training of English junior secondary teachers took place. It was a two-year diploma programme which ended in 1993. An intake for junior secondary trainee teachers was made again in the year 2000 and training continued up to the graduation of students in December 2019.

There was a standardisation of programmes, locally known as "harmonisation" in 2010 for both the French and English languages at VITE. This involved having the primary and secondary programmes in French and English amalgamated, so that both English and French trainees would be taught in the same programmes. As a result, VITE offered three-year diploma programmes for both primary and junior secondary teachers in both English and French languages. In this project,

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<sup>3</sup>The Ministry of Education and Training Statistical Digest Report (2019) indicates that 94% of teachers in secondary schools in Vanuatu were certified to teach (p.46). It was explained that although all teachers have some qualification, they are not equipped to teach. Some may have completed some secondary schooling, and may be year 10 or year 12 drop outs, while others may have taken foundation papers at USP (Emalus Campus) but have not completed their programme, and end up filling teaching gaps in schools.

graduates from VITE's three-year diploma programme constitute the relevant participant world. A brief discussion of the VITE intake process for the three-year diploma programme is presented in the next section.

### **1.5.2 The VITE intake process**

Each year, the Vanuatu Institute of Teachers' Education advertises publically to recruit trainees. Once the advertisement is public, a procedure is followed to recruit trainees. The procedure has three stages: meeting criteria; an interview; and a written test.

The institute has separate admission criteria for primary trainee teachers and for secondary trainee teachers. Standardization has meant that both the French and English intakes have the same criteria, although there are separate admission criteria for applicants with prior teaching experience and those who are school leavers. In this research, the focus is on beginning teachers, and the admission criteria for applicants to VITE without any prior teaching experience will be discussed.

The admission criteria for school leaver applicants to VITE require that each applicant scores a minimum number of points. The points are accumulated from (1) language requirements; (2) academic qualifications; (3) experience (school/community responsibilities); and (4) gender.

Regarding language requirements, VITE considers the level of English that each applicant has. The minimum requirement that they must have as an entry to VITE is year 13 or South Pacific Form Seven (SPF7), with grade B, or USP Foundation grade B, or equivalent. With regards to academic qualifications, in the Maths/Science stream, applicants must have successfully passed the year 13 SPF7 examinations, or USP Foundation grade C or higher for Mathematics, and three Sciences. For the Language/Social Science stream, applicants must have at least grade C or above in their Year 13 SPF 7 examinations or USP Foundation in any four subjects from the following list: English, Geography, History, or

Economics/Development Studies/Accounting/Computer Studies/French. For the stream of secondary French as a foreign language and English as a second language, the criteria are similar to the Language/Social Science criteria, but French is one of the four required subjects rather than being an option.

Under the experience criterion, an applicant must have undertaken at least two leadership roles/responsibilities while at school, with a written reference as evidence. For example, an applicant may have been a head boy/girl, a prefect, class/dormitory leader, sports/youth/Sunday school leader or other kind of leader. The applicant must also have at least one month work experience of some sort, with a written reference as evidence. The criteria also consider provinces of origin, so there is an equal sharing of trainee placements and not too many trainees from one province at one time. Gender is included to promote gender equality - a female scores one point more than a male in the Maths/Science programme and vice versa for Language/Social Science programme. This is done to promote gender balance in the subject fields.

The accumulated score from the criteria outlined above is used to short-list candidates, after which short-listed candidates enter the next step in the intake process of intake, which is the interview.

The interview is carried out in either English or French. The purpose of having an interview as part of the admission process is to confirm readiness, suitability, and motivation of the short-listed candidates. Interviews are usually offered on three islands in the country: Santo, Efate, and Tanna; however, when there are more short-listed candidates from a particular island then an interview venue may be offered at that location. Short-listed candidates must fund their own transport to these interviews. VITE sends tutors and lecturers to conduct face-to-face interviews with short-listed candidates. The interviews also have their own criteria which the interviewer uses to give a score for each interviewee.

The final stage is a literacy and numeracy test, which all shortlisted candidates have to take. The tests are marked and a final decision is made by the selection

committee based on the outcome of admission criteria scores combined with interview scores and test scores.

On occasion, some applicants to VITE do not fully meet the minimum score, but they are still given a place on the programme. There are two possible reasons for this to happen. Firstly, secondary school students who are very successful may not choose to become secondary teachers. Outstanding students view teaching as hard work with a small salary. It is not as attractive a job to some people as other jobs that are available in Vanuatu. Secondly, those secondary students who are very successful and want to become teachers may apply for scholarships to do their teaching qualifications overseas (for example at USP in Fiji, or the University of Goroka in Papua New Guinea). Because of their good results, the scholarships office selects them to undertake their teaching qualification abroad. Overseas qualifications have a higher status than local qualifications, because they are recognised in the wider Pacific region. Unlike USP qualifications, the three-year diploma in teaching offered at VITE is not fully recognised regionally. For example, graduates who apply to the University of the South Pacific do a three-year programme to get a bachelor's degree. A VITE graduate would spend three years to complete the diploma programme and then they must spend another three years in Fiji to get a bachelors qualification. Regional and international institutions offer a bachelor's degree with the same duration as the three-year diploma at VITE.

The majority of students going to VITE are self-sponsored or sponsored by religious education authorities or private sponsors (both domestically and internationally). They are not on Vanuatu Government Scholarships. Leaving Vanuatu and being sponsored to study overseas provides relief from the fee payment pressure on parents that is experienced by those who study in Vanuatu. No student will turn down an offer of a scholarship. After the most successful students are awarded scholarships for international education, VITE is left to select from the best of the remaining students to make up the annual intake. This has an impact on the quality of candidates accepted for the VITE programme.

### **1.5.3 The VITE Programme 2010 -2019**

The three-year diploma for secondary trainees at VITE is offered in three streams. One stream is for Mathematics and Science, the second stream is for secondary Social Sciences and English as a second language, and the third one is for secondary French as a foreign language and English as a second language. Secondary trainees apply for admission into one of these three streams.

During the three years of enrolment, all trainees at VITE (both primary and secondary) complete one year of 'Trunk' courses. These are combined learning courses intended to equip trainees better to face teaching in a rural school setting. Courses include basic foundation content on Information and Communications Technology, Vanuatu Studies, Language and Communication, Basic Mathematics, Child Development, Physical Education, Woodwork, Home Economics, and Visual and Performing Arts. In the second half of semester two, they begin to be split into streams, learning the foundations of the secondary courses that they will pursue during their second year of training at VITE. In the second and third years, trainees cover the specialised subject content of their streams.

During each semester at VITE, trainees enrol in four courses with a value of 10 credit points each. This gives a total credit point of 40 per semester and 80 in one year. Over a three-year period, trainees can reach a total of 240 credit points. Each course that a trainee completes at VITE has required assessment. A student is eligible to graduate with a minimum of 230 credit points, provided that compulsory courses are successfully completed. The credit points are accumulated from a range of assessment tasks that include but are not limited to: assignments, tests, portfolios, reports, projects, and examinations.

The diploma programme at VITE offers combined pedagogical content knowledge. This means a trainee is accepted into the institution to learn both subject content and pedagogy during their three years. The model of a separate

content-based degree, followed by an educational qualification, is not practiced at VITE.

During the three-year diploma programme, a vital component that trainees engage in is teaching practice. A total of 12 weeks is devoted to teaching practice. During the first year, trainees are placed in classrooms for four weeks. Their task is to observe and analyse the behaviour of children in various settings. In the second and third years, trainees are placed in classrooms again for four weeks each year. Their tasks are set according to their streams or discipline with regards to subject content and general teaching practice. Trainees teach students during these periods. Their teaching practice is assessed by a VITE lecturer who visits schools and observes trainees using a lesson observation form which contains 40 criteria grouped in terms of: lesson planning and preparation; teaching and learning; classroom management; and professionalism.

In addition to completing assessment for their papers, and participating in teaching practice, VITE students must also participate in a range of other activities. VITE has students who are day students as well as those who board in the VITE dormitory. The management of the boarders at VITE is similar to the management of other secondary schools in Vanuatu, where many secondary students are boarders. VITE boarders are required to participate in activities outside the classroom. There are compulsory work parties to perform every morning before classes begin as well as after class in the afternoon. Day students may also be required to take part in these duties.

There are other activities that happen on campus as well, that boarding students are expected to participate in. These activities include Christian fellowship, cultural meetings, and provincial meetings, where they each create their activity plan for the year and arrange certain members of the group to be responsible for certain tasks. For boarders at the VITE dormitory, the extra activities are endorsed by VITE as a way of developing the trainee teachers to become responsible in carrying out extra duties, in preparation for the time when the

trainees will be working in schools. In some small communities, teachers not only provide leadership for their classes of students and for boarders at their schools, but they are also expected to provide leadership in relation to the organisation of community activities such as church events.<sup>4</sup>

Upon fulfilling the VITE requirements for Teaching Practice and earning a minimum 230 credit points, trainees are eligible to graduate with a three-year diploma. Graduation takes place in December each year. At the time of this project, VITE was going through another transition, preparing to offer a four-year Bachelor's Degree in Education. The last year in which new students were enrolled at VITE for the three-year diploma was 2017. VITE was initially intending to have a first intake for the Bachelor's Degree in 2019 (Vanuatu Ministry of Education and Training, 2018b). Due to course writing and infrastructure development, the first intake for the Bachelor's Degree in Education at VITE was shifted out to 2020. Further delays have meant that the first Bachelor's intake did not eventuate in 2020. With the 2017 diploma class graduating in 2019, there are currently no primary or secondary trainee teachers enrolled at VITE. VITE instructors remain occupied with preparation for the new degree (Anonymous source, personal communication, January 15, 2020).

## **1.6 Education Governance in Vanuatu**

The Vanuatu Ministry of Education and Training (MoET) operates under the Education Act No. 9 of 2014 (Ministry of Education and Training Act No. 9 of 2014). According to the MoET structure, there exists a Minister's cabinet, different Councils and Commissions, the Office of the Director General (called a permanent secretary in some countries), and four Directorates. All education from early childhood through to secondary in Vanuatu falls under the Directorate of Education Services. One of their Commissions is the Teaching Service Commission (TSC). The full structure of MoET is presented in Figure 1.3.

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<sup>4</sup> The practices presented in this paragraph derive from my experiences and observations as a teacher in two of Vanuatu's secondary schools, and more recently as a teacher trainer at VITE.

The Teaching Service Commission was established in 2006. It is governed by the Consolidated Law Cap 171, and now also the Teaching Service Commission Act No. 38 of 2013. The TSC is the body under the Ministry of Education and Training that is responsible for teachers' employment. The Teaching Service Commission Act No. 38 of 2013 establishes a commission that will provide effective management of the Teaching Service as well as providing licensing for teachers. The preparation for licencing of teachers is currently in progress. Once implemented, all teachers teaching in Vanuatu schools must be licensed in order to teach (Government of Vanuatu, 2013).

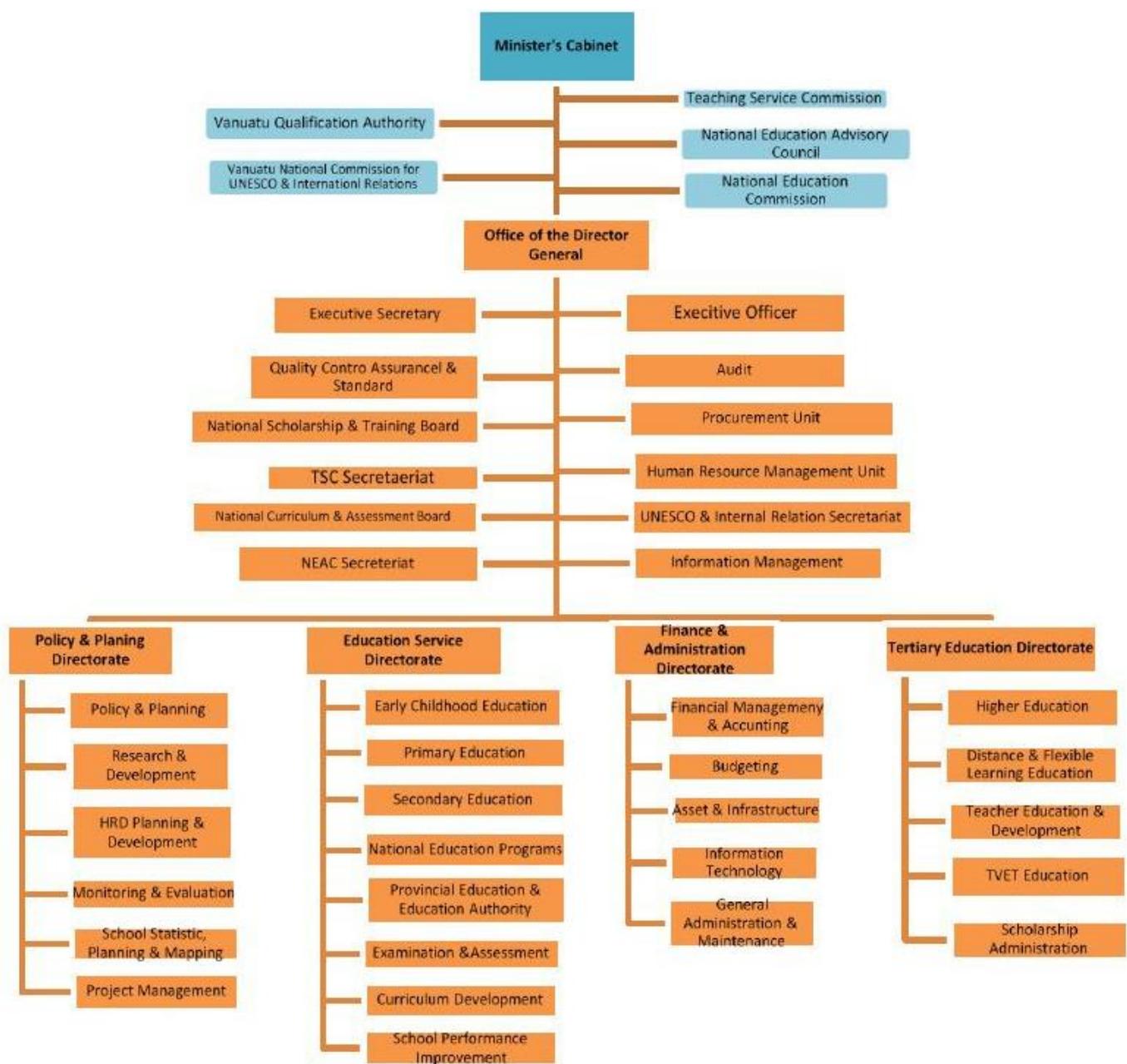


Figure 1.3: Vanuatu Ministry of Education and Training structure, 2014

### **1.6.1 Employment as a teacher in Vanuatu: Recruitment and Remuneration**

The teacher recruitment process in Vanuatu is clearly stipulated in the Teaching Service Act No. 38 (Government of Vanuatu, 2013), and described in the Teaching Service Staff Manual. The Teaching Service Commission is assigned responsibility for the recruitment, posting, and welfare of teachers in Vanuatu. Reportedly, due to a shortage of staff at the TSC office, the posting of new teachers and transfers of teachers between schools is now positioned under the Education Services Directorate. The most recent development has seen the Teaching Service Commission making a shift to manage the affairs of teachers (Anonymous, personal communication, October 2020).

According to the Teaching Service Staff Manual, new teachers must apply to the Teaching Service Commission if they want to teach in a Government school or a Government Assisted school. The documented process indicates that once applications are approved by the Commission, beginning teachers will receive their posting and letter of appointment. Then they make their way to their school of appointment. The appointment letter from TSC will state: the position that the teacher is going to assume; that the teacher is on probation from the specified commencement date; and that they will be paid at a particular grade on the salary scale. A teacher is only allowed to be on probation for a period of one year. During this period, the TSC may at any time confirm a beginning teacher as permanent, terminate the beginning teacher's employment, or direct a continuity of one further year of probation. Once the probation period ends, and with the recommendation of their principal, the teacher will move to 'permanency' status (Government of Vanuatu, 2013).

Anecdotally, the probationary period can take more than a year. A teacher can have probationary status for one year, two years, or more than five years depending on individual circumstances. The process to go from probation to permanent status is not clearly articulated. Some teachers ask their head of schools to follow up on their probationary status; others follow up personally by

going to the TSC office or accessing political networks. When teachers get their permanent status, there is no financial increment that reflects their change in status. There are some benefits of being permanent, such as home leave and public health care services, but teachers are not always aware of the benefits. For many, it is simply a change of terms of their status on paper (Vanuatu Ministry of Education and Training, 2017).

The formal recruitment procedure documented in the Vanuatu Teaching Service Act (Government of Vanuatu, 2013) is rather different to current pre-posting practices. During the period in which this research was carried out, prior to VITE graduation each year, student teachers would be encouraged to apply to the Teaching Service Commission for a position. They would also be encouraged to apply directly to schools. After graduation, beginning teachers follow-up their applications and if fortunate, a post will be given for the following year by the school council or school board. The beginning teachers arrive in their new schools, fill in the vacant positions, and begin teaching. The positions that beginning teachers fill are valid according to student-teacher ratios in most schools; however, beginning teachers are not officially posted by the TSC to take up those positions. The school board or council (similar to a board of trustees in New Zealand's schools) pays the teacher's salary at a rate determined by the school. Once the beginning teacher is at their new school, they must apply again to TSC with a support letter from the school board for their position to be posted formally.

The salaries for beginning teachers provided by school boards vary and can range from a minimal 6,000 vatu per fortnight, to a more substantial 30,000 vatu per fortnight (NZD \$80.00 to NZD \$400.00). The discrepancies are due to school councils making the decision based on individual school budgets. The school budget derives from the grant paid to all Government and Government assisted schools, along with contributions made by parents, and additional funds which may be raised through on-going fundraising. The beginning secondary teacher will continue to teach until money is made available by TSC for their salaries.

This occurs when the beginning teacher is given a letter of appointment, and automatically goes onto the government payroll. The starting salary for a beginning secondary teacher appointed by the TSC ranges from 35,000vt to 45,000vt fortnightly, and so is higher than the top end of the salary that might be paid by a school board. The wait for a formal appointment and government salary can take from six months to two years or even longer. While waiting for a formal appointment and government salary, a beginning teacher continues to teach with a fulltime load, and is asked to take up the same responsibilities as other experienced teachers.

The formal procedure to access a government salary is evidenced in the documents from TSC and MoET. The Teaching Service Act (2013) details the conditions upon which a teacher should enter the government payroll. The conditions require that a teacher is licensed:

If a position involves giving instruction in a school, the person appointed must hold and maintain a licence to teach under this Act. (Government of Vanuatu, 2013)

Although the Teaching Service Act No. 38 is currently in use in Vanuatu, no teacher in a Vanuatu government school held a licence prior to or during the period of this study. Although the TSC Act refers to a teaching licence, there is no teacher registration system in Vanuatu, and licences are not issued within the education system. Part 5, section 34, sub-section 5 of the goes on to say:

When a person is appointed to the TSC, the appointment is on probation. Unless the Commission directs otherwise, the probation period is for one year commencing from the date on which the person commences duty. (Government of Vanuatu, 2013)

Beginning teachers, along with any other new teachers who successfully join the TSC, are given a probationary period of one year. The formal letter of appointment from the TSC indicates the start date, the salary scale, and the school

that a teacher is posted to. Once the letter is produced, the teacher will receive a government salary beginning from the stated date. Section 35, Sub-section 1 details options available at the end of one year of probation:

As soon as is practicable, after the expiration of an employee's probation period, the Commission is to: (a) confirm the appointment of the person as a permanent employee; or (b) terminate the employment of the employee; or (c) direct that the employee is to continue on probation for such further period, up to one year, as the Commission determines. (Government of Vanuatu, 2013)

During the probation year, it is unclear what steps if any should be taken by new teachers to become permanent employees. Sub-section 2 says:

If however, one year after the expiration of an employee's probation period no action has been taken to confirm the appointment, terminate or extend the probation period of the employee, the employee is deemed to be confirmed as a permanent employee. (Government of Vanuatu, 2013)

It seems then, that one year after a teacher receives their formal appointment letter, if nothing else happens, that teacher is automatically understood to be a permanent employee of the Teaching Service Commission. There is a no change in the salary specified for a teacher when there is a change of status from probationary status to permanent status. The same scale of salary continues and the now permanent teacher continues with their teaching duties. The current practice of employment by schools rather than the TSC extends the one-year probationary period considerably. A beginning teacher could easily be teaching for one or two years as a school employee before receiving their official letter of appointment from the TSC and starting their formal one-year probationary period.

### **1.6.2 Vanuatu's Inspectorate system**

Since gaining political independence in 1980, the MoET has attempted to implement numerous educational programmes and plans to improve the quality of education in Vanuatu. In order to develop educational quality in Vanuatu, in 2002, the Vanuatu government through the Ministry of Education introduced an inspectorate system to monitor educational standards. The inspectorate system consisted of primary level inspectors and secondary level inspectors. Inspectors were required to give advice to principals and teachers in their professional roles, regarding for example their schemes of work, lesson preparation and pedagogical practices in the classroom. The inspectorate system was seen as a way of monitoring and evaluating teachers and monitoring the performance of schools. At the end of a school visit, the inspector would present a report with recommendations to the Ministry of Education, outlining improvements for schools when necessary (Tari, 2004). When the inspectorate system was in operation, it was reportedly assumed by inspectors and teachers alike that the reports would be used for probationary status decisions regarding beginning teachers; however in practice, this did not appear to be the case.

Following an evaluation of the inspectorate system, (Tari, 2004) recommended that there needed to be more support for the inspectorate system to be effective. Rather than being supported further, in 2005, the inspectorate system was abandoned. Piggot-Irvine (2010), a professor of leadership education, carried out research in Tonga, Fiji and Vanuatu and reported that Vanuatu principals need a lot of support, which implies that the situation had not changed further by 2010.

### **1.6.3 The School-Based Management 2012 - Present**

In 2006, an Education Summit was held in Port Vila, resulting in the development of the Vanuatu Education Sector Strategy. The summit identified weaknesses and challenges in the Vanuatu education system. The resulting strategy signalled a Human Resource Development plan, the establishment of two directors of education instead of five, and the decentralisation of jobs to Vanuatu's scattered

provinces. Based on the Vanuatu Education Sector Strategy, the Vanuatu Education Road Map and Millennium Development Goals for Vanuatu were developed.

One of the challenges that was highlighted in the Vanuatu Education Sector Strategy was the lack of help given to teachers in the field. To provide better support, a School-Based Management system was established in 2012. The School-Based Management system is quite similar to the older inspectorate system. It is currently positioned under the School Performance Improvement Unit of the Ministry of Education and Training structure. The officers working within the unit are called the 'school improvement officers' (Government of Vanuatu, 2013). Within the School Performance Improvement Unit, inspectors were appointed in 2017 from the provincial level to work with school improvement officers. Together, they were charged with supporting principals, teachers, and schools with compliance to quality standards and developing plans for school improvements to benefit students. The crucial goal of the School-Based Management system is now to help with the professional development of school principals.<sup>5</sup> Anecdotally, a principal's manual was drafted used in 2017, and a principals' induction was initiated in 2018.

Another goal of the School-Based Management system is to help teachers gain appropriate skills for registration with the Teaching Service Commission. Professional development is mentioned as a goal for School-Based Management system but there is no specific professional learning for beginning teachers described. The focus is on registration of current teachers in Vanuatu schools.

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<sup>5</sup> Recent social media reporting indicates that the MoET has made plans to have the first of several cohorts of principals go through a 'Certificate IV in Leadership and Management' in educational training with the Australian Pacific Training Coalition (known as APTC) beginning late 2019 (D. Hopkins-Leadership coordinator, MoET, personal communication, November 2019). At the time of writing, it was not known whether this latest plan has been put into action.

#### **1.6.4 National Teachers' Development Plan**

In 2009, the Vanuatu Education Road Map was released. A key area of the Road Map was the upskilling of teachers. The Teaching Service Commission decided upon the Bachelor's degree as the benchmark for a Vanuatu teacher qualification (Anonymous source, Personal Communication, 13 November, 2017), although by 2020, VITE was not yet offering a Bachelor of Teaching. According to a Vanuatu Education Support Program report, 50% of teachers are unqualified in Vanuatu (VESP, 2018), and it has been recognised that there has been "limited growth in teachers with the required professional qualifications in Vanuatu schools" (p. 1). Interestingly, the Ministry of Education and Training's Statistical Digest Report 2016-2018 reports that an average of 76% of teachers were certified across the early childhood, primary and secondary sectors in 2018, and that 94% of secondary teachers were certified in 2018. This means that these 94% of secondary teachers had completed at least the two-year certificate programme at VITE which was offered until 2010, when it was replaced by the three-year diploma programme.

The reality of untrained or undertrained teachers in Vanuatu's educational context is an important challenge for the MoET. The MoET identified a systemic strategy to address this challenge, with the establishment of a new sub-section under the Tertiary Education Department. This sub-section was created in August 2017 to help develop a framework for a 'National Teachers' Professional Development Plan' for Vanuatu, which was also intended to support the registration and licencing of Vanuatu teachers, which was under discussion at that time.

The National Teachers' Professional Development Plan was to be implemented in two phases. Phase one was to upgrade unqualified and underqualified teachers. 'Unqualified' here refers to teachers with teaching experience but no training, while 'underqualified' are teachers who have done some distance courses but have not completed a qualification. Phase two concerned teacher competencies and abilities, which were to be considered for teacher licensing

(Anonymous source, Personal Communication, November 13, 2017). The roll out of phase one was planned for 2018, although it does not appear that specific steps have been taken to implement the plan yet.

The MoET approved Vanuatu Education Support Programme (VESP) to draft a Common Teaching Service Standards for Vanuatu. VESP is a non-government organisation. AusAID (Australia's international aid program) and NZAID (New Zealand's aid program) are the main sponsors for the program. The resulting document brought together all other teacher-related standards that have been developed and it identified the components of quality teaching at four career stages. The four stages in the teaching career are:

1. Graduate teachers: teachers who successfully completed training that is accredited nationally but are yet to fulfil the requirements to become a fully registered teacher;
2. Proficient teachers: teachers who are successful in initial teacher training institutions and are fully registered;
3. Highly accomplished teachers: teachers who are recognised as highly effective, skilled classroom teachers and who can work independently;
4. Distinguished teachers: teachers who are recognised by the school community, are skilful in providing mentoring, are creative and innovative, and are professional, ethical and respected individuals inside and outside the school. (VESP, 2018)

These standards are intended for use in a range of education directorates, including the Teaching Service Commission. It seems likely that the TSC will use the standards to implement the Teacher Registration and Licensing Policy. The term 'graduate teacher' is equivalent to 'beginning teacher' in this research. Graduate teachers are described in the standards as displaying knowledge of their subjects and of pedagogical practices to teach these subjects (VESP, 2018). They are further described as being able to work in collaboration with colleagues,

as well as external professionals and community representatives, and they are expected to “[contribute] to the life of the school.” (VESP, 2018, pp. 4-5)

## 1.7 Summary of key events in education

Below is a summary of key events in the educational history of Vanuatu related to this study. The timeline shows a gradual development of teaching qualifications from the two-year primary certificate, to the three-year diploma, and looking forward to the introduction of the four-year bachelor’s degree in education. The timeline also documents several efforts to monitor educational quality and to introduce teacher registration and licensing.

- 1962 Kawenu Teacher Training College opens in Port Vila
- 1980 Republic of Vanuatu Independence
- 1983 School Administration Act
- 1983 First English and French intake of two-year certificate for primary teaching
- 1991 First English and French intake of two-year diploma for junior secondary teaching
- 1993 Secondary teaching intake ended at the end of this year
- 2000 Second English and French intake of two-year diploma for junior secondary teaching continued until it changed to a three-year diploma
- 2001 Education Act No. 21
- 2002 Inspectorate System initiated to monitor educational standards
- 2005 Inspectorate System abandoned
- 2006 Teaching Service Commission established formally with its own Act; Vanuatu Education Sector Strategy developed; Human Resource Development plan developed; Millennium Development Goals for Vanuatu developed
- 2009 Vanuatu Education Road Map released
- 2010 Harmonisation of English and French teacher training  
First English and French intake of three-year diploma for primary and secondary teaching
- 2010 National Curriculum Statement for secondary schools released
- 2012 National Language Policy allows for use of Bislama and Vernacular languages in years one to three
- 2012 School-Based Management system established, with ‘school improvement officers’
- 2013 Teaching Service Commission Act No. 38 to cater for the registration and licensing of teachers
- 2014 Education Act No. 9 to cater for Early childhood; Vanuatu Teachers’ Standards
- 2015 Establishment of the office of Teacher Registration and Licensing

- 2016 Teachers asked to submit paperwork and payment for registration
- 2017 Launching of the Teachers' Registration and Licensing Policy<sup>6</sup>; National Teachers' Professional Development Plan drafted; re-establishment of inspectors under the Devolution programme; final intake to VITE's three-year diploma
- 2018 Common Teaching Service Standards drafted; principals' induction; First announcement of four-year Bachelor's Degree in 2019
- 2019 Final graduation of the three-year diploma; First intake to the four-year Bachelor's Degree in Education delayed; further intake delayed to 2020 then to 2021
- 2020 Principals' recruitment by contract; Launching of the Teachers' Registration and Licensing Policy; Approval of the four-year Bachelor's Degree by VQA.

## 1.8 The thesis structure

The thesis comprises seven chapters. Chapter one has provided a brief introduction to the study, my interest in the study, and the research focus. This has been followed by a detailed introduction to research context of Vanuatu, including geographic and demographic information about Vanuatu and the impact of natural events on education. It has also outlined the history of Vanuatu's education, teacher education in Vanuatu, and role of the Teaching Service Commission (TSC).

Chapter two reviews literature that is directly related to this study of beginning teachers' induction experiences. Literature is explored in the following areas: motivations and identity in learning to teach; beginning teachers' learning and development; the support of beginning teachers from schools and higher authorities; and finally, induction and mentoring of beginning teachers. The review of relevant literature is guided by the research questions. Chapter three introduces the methodological approach used in the research. I outline the

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<sup>6</sup> During the enrolment period for this thesis, the Teachers' Registration and Licensing was launched twice according to documents that were published publically -

[TSC moves closer to licensing teachers - Vanuatu Daily Post](https://www.dailypost.vu/news/tsc-moves-closer-to-licensing-teachers)  
[dailypost.vu > news > tsc-moves-closer-to-licensing-teachers](https://www.dailypost.vu/news/tsc-moves-closer-to-licensing-teachers) and  
[Common Teacher Service Standards for Teachers in Vanuatu](https://www.espoanuatv.org/Documents)  
[www.espoanuatv.org > Documents >](https://www.espoanuatv.org/Documents).

qualitative approach taken in this study, explaining my use of the constructivist interpretative theoretical lens to interpret the research data, along with the Ecological Systems Theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) to frame the findings. I also discuss the ethical considerations around this research. Then, the research methods I used to generate data in the field are introduced, and the methods of analysis employed to interrogate the data are described. Ethical considerations in the research are presented. The chapter concludes with a description of the research process and briefly introduces the research participants.

Chapters four and five present the research findings. Findings in chapter four relate to the experience of becoming a teacher in Vanuatu in terms of beginning teachers' motivations for choosing teaching as a career. The chapter also recounts the pathways into employment of the beginning teachers and their principals. Both formal and informal pathways are described, and the mechanisms for remuneration that were encountered by the participants are explained. The chapter ends with findings that relate to the informal induction experiences of the beginning teacher participants and their principals. Key themes from the initial orientation experiences are described, followed by an account of the expectations that the beginning teachers bring with them into their new roles, and the realities of classroom teaching. The chapter ends with the principals' perspectives on beginning teacher induction within their context. Chapter five focuses on challenges of teaching and learning for beginning teachers in the Vanuatu context, and the enablers that beginning teachers employ to survive their first years of teaching. While the challenges faced by beginning teachers are many and varied, this chapter emphasises the agency and resilience of beginning teachers in response to the difficulties they face.

Chapter six discusses and interprets the research findings in relation to Bronfenbrenner's (1979) Ecological Systems Theory and in light of the relevant research literature. From this discussion, a contextually appropriate model is presented to support understandings of the experiences and perceptions shared by the beginning teachers and their principals in this study, and to propose the

inclusion of formal induction in the professional development of beginning teachers.

Finally, chapter seven offers a conclusion to the study. It provides an overview of the research design, and considers its methodological and ethical limitations. Recommendations arising from the research are offered for the Ministry of Education and Training, for the Teaching Service Commission, for the Vanuatu Institute of Teacher Education, and for secondary school leadership. The chapter ends with a brief identification of the next steps needed to further this research.

Chapter two reviews educational literature of relevance to the topic of induction, as beginning teachers are transitioning into teaching roles as new professionals. This background research was conducted to provide an account of a phase in a teacher's career that may have been overlooked by the Vanuatu education authorities and the beginning teachers themselves.

## CHAPTER TWO - LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1 Introduction

Education systems throughout the world constantly evolve in the hope of improving and enhancing students' educational achievement. Reforms that have had an impact on education systems are developed and continually draw attention to issues of access, achievement and success. Examples include *No Child Left Behind* in the United States of America introduced by President George W. Bush's government in 2002 (No Child Left Behind Act, 2002), and *Education for all in the Pacific* (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation, 2015). The education system in Vanuatu has also experienced educational reform in the hope of improving students' achievement; however, as outlined in the previous chapter, there is still much work to be done. Opportunities to support educational reform in Vanuatu exist in multiple places; however, it is often the most obvious areas which have the potential to make significant impact which are overlooked. Beginning teachers have a critical role to play in supporting high quality educational standards. However, in Vanuatu little is known about their experiences as they transition from initial (pre-service) teacher education to fully-fledged teacher.<sup>7</sup> This research draws attention to the transition period for beginning teachers and seeks to enhance understandings of ways that initial teacher education, school leaders, and beginning teachers themselves can prepare. The focus of the research is thus beginning teacher induction and support in Vanuatu.

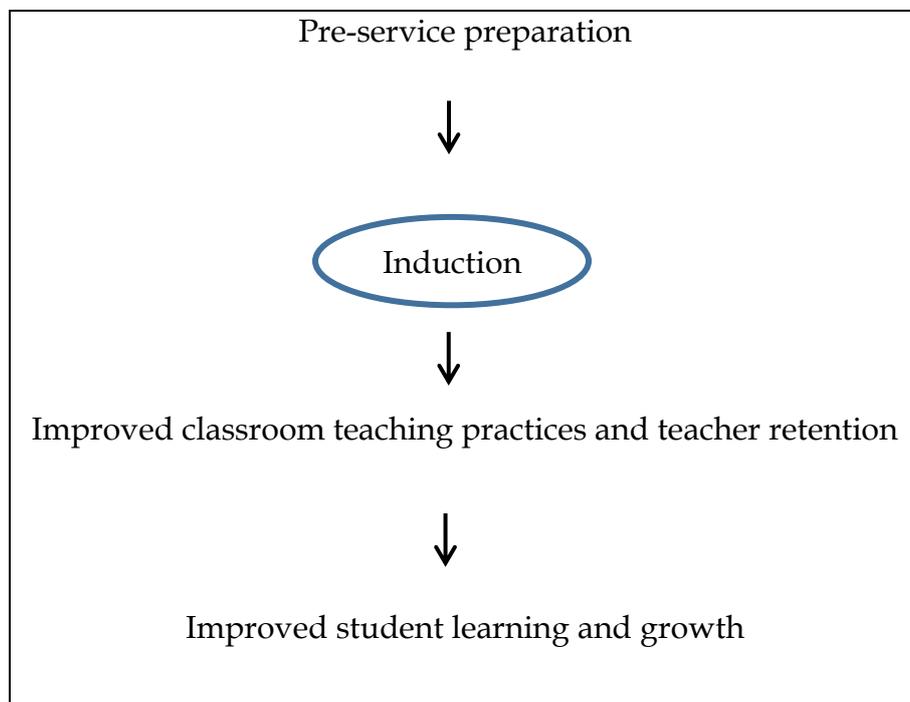
The literature reviewed in this chapter draws attention to research relating to the induction of beginning teachers into the teaching profession. The literature has guided the scope of this study into the perceptions and experiences of beginning teachers in Vanuatu. To date, it would appear that literature of direct relevance to teacher induction in Vanuatu is scarce. Therefore, the focus of the review has expanded to

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<sup>7</sup>By way of comparison, in relation to the teaching context in NZ, the transition phase between initial teacher education and full teacher registration is known as the provisionally certificated teacher phase (PCT), this phase lasts for two to five years.

consider how beginning teachers are inducted into the teaching profession regionally and internationally (Li & Zhang, 2015; Main & Hill, 2007).

In the teaching profession, initial teacher education is considered to be an essential learning stage for qualification into the teaching profession. However, the professional learning of teachers goes beyond pre-service education and can be understood as comprising three key levels: teacher preparation; induction; and professional development (Wilson, Rozelle, & Mikeska, 2011). Ingersoll and Strong (2011) visualise the relationship between these important elements of professional learning, and link these to the outcomes of the education system more broadly in figure 2.1 below.



*Figure 2.1: Professional learning for teachers (From Ingersoll and Strong, 2011, p. 203, circle added)*

Feiman-Nemser (2012) provides a more comprehensive framework for professional learning, which comprises four phases. In relation to these phases, she argues that although teacher educators are often talking about the transition from pre-service to induction, and induction to in-service, there is one missing phase. The missing phase is the pre-training phase. According to Feiman-Nemser (2012), the pre-training phase

considers the “informal preparation for teaching” and accompanying learning, which takes place before the pre-service preparation phase (p. 29). This draws attention to the importance of formative experiences, and the influence that these experiences have on shaping teachers.

In this project, the focus of this research is on formative experiences beginning teachers bring to teaching and the induction phase of their professional learning. The provision of support and opportunities for learning in the first few years of teaching is argued to be crucial for beginning teachers’ development (Langdon, 2011). In the sections that follow, a review of the literature related to becoming a teacher is presented in section 2.2, leading to a review of the stage theories of teacher development in section 2.3. A consideration of the literature on challenges faced by beginning teachers is then offered in section 2.4, followed by an examination of the importance of school culture and leadership on a beginning teacher’s success in section 2.5. This leads to the main body of the literature review, where a brief international history of beginning teacher induction is offered in section 2.6, and key functions of induction are presented in section 2.6.1. Initial teacher education is related to induction in section 2.6.2; coaching and mentoring as induction strategies are described in section 2.6.3; and in the final section 2.6.4, induction programmes of five different countries are presented as a frame to understand any informal induction strategies that might be identified in schools. The chapter concludes with a summary in 2.7 of the key points that have arisen through the literature review.

## **2.2 Becoming a teacher**

*“Teaching is the profession on which all other professions depend” (Darling-Hammond, cited in Schwartz & Pope 2018)*

Darling-Hammond’s statement above was made at an interview which saw her emphasise the importance of teaching to society (website interview- Schwartz & Pope, 2018). Teachers educate new generations of young people who are then able to join other professions in society. Garon (2013) who was an English teacher in New York, noted that until the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, being a teacher was the only option

for employment for a bright woman; this is no longer true in many parts of the world, although in Vanuatu the role of 'teacher' remains important and valued for men and women alike.

The formal education system that is present in countries like New Zealand is institutionalised is "institutionalised, chronologically graded, and hierarchically structured systems of education" (McCarter & Gavin, 2011, p. 1), and places a greater value on critical thinking skills where students are encouraged to share their opinions. There is less focus on standardised testing and there is more awareness placed on the progress of an individual child. This system also supports a range of learning needs of diverse learners (Wijaya, 2018). This kind of formal education has spread into most developing countries due to colonisation. The definition by McCarter and Gavin (2011) above, who carried out research on the relevance of traditional ecological knowledge to the formal school curriculum in Vanuatu, applies clearly to the formal education system in Vanuatu, a colonised nation, as described in the introduction.

Following colonisation, Vanuatu, has attempted to implement a formal education system that is based on the education delivered by its colonisers; however, historically, the indigenous people did not attend formal education. Instead they were educated traditionally according to their local culture (McCarter & Gavin, 2011). Cultural education taught males and females how to behave and participate appropriately in society. When young people grew up, they knew their responsibilities within their tribes and societies. However, when missionaries arrived, the indigenous people were told that the Christian way of life is better than the traditional ways of life, and as a result, most of the cultural/traditional education practices were replaced by a western model of education (Bratrud, 2017; McCarter & Gavin, 2011, Regenvanu, 2009). It was not until the late 20<sup>th</sup> century that scholars have come to embrace indigenous cultural values and belief systems, and to see them as having value in teaching and relevance to learning outcomes (Maeltoka, 2010; Regenvanu, 2009; Sanga, 2013). In his research on cultural gaps, Maeltoka (2010) emphasised that there is a cultural gap in the Vanuatu education system, and it is a contributing factor to the ineffective education

system. Niroa (2004), also affirms that schools in Vanuatu are training young people to live a life that is foreign, which does not reflect their indigenous identity.

When there are cultural gaps such as those identified by Maeltoka (2010) and Niroa (2004), it may be an indication that the education system needs greater attention in the shaping of teaching and learning strategies. Teaching and learning strategies are used by teachers in schools, and literature shows that the main influence in the shaping of students' learning is the classroom teacher (Darling-Hammond, 1998; Feiman-Nemser, 1996; Schwartz & Pope, 2018). Teachers are likely to need professional support to be able to minimise gaps such as the cultural gap identified in Vanuatu's education system, to make learning effective and meaningful for the students. Ingersoll and Strong (2011) point out the importance of professional learning for teachers (as shown in figure 2.1 above). The induction phase, which is the focus of this research, is a core element of this professional learning.

The starting point for beginning teacher development is their selection of teaching as a career. In the next section, the literature concerning motivations for becoming a teacher is reviewed.

### **2.2.1 Motivations for becoming a teacher**

The educational literature shows that people are drawn to teaching for many reasons. Motivations that have driven people to become teachers can be grouped into three categories: 'altruistic'; 'intrinsic'; and 'extrinsic' (Fokkens-Bruinsma & Canrinus, 2014; Sinclair, 2008; Tustiawati, 2017). Tustiawati (2017) defines the term 'altruistic' as concerns for others, and in relation to motivations to teaching, indicates that young people who are motivated by altruistic factors want to make a difference in the new generation of school students. Lortie's (1975) research on motivations identified several different motivations which can be understood as altruistic, including working with people, being of service, and continuing an involvement within an educational setting. Research in the decades following Lortie's (1975) study, by Joseph and Green (1986) and Alexander, Chant, and Cox (1994) found altruistic motivations to be the most common reasons that participants in their research chose to become teachers.

The second category of motivations that lead people into a teaching career are 'intrinsic'. Tustiawati (2017) defined 'intrinsic' motivations as involving self-belief, meaning the belief that someone holds that they could be a good teacher. Joseph and Green (1986) identified the need for stimulation in an absorbing career and desire for creativity as key intrinsic motivations in their research. More recently, Han and Yin (2016) found that intrinsic motivations are high in initial teacher education in a new survey of research on teacher motivations.

The third category of motivations is the 'extrinsic' category. Sinclair (2008) defines 'extrinsic' motivations as involving external motivating factors, such as the influence of significant others, financial motivations, or the desire to go to different places. Sinclair (2008) further explains that extrinsic motivations are related to "factors external to the person... more to do with job conditions, life-fit, and influence of others" (p. 87). Lortie's (1975) early research on motivations found that the material benefits and job security of teaching, as well as time compatibility, particularly for young mothers wishing to combine a career with raising children, were important motivations for some people who entered teaching. These motivations also fall into the extrinsic category.

In many contexts, multiple motivations have been found to be relevant. There are interesting differences in the types of motivations that feature more prominently in different cultural contexts. In Taiwan, a study of science graduate teachers found an emphasis on extrinsic factors over altruistic, where prior teaching experiences, cultural beliefs about teaching, and gaining social status were the main motivations (Wang, 2004). In Australia, a combination of altruistic and extrinsic motivations were identified: working with young people, working conditions, lifestyle and professional status were among the most influential factors for future teachers (Manuel & Huges, 2006). Turkish research on motivations for choosing teaching as a career revealed that motivations were gendered: altruistic factors were found to be stronger amongst females and extrinsic factors were found to be dominant in males (Yüce, Şahin, Koçer, & Kana, 2013).

Although teaching is a foundational profession, it must be acknowledged that there are now challenges in attracting future teachers to the profession. International research shows that teacher shortages and poor retention of teachers have been problematic for more than two decades (Feiman-Nemser, 2001; Sinclair, 2008; Tynjälä & Heikkinen, 2011). Consequently, researchers have carried out new studies to investigate more recent motivations for becoming a teacher (Tustiawati, 2017). Interestingly, this new research reflects similar trends in the reasons people choose teaching as a career. In 2017, it was revealed that in Indonesia, altruistic and intrinsic factors topped the ranking of motivations (Tustiawati 2017), while in London, it was reported that altruistic motivations were still the most popular reasons for becoming teachers (Perryman & Calvert, 2020).

It would appear there has been little investigation into the motivations behind young people becoming teachers in Vanuatu; as such, this research will fill an important gap in our knowledge of factors that motivate the choice of teaching as a profession in the context of Vanuatu, providing insights into the reasons why people turn toward teaching as a career.

### **2.2.2 Apprenticeship of observation**

The informative experiences of beginning teachers from their own education pathway are important elements which impact on their teaching practice. ‘Apprenticeship of observation’ is a term that seminal author Lortie (1975) devised to refer the experiences of students while at primary and secondary school. Undergraduate trainee teachers take their experiences of learning from previous schools with them to initial teacher education institutes (Grossman, 1991; Lortie, 1975; Kuzhabekova & Zhaparova, 2016). According to Lortie (1975), the experience that a teacher has of observing his/her own teachers in their classroom forms much of the future teacher’s beliefs about teaching and learning. In relation to the apprenticeship of observation, Chong, Wong, and Lang (2010), (as cited in Kuzhabekova & Zhaparova, 2016) stated that “the unsubstantiated beliefs that pre-service teachers bring with them have been shown to affect what they learn from teacher education and how they learn from it”

(p.1). This means that the models set by the potential teacher's classroom environment during their primary and secondary schooling have a substantial impact on their interpretation of teaching and learning theories that they may later apply in their practice of teaching. In the context of this study, beginning teachers experience thirteen to fourteen years of education at primary and secondary levels before entering the Vanuatu Institute of Teacher Education (VITE).

The apprenticeship of observation impacts on the decisions of future teachers in their teaching (Schempp, 1989). Smagorinsky and Barnes (2014) assert that future teachers enter the initial teacher education institutes with "deeply rooted beliefs and assumptions" (p. 31) regarding teaching due to being exposed to these beliefs and assumptions over a number of years at school. Teaching and learning practices in schools are vital because future teachers are likely to employ those same practices rather than implementing new practices taught to them at the training college. For that reason, Lortie (1975) concludes that initial teacher education is weakened by the apprenticeship of observation. Schempp (1989) mentions that teachers view their students just as students, and not as future leaders and teachers, indicating that the role of the apprenticeship of observation is not necessarily understood by practicing teachers. Smagorinsky and Barnes (2014) from the University of Georgia state that over time schools have remained authoritarian in their approaches to classroom instruction, suggesting that teachers are reproducing their own educational experiences, and setting up new generations of teachers to do the same. In this way, the "conservative traditions that have long driven educational practices" (Smagorinsky & Barnes, 2014) will be maintained.

Furthermore, scholars including Alexander (1994), Daniel and Ferrell (1991), Joseph and Green (1986), and Schempp (1989) discovered in their various studies that the teachers of future beginning teachers have a great influence on their students. This influence stays with the students when they enter initial teacher training institutions. Abbiss (2019) cautioned that these influences can impact negatively on students if beginning teachers do not reflect and make necessary changes to improve their

practice. Loughran (2007) calls on beginning teachers to understand the pedagogical reasons behind their own teachers' actions.

Depending on the educational experiences available to students, initial teacher education institutes may need to explore ways to minimise the effect of the apprenticeship of observation in initial teacher education. Professional support for beginning teachers, including developing strong skills of reflective practice, induction, and continuous professional support through a teacher's career would be helpful in managing and if need be, reshaping a new teacher's professional practice. Korthagen (2001) and Westrick and Morris (2016) suggest that if teacher trainees are guided to understand and articulate the what, how, and why of teaching and learning through their experiences (apprenticeship of observation), then they would become aware of their own learning, and be better positioned to improve their teaching and learning practices. Similarly, initial teacher education programmes should aim to develop teachers who are aware of their background and experiences but at the same time use this awareness to improve their future practices (Boyd, Gorham, Justice, & Anderson, 2013; Darling-Hammond, 2006). By designing programmes that develop personal and professional awareness at the level of initial teacher education, negative effects of the apprenticeship of observation can be minimised.

Not all scholars accept Lortie's view of the apprenticeship of observation. Some scholars have revisited Lortie's work and suggested that the time and context of where Lortie carried out his research resulted in the idea that the apprenticeship of observation could have negative effects. Mewborn and Tyminski (2006) are an example of these scholars. They found that Lortie's narrative is overly deterministic and static, arguing that Lortie's research was conducted in more provincial settings with local knowledge, where teachers were limited in attending academic conferences, teachers had limited access to resources, and a relatively authoritarian approach was used in the classroom, instead of a more constructivist one. Smagorinsky and Barnes (2014) are another example of scholars who critiqued Lortie's research and agreed with Mewborn and Tyminski (2006), stating that Lortie's conclusion was based on a

narrow rural setting, and that the negative effects of the apprenticeship of observation would not necessarily be evident in other types of settings.

In the context of this study, Vanuatu, it would seem likely that the apprenticeship of observation has a strong influence on beginning teachers. As a developing nation with many rural schools and poor educational outcomes, beginning teachers in Vanuatu may well revert to the traditions of practices that they were exposed to through their school years in that same system (for example Smagorinsky & Barnes, 2014). It is also likely that the formation of beginning teachers' professional identities (for example Lortie, 1975; Kuzhabekova & Zhaparova, 2016) is influenced by the years spent in the Vanuatu education system. This would in turn, impact on the formation of their professional identity as teachers as they would likely have experienced and witnessed a more restricted pedagogy. Therefore, it is timely to examine the educational literature on the development of a teacher's professional identity.

### **2.2.3 Teacher identity development**

*Good teaching cannot be reduced to technique; good teaching comes from the identity and integrity of the teacher* (Palmer & Scribner, 2007).

'Identity' in the context of education is closely related to 'why and how' someone learns, and it involves both professional and personal elements (Barker & Bunting, 2016). Britzman (as cited in Grudnoff, 2007) perceives teacher identity as a conversation between an individual identity and social experiences, thus signalling that professional teacher identity development involves both prior and daily experiences. Knowing 'who you are' connects the teacher with their students and in turn can connect students to educational subject matter more effectively: according to Palmer and Scribner (2007), a strong teacher identity enhances quality teaching. Ferrier-Kerr (2016) postulates that it is vital for beginning teachers to be aware of their personal and professional 'self', which may be seen as beginning teachers being themselves as teachers, and knowing the teacher they want to become. In the development of teacher identity, it is important for teachers to "combine parts of their past, including their own experiences in school and in teacher preparation, with pieces

of the present in their current school context” (Feiman-Nemser, 2001, p. 1029). Another factor of importance in the development of ‘self’ is the beginning teacher’s efficacy which is the belief that beginning teachers have about their “capability to exercise control over specific circumstances in teaching” (Gibbs, 2006). A higher sense of efficacy shows greater dedication and commitment by the beginning teachers to their teaching and may result in them being open minded about challenges (Ferrier-Kerr, 2016). Once commitment by beginning teachers is shown to students, there may be a positive impact on their students’ achievement, and beginning teachers will feel that their teaching is “worth the effort, that leads to the success of students, and is personally satisfying” (Gibbs, 2006). In this way, developing and experiencing self-efficacy and agency contributes to the beginning teachers’ professional identity.

Alongside demonstrated self-efficacy, and the development of a strong teacher identity, professional knowledge such as knowledge of pedagogy and of the content of subjects being taught is also essential. In the next section, the notion of pedagogical content knowledge is considered as an important aspect of teacher development and professional identity formation.

#### **2.2.4 Pedagogical content knowledge**

Professional knowledge of teachers can affect all aspects of teacher education and teaching. One important aspect of profession knowledge involves ‘Pedagogical Content Knowledge’ (Shulman, 1986). Pedagogical content knowledge combines knowledge of the subject matter that is being taught to students in specific fields, along with pedagogical understandings of how the teacher can transmit that knowledge effectively to the learner (Zhou, 2019). A teacher is required to understand the content of the syllabus and curriculum, as well as the ways of teaching curriculum content. The knowledge that a teacher holds about a particular concept and how that teacher shares their knowledge is critical to their students’ learning (Zhou, 2019).

Pedagogy is understood in different ways. For example, in places like the United States of America, Canada, United Kingdom, and Australia, pedagogy is often referred to as a “synonym for teaching” (Loughran, Berry, & Mulhall, 2012, p. 4).

Pedagogy can be referred to as the way of teaching and transmitting knowledge to students, while content knowledge is to do with the subject knowledge (Shulman, 1987; Solis, 2009; Zhou, 2019). Lee Shulman is the teacher educator and researcher who developed the combined concept of 'pedagogical content knowledge'. Observing that content and pedagogy need to be blended for effective teaching, Shulman (1986) argued that providing general pedagogy to student teachers is not sufficient for them to fully understand content knowledge. Shulman (1987), went on to propose seven categories of teacher knowledge including:

- knowledge of representation of subject (content knowledge);
- general pedagogical knowledge (teaching strategies);
- knowledge of the curriculum (trade knowledge);
- Pedagogical content knowledge (PCK)
- knowledge of learners
- knowledge of educational ends, purposes and values
- knowledge of contexts

Shulman (1987) stressed that amongst these elements, the significant one is pedagogical content knowledge because it combines content and pedagogy so that a topic or problem can be best understood and taught. Pedagogical content knowledge as a concept has the goal of improving education quality through enhanced teaching (Shulman, 1986). This may explain some rationale in the decision in the 1990s, where secondary teachers in England and Wales were required to complete a first degree in a content subject in order to enter teacher training at a postgraduate level (Leach, & Moon, 1999). In other countries, teacher trainees were required to have at least two years of their first degree in the subject that they wished to teach (Banks et al., 1999).

Prior to the recognition and new focus on the balance of pedagogy and content knowledge, as expressed by Shulman (1986, 1987), initial teacher education institutions tended to emphasise either pedagogy or content knowledge in their programmes or standards. Shulman (1986) reviewed the history of teacher education standards. In his review, he discovered a striking contrast over more than 100 years between 1875 and 1985. In 1875, examination categories for teachers had more content and very little on practices of teaching; but in 1985, examination categories had more to do with practices of teaching than with subject content. The separated content knowledge and pedagogical knowledge were blended to produce pedagogical content knowledge, which is now recognised widely in the field of teacher education as PCK. However, since then there has been more development of the concept (Lee & Luft 2008, cited in Donnelly & Hume, 2014). For instance, in the science education literature, pedagogical content knowledge “has been widely used as a theoretical lens” (Chan & Hume, 2019) to conduct research. From the science perspective, after several scholarly debates about pedagogical content knowledge as a concept, they finally settled on a ‘Consensus Model’ (Chan & Hume, 2019). The consensus model is represented as a diagram which links knowledge of science to other types of teacher knowledge.

Educational reform is intended to improve teaching standards and qualifications. Pedagogical content knowledge is significant in recent reforms. Some educational systems teach both content and pedagogy together within the teacher training qualification period. Such systems may award a bachelor’s degree (or diploma) in secondary teaching without a first degree in a content-based subject. In contrast, reformed programmes in some countries require a first degree in a content-based subject for entry into a postgraduate teacher training course in secondary teaching. England and Wales have both pursued educational reform to apply the concept of pedagogical content knowledge in some of their programmes. They have raised their professional teaching qualification to a postgraduate level. Some New Zealand universities now also require secondary teacher trainees to have a first degree to ensure content knowledge, before completing a one year graduate diploma in

teaching, to develop pedagogical knowledge (Johnston, 2016). Similarly, in Singapore one pathway to teaching involves an undergraduate content degree (BA or BSc) followed by a postgraduate teaching diploma (Johnston, 2016), while Finland requires both an undergraduate and a masters degree in education, meaning it takes five years before a teacher is qualified, and a substantial amount content knowledge is included the education programme (Tucker, 2019). However, there are other countries where reform has not been implemented. Instead, content and pedagogy are woven together for teacher trainees during their training period. Vanuatu is one such country. This indicates clearly that there are different pathways to becoming a teacher in different parts of the world.

Feiman-Nemser (2012) stressed that some teacher educators in initial teacher education programmes do not have time to go through all relevant content and pedagogy with trainees. Trainees need to continue their learning in the field while practicing as a teacher. Whatever version of the teaching qualification completed by teacher trainees, they will continue to learn on the job in the classroom and from other teachers. Beginning teachers need to be aware of this process, so that they understand their learning is not finished when they graduate from initial teacher education. One way to support the learning of beginning teachers is through a mentor who can help the beginning teacher to learn and grow professionally in the job (Feiman-Nemser, 2003, 2012; Grudnoff, 2007).

In the educational literature, the engagement in wider networks with mentors, colleagues in one's school and also with other first year teachers in other schools an important step in the development of professional identity for beginning teachers, helping them to deal with and survive the daily challenges of being a teacher (Frelin, 2010; Kitchen, 2009; Wyatt & White, 2007; Yusof, Osman, & Noor, 2016). Engaging with wider networks begins the process of building relationships with the school community. Frelin (2010) considers relationships in teaching as "central to the process" (p.4) of effective teaching. Engaging with other colleagues may also be an important action that supports beginning teachers to develop their professional identity. The challenge of becoming an effective teacher is best appreciated in the context of the

literature on the developmental stages of teachers. The next section of this literature review considers stage theories of teacher development.

### **2.3 Stage theories of teacher development**

The learning associated with being a beginning teacher happens in school contexts and cultures, and is co-constructed by individuals (Flores, 2003; Fox, Deaney, & Wilson, 2010) through their daily practices and encounters with others. According to Flores (2003), beginning teachers' learning involves making sense of the world through the continuous social construction of knowledge. A number of researchers (see for example, Berliner, 1986; Fuller, 1969; Kagan, 1992; Katz, 1977) have put forward theories to explain the various stages beginning teachers move through as they construct their professional knowledge. Richardson and Placier (2001) assert that much of the research carried out on beginning teacher learning can be divided into two categories, these being 'classic stage theory' and 'non-stage theory'. For the purpose of this study, classic stage theory will be discussed in greater detail as this theory looks at how a teacher enters into and develops after pre-service education, which is the focus of this research. Classic stage theory is based on the growth of the teacher "through a series of stages in a relatively deterministic manner" (Richardson & Placier, 2001, p. 909), where the stages are assumed to be sequential and hierarchical. Classic theory has certain characteristics for each stage, and over time a beginning teacher may progress through to the next level if the distinct character of the particular stage is present. The non-stage theory of beginning teacher development is not sequential, but is contextualized.

One of the earliest classic stage theories that examines teacher development focuses on the 'concerns' that many beginning teachers have. In this approach, Fuller (1969), and Fuller and Brown (1975) propose a continuum of four stages, which begins during pre-service training:

- "Pre-teaching concerns" - this stage happens before going into the teaching field and pre-service students are already concerned about how they will deal with students in the classroom;

- “Early concerns about survival” - novice teachers face realities in classrooms, so they are now concerned about themselves. They are concerned about class control and the subject content to teach, as well as their supervisor’s reports;
- “Teaching situation concerns” - the novice teacher’s limitations and frustrations are of concern here, how they can survive with limited resources, methods of delivery and changes that are happening;
- “Concerns about pupils” - when they are more accustomed to the realities, novice teachers become concerned about the students’ learning, social and emotional needs and how they can relate to them better.

(Fuller, 1969; Fuller & Brown, 1975)

In the above, Fuller and Brown (1975) focus on the teacher’s behaviour and concerns. In 1988, almost twenty years on, David Berliner proposed a five stage model of teacher development beginning when the beginning teacher first enters the classroom. Berliner’s stages focused more on teacher cognition about the classroom, rather than on beginner teacher concerns:

- “Novice” - the beginning teacher is labelling and naming elements in the classroom and is taught to use a context-free rule. This requires much concentration as teaching performance is rational and inflexible;
- “Advanced beginner” - this stage is the blending of experience and verbal knowledge. Teachers form strategic knowledge and context begins to guide their behaviour;
- “Competent” - this is when the teacher is able to make conscious choices about his or her actions and can make plans and set priorities. The teacher uses prior knowledge to determine the importance of things and learns not to make timing and targeting errors but is not flexible or fluid with the performance as yet;

- “Proficient” - This is the stage when intuition and know-how begin to guide decisions and performance. In addition, the teacher picks up information without conscious effort and uses prior experience to recognise similarities;
- “Expert” - This is when the teacher has both an intuitive grasp of the situation and a nonanalytic and non-deliberative sense of behaviour. The teacher operates automatically and their performance is fluid but does not really solve problems or be reflective in their performance, they ‘go with the flow’.

(Berliner, 1988, p. 40-43)

While Fuller and Brown (1975) pay more attention to performance of classroom routines in their stages of teacher development, Berliner’s (1988) stages add attention to the teacher’s development of critical thinking in relation to the performance of classroom routines until those routines become automated.

Following this work, Kagan (1992) analysed the work of Fuller (1969) and Berliner (1988), ultimately proposing five components of professional growth for ‘learning to teach’. These five components extend further the two earlier stage theories to take the beginning teacher from a basic awareness of the classroom, through automation, to more advanced problem solving:

- “An increase in metacognition” - where novice teachers become aware of pupils and classrooms and also of how their knowledge and beliefs are changing as a result of this;
- “The acquisition of knowledge about pupils” - where the beginning teacher’s images are reconstructed to modify and shape the novice’s image of themselves as a teacher;
- “A shift in attention” - when the novice’s image is reconstructed and, his or her attention shifts to designing instructions for pupil’s learning;

- “The development of standard procedures” - when the novice develops standardized routines that integrate instruction and management and grow increasingly automated;
- “Growth in problem-solving skills” - when the novice eventually increases his or her level of problem-solving in the classroom and generally across contexts  
  
(Kagan, 1992, p. 156).

The stage theories described in this section all presuppose that beginning teachers will encounter difficulties and challenges as they begin their careers in classrooms with their students. In the next section, the literature which focusses specifically on beginning teachers’ problems and challenges is reviewed.<sup>8</sup>

#### **2.4 Problems and challenges encountered by beginning teachers**

There is evidence that beginning teachers face difficulties or problems when they first enter a school (Brock & Grady, 1997; Dinham, 1992; Fantilli & McDougall, 2009; Kearney, 2014; Langdon, 2011; Veenman, 1984). A survey of the literature by Jarvis and Algozzine (2006), shows that the problems beginning teachers face, and the challenges they must overcome are similar. To be more specific, there was a report over five decades ago on problems with classroom discipline, classroom methods and motivations (Dropkin & Taylor, 1963). In the 1990s, classroom problems were most prominent of the problems reported by beginning teachers in Australia (Dinham, 1992). Nearly three decades on, the work of Kearney (2019) highlights a continuation of the previously identified challenges, along with newly identified additional challenges as schools become more complex organisations and educational reform based on neo-liberal policy asks more from teachers in the profession. Beginning teachers need to understand that teaching can be quite different from what they have learned about in their pre-service programmes (Feiman-Nemser, 2012). Many leave

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<sup>8</sup> The literature cited in this section appears to be somewhat dated; however, newer research that I have been able to identify in this area continues to refer to these original pieces of research.

their programmes believing that teaching is about passing information to students but they forget that the transmission of information also involves dealing with the school and classroom context (Lundeen, 2004). Novices cannot expect to be perfect at the start; however, they should keep a sense of hope that things will get better as they deal with the difficulties, cope with irritations and frustrations over time, ideally with the help of an induction process and professional development. The teacher development stages by (Fuller, 1969), reported in section 2.3 were established for educators and policy makers, to emphasise that teachers develop progressively, and that beginning teachers take time to transition into their new profession.

Kearney (2014), in his review of international and Australian literature on understanding beginning teachers, discovered that the main problems associated with beginning teachers included: workload; behaviour management; pay; and class size. He stressed that these four concerns have been the same over a number of years. Jarvis and Algozzine (2006) came up with five overlapping problems faced by beginning teachers: workload and time management; content and curriculum knowledge; relationships with students, parents, colleagues, and supervisors; evaluation and grading; and autonomy and control.

The sets of problems listed above are very similar and upon analysis they can be represented in two main groups: work-related challenges and social challenges.

#### **2.4.1 Work related Challenges**

A beginning teacher from a university or teacher training college steps into a new world of challenges on exiting their training. Key work-related challenges synthesised from reported literature include: workload challenges; instructional challenges; and classroom management challenges.

Workload challenges are amongst the most difficult problems beginning teachers face in their first year of teaching (Kearney, 2014). A heavy workload leads to the problem of managing time to fulfil the tasks that are given to beginning teachers (Flores, 2001). Workload challenges can include difficult teaching assignments, and daily duties as

well as extra-curricular activities, and excessive paperwork. Walsdorf and Lynn (2002) point out that teachers spend many hours on paperwork, clerical work, evaluation of students' work and lesson plans. Most of these activities must be completed outside of school time in order for the teacher to be prepared to receive students each day. In the research carried out by Britt (1997), who explored the perceptions of beginning teachers on several issues pertinent to their teaching in the United States of America, it was discovered that beginning teachers find teaching very challenging, with one beginning teacher saying, "paperwork takes up too big of a portion of my day" (p. 3). It is also acknowledged in educational research that when beginning teachers enter a school, they are frequently given the most difficult classes, more classes to teach, and more extra-curricular activities are imposed on them than on the veteran teachers (Darling-Hammond, 1998; Feiman-Nemser, 2001; Kearney, 2014). Thus, the beginning teacher can easily feel overloaded with work, and overwhelmed during the beginning stages of their career.

Instructional challenges are another problem for beginning teachers. With pressures to plan, perform and manage a classroom, novices often spend little time on student learning (Athanases & Achinstein, 2003; Veenman, 1984). Some of the encounters/challenges mentioned within the literature are: how to diversify to improve learning for all students, how to meet expectations through student work, how to articulate what students know or do not know, how to conduct the best use of personal strength, how to present effective material, how to create and maximise the ways for students to learn, how to assess instructional strategies and methods, how to develop assessments, what to do with the results and how to use previous assessment to plan for the next lessons (Athanases & Achinstein, 2003; Lundeen, 2004). These are broad classroom practices that beginning teachers are not specifically trained to manage. Their initial teacher education is a general training, not for "a specific job in a specific school" (Britt, 1997). In addition to having only a general training, accessing resources are often a problem. Some schools do not have adequate access for teaching resources and beginning teachers find this a great challenge when planning and delivering lessons (Brock & Grady, 1997).

Classroom management relates to everything a teacher needs to do for a group of students to learn effectively. It includes organisation of the classroom, spacing of desks, timing, and all that needs to be done during a day, a week or a term (Killeavy, 2006). Research show that classroom management is one of the major concerns for beginning teachers, who perceive it as “the monster in first-year teachers’ nightmares” (Wyatt & White, 2007). Beginning teachers often feel incapable of teaching due to these problems, and it is understood to be one of the contributing factors to high teacher attrition (Freeman, Simonsen, Briere, & MacSuga-Gage, 2014; Hudson, 2013; Kearney, 2014). According to Kearney (2014), the problem of classroom management and student discipline has been around since the 1960s and it is still amongst the top for beginning teachers’ challenges along with workload, in Australia. Beginning teachers have difficulty teaching to the depth that they want or plan to, due to time spent on behaviour management in a classroom. As one of the novices Britt (1997) interviewed expressed, “we were taught many different reinforcement schedules. If behaviour modification was my only goal, then this would be reasonable. However, academics cannot be pushed aside for discipline. More simple plans are needed” (Britt, 1997). This frustration indicates that the beginning teachers may be able to deal with discipline and classroom management but that addressing it takes up valuable time which is needed to teach content and build a productive learning environment with the class.

When Cynthia Lundeen (2004) conducted research on beginning teachers at Florida State University to identify beginning teachers’ struggles in professional development, simultaneously with their struggles of emergent adulthood, she found that work related challenges were dominant in the earliest stages of teaching:

Classroom management problems outnumbered adult relationship problems, two-to-one during the first half of the year. However, the number of identified classroom management/discipline problems fell sharply, and at year’s end, problems with adult relationships outnumbered classroom management concerns nearly three-to-one. (Lundeen, 2004, p. 555)

Lundeen's (2004) research confirms that beginning teachers face a combination of work-related and social challenges. This highlights the importance of seeing teaching as working on relationship building both inside and outside the classroom (Brighouse & Woods, 2008). In the next section, social challenges experienced by beginning teachers are considered, focusing on the challenges of relationship building.

#### **2.4.2 Social challenges**

Beginning teachers encounter social challenges in their lives as new professionals. These challenges focus around relationship forming and building. Entering a school campus automatically means entering and becoming a member of a group (Wyatt & White, 2007). Creating a good relationship with new members is vital from day one for beginning teachers. Relationships can begin with greetings, attending morning tea, and being pro-active. Being shy will not help to form relationships; however, most novice teachers do not approach colleagues to ask for help because they have this misconception in them, believing that asking questions shows their weaknesses (Cooper, 2012). Jarvis & Algozzine (2006) suggest that beginning teachers should not keep silent, but rather find good teachers and ask them for their help and about their experience as a beginning teacher. Other research reveals that teacher-to-teacher dialogue in a school environment encourages teachers' professional growth and morale (Veenman, 1984). Beginning teachers benefit from this kind of dialogue. However, although research shows the benefits of collegial relationships, Brock and Grady (1997) observe that not all novice teachers receive support and help from their experienced colleagues.

The school is a learning community which comprises students, teachers, and parents. Good relationships may be built from high expectations and trust (Jarvis & Algozzine, 2006), where trust is gained over time. For young beginning teachers, relationships between teacher and student must be focused on learning rather than being built purely on emotions. A beginning teacher who focuses on learning, and student-centred lessons in his/her classroom will promote effective learning. This will lead to higher student achievement and support stronger student-teacher relationships

(Jarvis & Algozzine, 2006). Jarvis and Algozzine (2006) caution that beginning teachers need to be good listeners, and have patience and understanding. If not, emotional stress caused by behavioural conflicts can lead to broken relationships between the teacher and their students in the classroom (Wilson, 2004).

Building functional relationships with parents can be challenging. Jarvis and Algozzine (2006) characterize parents in three groups for beginning teachers: parents who love or like the teacher and want to be helpful; parents whom teachers never see even though teachers see their children every day in class; and parents who believe their children never do wrong. The last group is the one that beginning teachers have challenges with, although beginning teachers can also be frustrated over the lack of concern for children shown by the second group of parents. A statement of a novice teacher reads, “dealing with parents has been an eye opener, I have been surprised when they defend their child even [when] s/he is wrong” (Britt, 1997).

Beginning teachers are developing both as teachers and as adults in a community where they live alongside the parents of their students. Wyatt and White (2007) acknowledge that beginning teachers have the right to life outside the school setting, but argue that if a community is small, beginning teachers need to be careful about being observed outside school hours, and about how parents might view their activities. If beginning teachers want more autonomy, then they may need to move to a community where the behaviour of beginning teachers outside the school is accepted or not monitored too closely. The personal identity and public identity of beginning teachers can be conflicting, resulting in confusion. It is believed that with time, beginning teachers will shift their focus from “self as a teacher to teacher of children” (Lundeen, 2004, p. 559). As they mature, their professional identity becomes clearer and informs more of their social choices.

The above social concerns are fundamental among the concerns of beginning teachers. The development of a teacher’s identity can also be considered to be a social concern or challenge. It is quite difficult for a beginning teacher to construct their identity early in their career (Stanulis, Fallona, & Pearson, 2002). Jenlink (2014) explains teacher

identity as choices that teachers make and responses to the lives of the people they interact with. Novices construct their identity from the various teaching roles they are involved in. Agee (2004) discovered in his study that due to multicultural learning contexts, beginning teachers can struggle with what they bring from teacher training and what they are faced with in schools for a professional identity. As a result, it can take them two or more years to build their professional identity as a teacher (Dotger & Smith, 2009). Given the role that teachers have in small communities in the more remote parts of Vanuatu, it is likely that relationship building, and the development of a professional identity will be vital for the success of a beginning teacher.

## **2.5 School culture and leadership**

The social challenges faced by beginning teachers that were described in the previous section link to issues with school cultures and leadership systems. Numerous studies have been carried out to investigate the influence of school organisation on teachers' professional development and practices (Feiman-Nemser, 2001; Flores, 2001; Flores & Day, 2006). Corcoran (1981) describes the dilemma beginning teachers face as the "condition of not knowing" (p. 20). Although beginning teachers may be well prepared and may have scored well in their pre-service training, the reality of the school that they enter is unknown. New expectations of the school administration and parents can make the beginning teacher panic and feel afraid to admit their lack of knowledge (Corcoran, 1981). Having a positive school culture promotes positive professional practices and this can result in better student achievement. Brock and Grady (1997) argue that a successful school is one that has a strong culture that aligns with a vision that engages the community. This kind of school culture indicates a good relationship between the principal and teachers.

To create and nurture a positive and effective school culture, the principal plays a vital role. Novice teachers also observe the leadership and teaching practices and this impacts on their professional learning (Brock & Grady, 1997). Brock and Grady (1997) further state that the climate principals create for beginning teachers "will be a factor in their success or failure" (p. 23). This implies the need for good leadership in schools to enhance the professional learning of beginning teachers. Preparing for orientation

and induction programmes in schools promotes the culture of the school and can help to minimise the challenges faced by beginning teachers. Principals need to pay close attention to the school's culture with regards to beginning teachers (Watkins, 2005). The leader of the school has to make certain that the school is prepared to receive beginning teachers.

Writing on leadership more generally in the Solomon Islands, Sanga and Walker (2005) emphasise the importance of leadership in a Pacific Island context. While Vanuatu does not share the same devastating period of national unrest that was experienced in the Solomon Islands, from 1999 to 2003, Sanga and Walker's (2005) call for ethical leadership resonates in the Vanuatu context. Sanga and Walker (2005, p. 16-17) identify three areas of leadership challenges in communities, these being relationships, behavioural choices, and resource challenges. These same challenges exist for leaders in many of Vanuatu's schools, especially in more remote and rural areas. School leaders must nurture relationships, provide guidance on behaviour in small communities, and ensure that classrooms are adequately resourced. Sanga and Walker's (2005) model of leadership is complex, but offers a useful regional guide that is applicable to Vanuatu's Pacific educational context. Strong contextually appropriate leadership will provide a positive school culture in which beginning teachers may thrive.

In the next section, selected educational literature concerning induction will be reviewed.

## **2.6 Teacher induction**

Induction of beginning teachers is focused on supporting novice educators to gain a better experience in their early career years to enable better professional learning and thus student achievement. In Hattie's (2003) early research, he recognises that there are many contributing factors to student achievement; however, he identifies that it is the quality of teaching has the most significant impact on children's learning (Hattie, 2003). This means that it is important to support student teachers and classroom teachers, along with more experienced teachers. If quality teaching is known to lead

to better student performance, then those who care about student learning will want to take the lead in induction programmes (Cameron, Lovett, et al., 2007).

Teacher induction programmes are being developed worldwide and there is a plethora of literature on induction (Britton, Paine, Pimm, & Raizen, 2003b; Feiman-Nemser, 2001; Grudnoff, 2007; Main, 2009). The term 'teacher induction' has many meanings depending on its settings but ideas shared around it are similar. For example, Tickle (2000) mentions that essentially, induction is the link from initial teacher education, to entry into full-time teaching, and long-term learning for teachers. Tickle (2000) also observes that there are other matters that can be woven in to contribute to the link from trainee to professional teacher. These other matters are supported by Britton and his colleagues from the three-year study of comprehensive induction they carried out in five different countries (Britton, Paine, Pimm, & Raizen, 2003a). They discuss induction under four categories: a) a *process* for learning; b) a particular *period* of time; c) a specific *phase* in teaching; and d) a *system*. Induction is a process in the sense that it supports the beginning teacher with further skills and knowledge. It is a period where skills and knowledge must be learned and that learning requires time. Induction is a phase in that the novice teacher must transition from being a pre-service trainee to being a classroom teacher. Finally, induction constitutes a system by its characteristics of "complexity, interconnectedness, variety, co-ordination, responsiveness and dynamism" (Britton et al., 2003, p. 4). The study by Britton and colleagues (2003) reveals that induction is a vital part of a beginning teacher's life-long career, and that it is vital for students' improved performance as well.

In discussing induction in the context of New Zealand, Cameron (2009) defines induction as, "a planned process that addresses the key dimensions of early professional learning and supports [a] teacher towards meeting the criteria for full teacher registration" (p. 12). Cameron (2009) appears to be reflecting on the 'process' category discussed by Britton et al. (2003a). As beginning teachers work towards registration, they are actually going through a process. Beginning teachers must fulfil a 'to do' list to meet the criteria for full registration. Regarding the educational context

in the United States, Nielsen, Barry, and Addison (2007) describe induction as the 'period' when teachers have their first experience of teaching and adjust to the roles and responsibilities of teaching. Ingersoll, the leading expert on impacts of induction in the United States of America, and his colleagues report on induction as a programme involving orientation, support, and guidance (as cited in Kearney, 2014), attending primarily to induction as a 'system'. More recently, Kearney (2014), defines induction as the primary 'phase' in a continuum of professional development leading to the teacher's full integration into a professional community of practice, and their continuing professional learning throughout their career.

### **2.6.1 Functions of induction**

Kearney (2014) mentions that literature around induction of teachers is evident in the 1950s and 1960s in America and in the United Kingdom as far back as the 1940s, and programmes of induction continue to be implemented and reviewed today.

Many countries, recognising the importance of induction, have applied time, effort, and money to developing induction programmes in the hope of improving professional development in education, and improving teaching and learning for better student success. As shown previously in figure 2.1 by Ingersoll and Strong (2011), the professional learning for teachers begins with pre-service preparation. Beginning teachers should then transition to induction when they enter schools.

It is evident in the literature that professional development in education is important, and induction can be seen as a form of professional learning (Cameron, 2009; Cameron, Berger, Lovett, & Baker, 2007; Howe, 2006; Ingersoll & Strong, 2011; Tickle, 2000). During the first years in the classroom, beginning teachers are 'learning to teach' on the job; the literature concerning the professional development of teachers pays considerable attention to this process (Darling-Hammond, Hammerness, Grossman, Rust, & Shulman, 2005; Fuller, 1969). Professional learning provides motivation and strengthens teachers through their teaching career, in particular, the induction stage which provides professional guidance and support at the early stage of beginning teachers' careers (Feiman-Nemser, 2012).

Novice teachers move away from universities and training colleges with knowledge to use in their classrooms but they need to be able to use their knowledge appropriately to meet the learning needs of each student. Where induction programmes provide professional development, this can support novice teachers to analyse the learning of their students better (Cameron, 2009).

Another important aim of induction programmes in schools is to improve teaching performance (Clement, 2000; Flores, 2003; Ingersoll & Strong, 2011; Lang 1996). It is assumed that when induction programmes are effective, teachers' performance of teaching in their classrooms may be improved and so then will student performance. According to Cameron (2007), although there may be other factors contributing to student learning, the quality of teaching has the most impact on whether or not a child is able to learn successfully.

### **2.6.2 The relationship between initial teacher education and induction**

Gaining a teaching qualification from a university or training college is an indication that a trainee has completed most of the theoretical training needed to become a teacher. However, Initial Teacher Education programmes are often criticized due to the performance that their trainees display when they enter schools as new professionals. There is a growing body of literature concerned with the theory-practice gap (Hennissen, Beckers, & Moerkerke, 2017; Korthagen, Kessels, Koster, Lagerwerf, & Wubbels, 2001; Loughran & Hamilton, 2016; Nuthall, 2004). Nuthall (2004) carried out an examination of theory-practice gap, identifying issues with pre-service teacher education that needed to be addressed. The theory-practice gap means that the transition into the teaching profession is usually found to be challenging for novice teachers as expressed by many studies carried out on beginning teachers (Cameron, 2009; Corcoran, 1981; Grudnoff, 2007). The transition is challenging for beginning teachers because, unlike other professions, beginning teachers enter their workplaces with same responsibilities and expectations as their more experienced colleagues. They do not generally have a 'transition period' (Cameron, 2009) or internship period. When school starts, beginning teachers must fully step into their new careers.

Induction programmes have been introduced in some countries to support beginning teachers' transition into teaching, and many researchers argue that it is an increasingly important aspect of teacher education. Corcoran (1981) carried out a long-term study on beginning teachers from the University of New Hampshire, which explored, described and explained the shift from being a university student to being a teacher in a state school. Corcoran (1981) draws attention to the 'transition shock' experienced by beginning teachers, when new teachers are unable to successfully transition into their teaching role, because they are unable to apply the types of thinking learned during teacher education to the challenges of the school environment. Her work was carried out due to gaps identified between initial teacher education and schools. Corcoran (1981) found that beginning teachers were usually quite shocked when confronted with the reality in schools. Lang (2001) suggests that the 'transition shock' experienced by beginning teachers' can last for their whole first year of teaching.

Dotger and Smith (2009) consider why beginning teachers experience 'transition shock' suggesting that the pre-service training mostly takes place outside a public or state school context, and in university classroom contexts instead. The only experience beginning teachers have of schools is their practicum, which for some universities and teachers colleges is from eight to fifteen weeks. The practicum is usually focused on fulfilling the 'tick-a-box' requirements of the tertiary education system. In the context of this study, Vanuatu, the practicum for VITE students is only eight weeks. Anecdotally, many students only teach four to five weeks due to conflicts with other programmes happening in schools.

Other studies claim that 'transition shock' exists due to a lack of information transfer from the period spent as a student teacher to the role of classroom teacher (Corcoran, 1981). Another contributing factor is the weak intervention provided by schools compared to the social reality of schools (Flores & Day, 2006; Kagan, 1992). To minimize the transition shock, Brouwer and Korthagen (2005) suggest the designing of programme interventions that support the integration theory with practice. Langdon (2010) emphasises the importance of induction programmes for beginning teachers, believing that teacher learning is most effective when it takes place over time.

One type of longer term intervention which has been proposed is a collaborative approach to professional learning for beginning teachers, involving for example a coach or a mentor.

### **2.6.3 Coaching and mentoring as induction strategies**

Generally, coaching is focused on supporting individuals to achieve particular tasks, skills or capabilities and it is connected to developing/performing in the various competency levels of these skills. Robertson (2016) defines coaching as a “reciprocal relationship between (at least) two people who work together to set professional goals and achieve them” (p. 1). Thus, coaching can be seen as a process of developing an individual’s strength. With regards to coaching in education, it concerns the development of beliefs about teaching and learning, knowledge and skills, provision of support, and feedback with the aim of improving students’ academic success (Roberts & Pruitt, 2009; Rodie, 2011). As such, coaching involves experiences, questioning, problem solving, analysis and the development of new thinking (Robertson, 2004). Coaching is non-sequential and can occur at any point in an individual’s career path, including at the start of a teaching career or overlapping with mentoring (Roberts & Pruitt, 2009). Rodie (2011) who carried out significant research on beginning teachers in the Solomon Islands, believes it is worth encouraging students to begin coaching during their initial teacher education, with students practicing to provide each other with educational help based on their strengths. This suggestion by (Rodie, 2011) may be applicable to the context of the present research, as both countries are Melanesian and in the Pacific context. The suggestion is in line with Morgan and Rochford (2017) idea of peer coaching. One of the main characteristics of coaching is to be involved with another colleague and to reflect on teaching practices. Coaching is thought of as a certain form of mentoring with a more specific task or skill development in mind (Harrison, Dymoke, & Pell, 2006).

More generally, mentoring is described by the Education Council of Aotearoa New Zealand (Educational Council of Aotearoa New Zealand, 2015) as “an essential component of induction”, which is “educative in focus and based on a relationship of

trust and collegiality” (p. 12). Mentoring is further defined by Rodie (2011) in terms of teacher-education as an individual-to-individual support given to beginning teacher by a veteran colleague. In the context of teacher education, Hudson (2013) states that “combining the mentor teachers’ knowledge of teaching practice with the knowledge of effective mentoring can provide pre-service teachers (mentees) with valuable directions for advancing their pedagogical development” (p. 363).

Experts in educational change and leadership explain that new professionals should have mentors to guide them through the development of skills and the management of stress (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2000). The idea of mentoring has become accepted as more literature has focused on the importance of providing help to beginning teachers. Carter and Francis (2001) stress that beginning teachers are frequently disadvantaged by being given the same responsibilities as their experienced colleagues without any ongoing coaching or mentoring. The mentoring of beginning teachers is one of the types of professional support provided in many westernised education systems and schools in their induction programmes (Carter & Francis, 2001; Feiman-Nemser, 2001). An effective mentoring programme is one that combines beginning teachers with mentors who are well prepared to offer assistance. According to ECANZ (2015), a high quality or effective mentoring programme is “relationship-based, focussed on educative mentoring, recognised and resourced” (p.12). An induction programme with a strong component of mentoring is generally believed to be the best form of support for beginning teachers in their early careers (Luft, Roehrig, & Patterson, 2003).

#### **2.6.4 Induction programmes**

Induction programmes are designed to address needs in particular contexts and differ depending on what these needs are and how the education system is implemented. In this section, summaries of induction programmes in five countries are presented in order to identify the key elements of induction.

According to Rippon and Martin (2006), Scotland introduced a formal teacher induction scheme in 2002 in order to support beginning teachers into the teaching profession. The formal induction programme was introduced to ensure that

probationers (beginning teachers) throughout Scotland receive consistently high-quality experiences as they enter the teaching profession (Norgaard & Pachler, 2010). Current information provided by the General Teaching Council, and available online, describes an intensive one-year induction programme, for all beginning teachers, with the following elements:

- a) All students graduating with a teaching qualification from a Scottish university are guaranteed a one-year training post;
- b) Probationers on the teacher induction scheme have a maximum class contact time equal to 80% of that of a full-time teacher (18 hours per week); and
- c) The remaining 20% of non-class contact time is dedicated to advancing the probationer's own continuing professional development. This includes activities inside and outside the school;
- d) Weekly meetings are held with an experienced in-school supporter (mentor) to plan and discuss progress with professional development;
- e) Each Local Authority is involved in managing the teacher induction scheme within its own area; and
- f) The progress of each probationer is assessed twice a year, through the use of an interim profile and a final profile which is forwarded to the General Teaching Council for Scotland (GTCS).

(General Teaching Council for Scotland, n.d.)

In Scotland, induction of beginning teachers includes teaching relief, an assigned mentor, professional development provided by the school, and monitoring.

In Australia, support for beginning teachers was prevalent in the 1990s and was formally implemented in the 2000s (DEST, 2002; Dinham, 1992; McCormack &

Thomas, 2003; Ramsey, 2000). Within the context of most states in Australia, the following induction strategies involve:

- The provision of a mentor;
- The opportunity for collaboration;
- Structured observations;
- Reduced teaching, and/or release time;
- Teacher evaluation;
- Opportunities for professional discussions and/or communication;
- Professional support and/or professional networking;
- Induction as a programme of professional development.

Recently, the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) has developed guidelines to further strengthen induction in Australian schools and this was endorsed by Education Ministers in July 2016. The guidelines emphasise practice-focused mentoring, by one or more expert colleagues, and focuses on professional practices, professional identity, wellbeing and orientation (Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership [AITSL], 2016).

In the United States of America, the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) made a resolution in July 2000 that all schools should introduce induction for beginning teachers after discovering from their 50-state AFT analysis of induction policies that not all beginning teachers were being inducted into the teaching profession after their initial teacher training (AFT Educational Issues Dept, 2001). In the United States context, induction programmes have been in place for some decades. The programmes are characterized by the provision of a mentor for each beginning teacher, and induction covers at least the first two years of employment. According to Britton,

Raizen, Paine, and Huntly (2000), Connecticut's induction programme was regarded as one of the best. The induction programme operates over two years, with a third year when needed. Schools provide mentors for beginning teachers, and the state provides professional development activities. The majority of Connecticut's budget for the Beginning Teachers Programme is used for mentor-teacher workshops run by the state. Each district also gets about \$200 per new teacher to pay a mentor's stipend.

According to Bullough Jr. (2012), in New York, there is a two-year induction programme for beginning teachers, where every teacher has a mentor, and works to an individualised induction plan. In their first year of teaching, both the beginning teacher and the mentor are given a minimum of 10% release time from the classroom. The state pays the school 10% of the mentor's salary to cover this release time. In California, there is also a two-year induction programme involving a mentor. Beginning teachers are given at least one hour a week of individual support by their mentor (California Commission on Teacher Credentialing, 2017; 2019).

In New Zealand, Main and Hill (2007) observe that teacher induction began in the 1970s programme, but it was more an individualized program, which may be referred to as a 'sink or a swim' programme, where beginning teachers are left on their own. Although there were some tutor teachers at that time, not a lot of support was given to beginning teachers. Main and Hill (2007) reported that Campbell's study in 1977 showed that the individualised programmes were not helping teachers grow professionally. In the 1980s, a new induction programme commenced which shifted the paradigm from individualistic to humanistic learning. The teacher induction programme in New Zealand is designed and reviewed by the New Zealand's Council for Teachers (changed to Education Council of Aotearoa New Zealand- EDUCANZ), and beginning teachers are evaluated based on the Registered Teacher Criteria. While at their new school, beginning teachers are provided with a mentor teacher who supports the beginning teacher for the first two years as they work towards full teacher registration (Cooper, 2012). The teacher induction programme in New Zealand has continued to be reviewed to provide better support for beginning teachers. The New Zealand government provides funding for teacher induction

programmes in all sectors to support Provisionally Certificated Teachers during their first two years of teaching before full registration (Main, 2009).

In New Zealand, induction programmes for beginning teachers vary from school to school, but all state schools and assisted state schools are required to have an induction programme. The induction programme is summarised below:

- a) Beginning teachers must have a teaching qualification and be appointed by the Board Of Trustees of the school;
- b) An induction programme of two to five years is available for beginning teachers, although the government only provides funds for the first two years;
- c) Beginning teachers are given a 0.2 time allowance in the first year and 0.1 in the second year;
- d) Beginning teachers are given a mentor and mentors are paid an annual incentive for the extra load;
- e) Everyone at school is encouraged to aid beginning teachers (Grudnoff, 2007; NZTC, 2006).

The induction programme was most recently updated in 2015, with new guidelines for induction and mentoring. These are aimed at supporting the provisions of the update, which focus on ensuring national consistency, high quality, and comprehensive support for Provisionally Certificated Teachers (PCTs) with the capability to assist learners in achieving success in education (ECANZ, 2015, p. 3).

In the Pacific island nations, Papua New Guinea embarked on a three-year period of beginning teachers induction in which they have to go through inspections and registration to become a fully registered teacher (Deruage, 2007). In Papua New Guinea, the induction strategy or programme operates under an inspectorate programme which also issues licences to teachers. A beginning teacher from teachers college or university enters the school and works under a subject master or senior

teacher (in primary schools) who becomes his/her mentor. The beginning teacher takes part in extra-curricular activities to create social networks, and attends in-service training at school, within departments, along with a Provincial In-service Week (where beginning teachers are normally funded to attend seminars and workshops run by the provincial education authorities). The induction period takes one to three years. A school inspector observes and makes a report at the end of each year determining whether a full registration will be given or not. This work is carried out with no release of time or a lower workload for the beginning teachers, which differs from the Scottish, New Zealand and Australian systems. However, the mentor is given some financial benefit for the extra work load of mentoring a new professional (Deruage, 2007).

The five countries listed above with their brief induction programme summaries, show the following: they all have a system that guides student teachers in what to do when they finish their initial teacher education and become classroom teachers; they all indicate clearly what the beginning teachers need to do to get their full registration; and they all show benefits for mentors who will take on the extra responsibility to mentor a beginning teacher. Three countries offer beginning teachers a reduced work load. It is unclear whether release of time is always given to beginning teachers in the United States, and it may vary from place to place. In Papua New Guinea, beginning teachers do not get release time. The induction programmes in these five countries thus vary a little; however, they all show that induction involves multiple institutions and individuals. Not only are systems and policies required but also the context is important to allow induction to happen (Britton, Paine, Pimm, & Raizen, 2003a).

A search for literature and documentation on induction in the context of this research, Vanuatu, has not revealed any evidence of a formal induction programme. There appears to be no research carried out yet on induction in Vanuatu either, and as such, this research has been designed to explore the nature of any informal induction programmes in Vanuatu secondary schools for beginning secondary teachers.

## 2.7 Summary

In this literature review, a number of key points have emerged. The professional learning of teachers is a process that begins before initial teacher education, with formative personal experiences and the apprenticeship of observation that is experienced by students during their years of primary and secondary schooling playing a significant role (Feiman-Nemser, 2012). Initial teacher education and schooling provides some but not all content knowledge for trainees, and some, but not all pedagogical knowledge for trainees. Countries that require an initial content-based degree are likely to see teachers with a stronger understanding of the subjects they are specializing in, as secondary teachers.

When teacher trainees transition into being beginning teachers, they commonly experience a 'transition shock'. A strategy which has emerged from the literature to reduce the 'transition shock' and support beginning teachers is an induction programme. Formal induction can combine a reduced teaching load with a programme of professional development, and an assigned mentor whose role is to guide the beginning teacher toward enhanced teaching practice.

Even though a range of induction programmes exist, in the context of the research reported in this thesis, Vanuatu, there is no evidence of a formal induction programme. The purpose of the research is to record the experiences and perceptions of beginning teachers and their principals as they transition into their first teaching role in a Vanuatu secondary school. Through this research, it may be possible to identify informal induction elements, and to propose a contextually appropriate model to better understand and support beginning secondary teachers in Vanuatu.

## CHAPTER THREE- THE RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

### 3.1 Introduction

The main purpose of this research was to find out about how beginning secondary teachers in Vanuatu are inducted into their schools and into teaching as a profession. The study was framed around a main research question and three sub-questions:

*What are the induction experiences and perceptions of beginning secondary teachers in Vanuatu schools?*

- i. How are beginning secondary teachers inducted into the teaching profession in Vanuatu schools?
- ii. What are the challenges/barriers/enablers to successful induction into the secondary teaching profession in Vanuatu schools?
- iii. In what ways do Vanuatu schools, particularly through their school leadership systems, support beginning secondary teachers into the teaching profession?

Through asking these questions, I sought to understand the process of how beginning secondary teachers are inducted into the teaching profession in Vanuatu. I was interested in exploring beginning teacher experiences and perceptions as they developed over their first year (or years) of teaching, and also to gain an understanding of the aspects of their prior and current experiences that enabled or limited their development as a teacher. Principals' perceptions about the support provided to beginning secondary teachers and development of beginning secondary teachers were also relevant to this study. This was because principals had spent more time in the teaching field than beginning teachers and had experiences with beginning teachers in the past. They would be able to provide further perspectives of the support provided to beginning secondary teachers as they settled into their schools.

Coming to know about the experiences and perceptions that beginning secondary teachers in Vanuatu have of induction into teaching will be extremely useful for two main purposes. Firstly, it will aid in the development of structures which can support beginning teachers in the first few years of their careers. The research findings will be

of value to secondary school leaders and policy makers in designing and implementing effective induction programmes to support beginning secondary teachers into the teaching profession. Such programmes are intended to aid beginning teachers in their desire to be well-informed, effective, professional and confident teachers. Secondly, Vanuatu is in the process of establishing a formal teacher registration system. Building on the development of induction programmes, it may be possible to identify elements of an induction programme that can be integrated into the formal teacher registration process in Vanuatu. When teacher registration is fully implemented, beginning secondary teachers will potentially complete an induction programme, and in doing so, provide evidence that they are ready to qualify for teacher registration.

Regarding the motivation for this research, (Yin, 2011) emphasises that research is valuable and that it is carried out to find answers to questions about the world we live in. In social science research, including education research, researchers are to be committed to understanding and improving the human condition (Reichardt & Rallis, 1994). To do so, the researcher must select an appropriate research paradigm to use in their study to enable them to develop their understanding of the relevant phenomena, and ideally to use their findings to improve the human condition. In this study, I have chosen an interpretive research paradigm involving a relativist ontology and a constructivist epistemology. I used this research paradigm as a framework to guide my selection of a qualitative case study methodology, to better understand the experiences and perceptions of beginning secondary teachers in Vanuatu. This chapter provides information about the selected paradigm for this research project in section 3.2, followed by details of the specific research methods in section 3.3. In section 3.4, there is an outline of the analytical processes employed. In section 3.5 the ways that credibility and reliability are maintained in the research are explained. In section 3.6, the ethical considerations in the research are presented. The chapter concludes with a brief introduction to the research participants recruited for the project in section 3.7.

### **3.2 The Research Paradigm**

In any research inquiry, the researcher's view of the world can be understood to affect the entire research process, from conceptualizing a problem, through collecting and analysing data, to interpreting the findings (Merriam, 1998; Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2018). It is important to locate the particular theoretical and methodological underpinning for the research within the researcher's assumptions and beliefs. Prior to embarking on research, the researcher must consider which methods and methodologies are appropriate, and how they can justify the uses of these methods and methodologies (Crotty, 1998). Methodologies are always dictated by the chosen research paradigm, which is defined as the basic belief system that guides the study not only in methodological choices but also in ontology and epistemology (Abbas & Charles, 1998).

Denzin and Lincoln (2005, p. 22) observe that the "net that contains the researcher's epistemological, ontological, and methodological premises may be termed a paradigm, or an interpretative framework." According to Schnelker (2006), a paradigm is a lens through which individuals view the world and it presents the 'big picture' of how the world works. Theories and concepts linked to the ways knowledge and truth are perceived are seen as important parts of a research paradigm. Each paradigm has consistent views about ontology (the nature and form of reality), epistemology (the nature of knowledge), and methodology (the procedures used to investigate, and the rationales behind the procedures).

While educational research can be guided by any one of three main paradigms: the scientific/positivist paradigm; the naturalistic/interpretive paradigm; or the critical theory paradigm (Lather, 2006), in this research, the interpretive paradigm is identified as the guiding framework. The interpretive paradigm is concerned with knowledge about individuals and groups of people. An interpretive researcher cannot accept the positivist ontological position that there is a single reality 'out there' in the world, which exists irrespective of people. Instead, interpretivists see reality as a human construct (Mutch, 2005; Neuman, 2014; Rubin & Rubin, 2012). Those who take a constructionist or relativist ontological perspective believe there are different people

with different views and that many different realities (multiple realities) can be created (Cohen et al., 2018; Grix, 2001). In this study, the ontology that is adopted is relativist.

O'Leary (2014) describes relativist ontology as making the assumption that there is no single truth, and that truth, morals, and culture can only be understood in relation to their socio-historic context. In this study, beginning secondary teachers in Vanuatu are recognised as constructing meanings of their experiences about induction related to how they view the world within their socio-historic and present contexts. These contexts may involve their educational and teaching journey (education system), the environment (living and non-living), and their spiritualism (cultural and God). Relativists take the view that there are multiple truths, and in this study, different views are expected from the participants. For example, even two beginning secondary teachers who were brought up together and had similar life experiences are likely to construct different realities. My position then as a researcher is to understand their realities, and make meaning of their individual perspectives.

Considering epistemology, the term originates from the Greek word 'episteme', which describes knowledge (Grix, 2001). Within a research context, epistemology is concerned with knowledge, its nature and forms, and how it is shared, gained (Denzin & Lincoln, 2013), and passed on to other individuals (Cohen et al., 2018). Working within an interpretivist paradigm, researchers aim to develop an understanding of social life, and have the goal of discovering how people construct meaning in their natural settings (Mutch, 2005; Neuman, 2014). Interpretivists hold the view that reality is subjective, and they see "social reality as consisting of people who construct meaning and create interpretations through their daily social interaction" (Neuman, 2014, p. 105).

The interpretive paradigm can be contrasted most clearly with the positivist paradigm, which is linked to empirical science. According to Neuman (2014), "positivism sees social science as an organised method for combining deductive logic with precise empirical observations of individual behaviour in order to discover and confirm a set

of probabilistic causal laws that can be used to predict general patterns of human activity” (p. 97). Positivists hold the ontological view that empirical facts exist apart from personal thoughts (Crotty, 1998; Neuman, 2014). Positivists take an objective stance, so a quantitative approach is preferred, and data is often generated through experiments and surveys (Neuman, 2014).

The nature and purpose of this study, to examine and understand the lived experiences of beginning secondary teachers in Vanuatu, indicates that the interpretive rather than the positivist paradigm is the appropriate paradigm to guide the study. Through the research, I intended to explore, make meaning, and theorise the perceptions of beginning secondary teachers’ experiences as well as principals’ experiences with the beginning secondary teachers during their early years of teaching. Meanings are constructed by beginning secondary teachers as they engage with the world, and as they view and interpret their experiences of the world in their minds (Crotty, 1998). In this study I am focusing on co-constructing knowledge of the induction experiences and perceptions of beginning secondary teachers, and their principals.

The research paradigm that guides a researcher in thinking about a research question and research context, also influences and guides the chosen methodology for the research. Krauss (2005) summarises the relationship between ontology, epistemology, and methodology by stating that, “ontology involves philosophy of reality, epistemology addresses how we come to know that reality while methodology identifies the particular practices used to attain knowledge of it” (p. 758-759). These three elements are interconnected (Denzin and Lincoln (2005, p. 22).

### **3.2.1 Research Methodology**

Strauss and Corbin (1998), describe methodology as a way of thinking about and studying social reality. A researcher must decide which type of research methodology will be used for their study. In the selection of a methodological approach, Sarantakos (2012) aides by explaining methodology as a “research strategy that translates ontological and epistemological principals into guidelines that show how research is

to be conducted” (p. 30). Meyer (2001) points out that there are two main methodologies that are used in major social science research that relate to the positivist and interpretative paradigms: quantitative and qualitative. A quantitative methodology is used by researchers who work within the positivist paradigm, where the positivist paradigm consists of the objectivist ontology and empiricist/positivist epistemology, and requires a research approach that is objective and deals with figures. On the other hand, a qualitative methodology is used by researchers who work within the interpretivist paradigm. This paradigm consists of the relativist ontology and constructivist epistemology, and requires a research approach that deals with human beings’ experiences (Merriam, 1998; Neuman, 2014). Furthermore, Merriam (1998), notes that qualitative methodology is underpinned by a constructive epistemology and a relativist ontology which assumes that meaning is embedded in the experiences of the participants and mediated through the researcher’s view.

When qualitative research is proposed, Creswell (2013) observes three considerations that contribute to selecting an appropriate qualitative research design. The research question, the researcher’s own experiences and world view, and the audience who will read the research report will all shape the research design. With the considerations provided by Creswell (2013), it is appropriate for this study to use a qualitative methodological approach situated within the interpretative paradigm. The study is aimed at investigating the induction experiences of beginning teachers. This means that the study is focussed on what the first year of teaching is like from the perspective of teachers, how individual beginning teachers are received by their schools, and how they are supported professionally through their first year of teaching. The qualitative methodological approach allows me, as the researcher, to interpret the experiences shared by the beginning teacher participants, to understand better the support they are receiving. The interpretive, qualitative research is thus the appropriate paradigm to employ in order to understand the subjective world of the beginning secondary teachers’ experiences.

Denzin and Lincoln (2013) affirm that qualitative researchers study occurrences in their natural settings, “attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms

of the meanings people bring to them” (p. 7). Creswell (2013) helps to identify four general approaches to qualitative inquiry: phenomenology, ethnography, case study, and grounded theory. The approach selected for this study will be discussed in the next section.

### **3.2.2 Qualitative case study methodology**

In considering a specific qualitative methodology for this project, I have been guided by my ontological and epistemological perspectives within the interpretive paradigm toward the use of a qualitative case study. A case study is defined as “an empirical inquiry about a contemporary phenomenon (i.e., a case), set within its real-world context – especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident: and in which multiple sources of evidence are used” (Yin, 2009). Case study methodologies include: those which have a disciplinary orientation – involving for example law, medicine, psychology, and many others; those which have an overall intent – involving description or evaluation of a phenomenon; and those which involve multisite or comparative case designs (Merriam, 1998, p. 200). Bogdan and Biklen (2007) also include historical organisational case studies as a form of case study common in educational research. Merriam (1998) identifies three different purposes for which researchers might use case studies: they can provide a detailed account of a phenomenon without seeking any theoretical explanation; they can be interpretive case studies that are also highly descriptive but where the researcher analyses the data for patterns to develop concepts and theories; and they can be an evaluative case study, containing explanation and description. In support of case study approaches, especially those with more than one site, Stake (2000) argues that “understanding them [individual cases] will lead to better understanding, perhaps better theorising, about a still larger collection of cases” (p. 437).

According to Merriam (1998), there are three broad yet distinct characteristics of qualitative case studies. Firstly, they focus on particular situations, events, or phenomenon, making them particularistic. Secondly, they are descriptions that give a rich, ‘thick’ description of the phenomenon. And thirdly, the heuristic case will give

an understanding of the phenomenon under study to the reader and “can bring about the discovery of new meaning, extend the reader’s experience, or confirm what is known” (p. 30). The case study is therefore used to gain an in-depth understanding of a situation and those involved. This implies that context and other conditions aligned with an understanding of the ‘case’ are vital in research which employs a case study methodology.

Stake (1995) amongst others (see e.g. Creswell, 2013; Johnson & Christensen, 2012; Yin, 2009) also describes three types of case study: intrinsic studies, instrumental case studies, and collective case studies or multisite case studies. A researcher employing an intrinsic case study is interested in understanding one particular case and so the design is classic and single-case. For example, a researcher might want to understand a student who is not performing in class, and so focuses on that student as a single case. In an instrumental case study, the researcher is interested in understanding something more than the specific case. The researcher studies the individual case to reach a more general understanding about a topic. For instance, a researcher wants to find out about a discipline problem in general rather than in a particular classroom, but generalises from the particular classroom to reach their understanding. In a collective case study, the researcher studies multiple cases for comparison. For example, a researcher could investigate induction programmes in five different schools in New Zealand and bring together the findings of each case to build a larger understanding. Stake (2000), points out that there can be overlap between intrinsic and instrumental case studies in a “zone of combined purpose” (p. 437).

In this study, where I will explore the experiences and perceptions of beginning secondary teachers, many characteristics relevant to case studies are present. The research methodology resembles an intrinsic case study, because it will only look at the early stage of the beginning secondary teacher’s professional journey. The first year, or two years, of teaching provide the temporal boundaries of the study. It also shares the characteristics of the instrumental case study, as the early experiences of individual teachers will be used to develop a more general understanding of how beginning teachers in Vanuatu are currently supported during their early years of

teaching. Finally, it displays the characteristics of a collective case study because the study will be carried out at different sites around Vanuatu, but in each case, the site of the research is a Vanuatu secondary school.

Due to the small population of Vanuatu, an individual secondary school selected as the site of a single case (an intrinsic case study) may be identifiable, which may become problematic. To address the issue of identifiability, I have chosen to conduct research at several different school sites as a collective case study. The findings are also reported collectively rather than as individual cases to protect the identities of participants. The study involves a small number of beginning teachers who have graduated from the Vanuatu Institute of Teacher Education and their principals, which provides a boundary to the potential participant pool. Being a particularistic methodology, the case study involves me working with 11 participants to understand induction experiences during the early years of teaching. I employ the case study to make sense of my own knowledge gained from my years of employment in the Vanuatu education system, and to discover new knowledge and meaning, particularly regarding factors that enable or limit beginning teachers in terms of their professional support, professional learning, and professional development.

As a researcher generating a case study to explore my research topic, I understand that there are strengths and weaknesses to this method. Merriam (1998) states that the case study is limited by the sensitivity and integrity of the researcher, given that s/he is the primary instrument of data collection and analysis. As an insider with experience of the Vanuatu education system, I have access to the research sites and participant pool, and I have experiences with may be shared with my participants, which may help me to understand and represent their perspectives with sensitivity. Guba and Lincoln (2005) also caution about the 'bias' of the case study, as sometimes, the people who finance the study want the expression of results to favour their position. For this study, the New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, and the University of Waikato Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences (now Division of Arts, Law, Psychology and Social Sciences) funded the study, but there was no pressure from either organisation to present findings in particular ways. Furthermore, Merriam

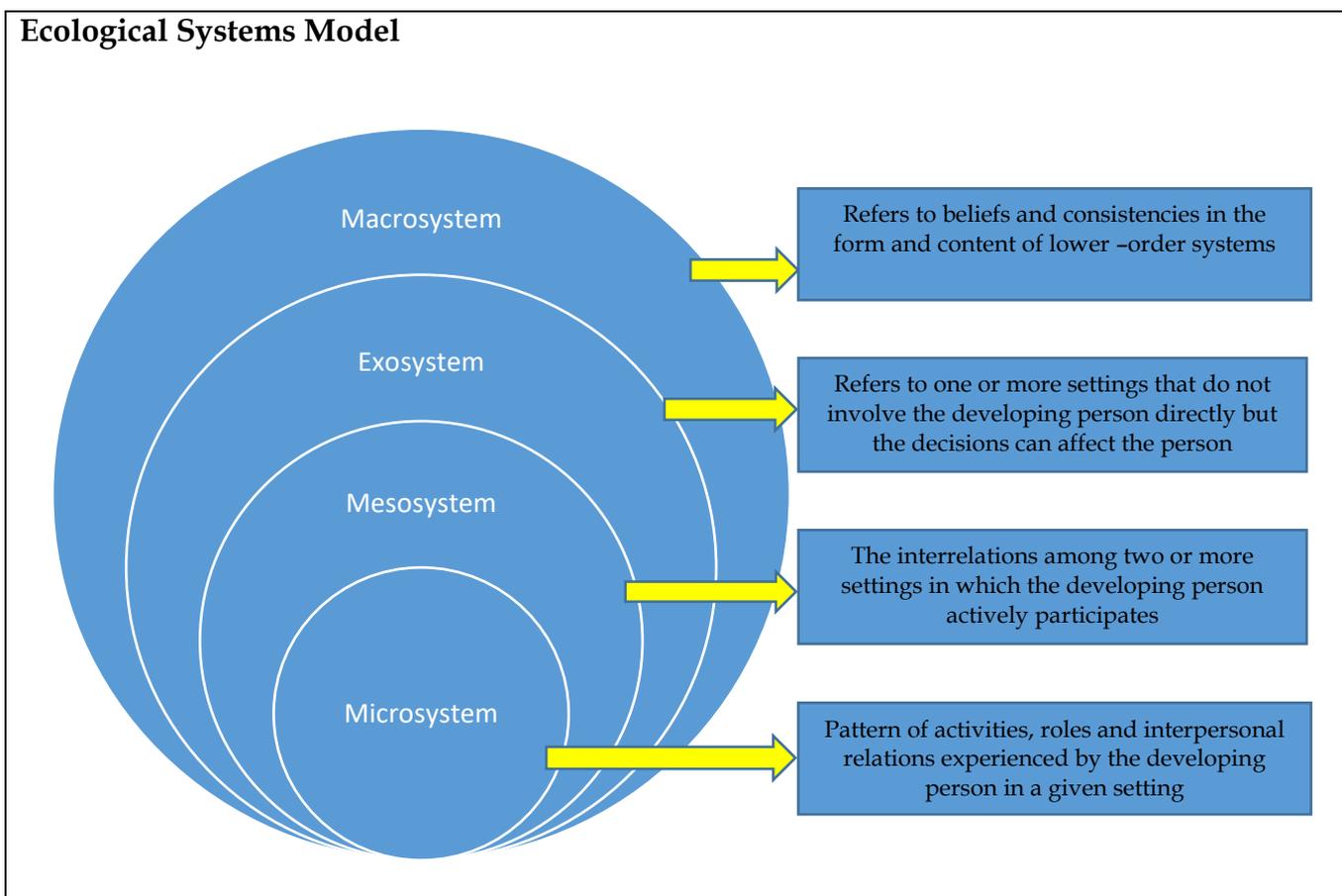
(1998) brings about the concern of the reliability, validity, and generalisability. With a small sample, it is difficult to generalise at a national level. For this study, I use the data that is collected to make observations and reach understandings of the beginning teachers' experiences. In turn, these understandings are used to formulate recommendations regarding induction in Vanuatu.

### **3.2.3 The application of the Ecological Systems Theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) to teacher induction**

The case study approach taken in this project emphasises understanding participants' experiences. Bronfenbrenner's (1979) Ecological Systems Theory is used as a lens through which to view the research findings. The Ecological Systems Theory involves understanding that the environment that the research participants are brought up in, and are situated in, contributes to their development. The Ecological Systems Theory has influenced research methodologies and policy development in a range of disciplines, such as social work, health, community development and education (Clarkin-Philips, 2016; Eamon, 2001; Howard & Johnson, 2003; Johnson, 2008). According to Johnson (1994), the ecological theory views "student development, learning, and behaviour as manifestations of child-environment interaction" (p. 38). Thus, in education, numerous researchers have adopted the Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory as an analytical lens (Clarkin-Philips, 2016; Johnson, 2008; Johnson, Johnson, & DeMatta, 1991; Johnson, 1994). The central role of context in understandings of development that are encapsulated within Bronfenbrenner's (1979) Ecological Systems Theory makes it an appropriate analytical lens through which to explore the experiences of the beginning teacher participants in this research.

Considering the Ecological Systems Theory more closely, Bronfenbrenner (1979) was interested in the relationship between the individual and their environment. He knew that carrying out research in a laboratory with an individual would mean isolating that individual from their environment, and that this would not lead to useful research understandings. His original ecological systems theory is portrayed as a set of four nested structures which showed how the developing individual cannot be separated from their environment.

Bronfenbrenner's theory, modelled in Figure 3.1, begins with the individual in their immediate environment. This first layer is called the microsystem. It encapsulates the individual's direct involvement with their family, school, workplace and community. Other layers occur outside the microsystem. They gradually become less directly related to the individual, but they are influential in development. The second layer is the mesosystem, which represents the interrelationship between the settings in which the individual is directly involved, for example, the home and school. The third layer is the exosystem. The exosystem is not directly related to the individual, but decision making at this level has an influence on the development of an individual. The fourth layer is the macrosystem, which consists of cultural and social forces that have indirect influence on the development of an individual within community and nation as a whole. These cultural and social forces influence positively and effectively when the lower order systems are consistent. The interactions between the layers offers a diversity of options for growth and development (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).



*Figure 3.1: Ecological Systems Model (Based on Bronfenbrenner, 1979)*

By employing Bronfenbrenner's (1979) Ecological Systems Theory as a lens, I was able to create a deep understanding of the experiences that the beginning teachers had in their early years of teaching. Johnson (2008) asserts that when individuals and their ecosystem are balanced or harmonious, meaning when their characteristics are appropriate for their particular environment, then the normal function of the environment will occur. In relating this idea to beginning teachers, when a teacher is appropriately positioned and supported, we can expect their school will function effectively and students will successfully be educated. Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory helped me to understand and examine the multiple layers of influence and networks which were present during the beginning teachers' entry into Vanuatu secondary schools.

Although Bronfenbrenner's (1979) Ecological Systems Theory helped me to understand the experiences of beginning teachers, it was not developed to describe the experiences of beginning secondary teachers in Vanuatu, and the model shown in Figure 3.1 does not present understandings that are immediately and clearly relevant to educators in the Vanuatu context. In this study, I go beyond the Ecological Systems Theory to develop a contextually appropriate metaphor to explain my research findings to Vanuatu educators. Using metaphor in educational research is not new in the Pacific. Sanga (2013) showcases four examples of indigenous metaphors used by Pacific educators. These are: the HAUS 'house' Framework for Curriculum Development, developed by Daudau (2010) in the Solomon Islands; the GELAGEL 'taro' Framework for Teaching and Learning, developed by Mwarakurmes (2012) in the northern island of Vanua Lava of Vanuatu; the IORA 'canoe' Framework for Leadership developed by Houma (2008, as cited in Sanga, 2013) in South Malaita, of the Solomon Islands; and the VAKAISULU 'being clothed with honor' Framework for Mentorship developed by Ruru and colleagues in Fiji, and reported in Johansson-Fua, Sanga, Walker and Ralph (2012) and (Sanga, 2013, p. 41-45). An important property of these metaphors is that each metaphor is locally relevant, including the teaching and learning metaphor developed for northern Vanuatu.

Sanga (2013) observes that these Pacific educational metaphors valuable because they are active and salient for Pacific people. They are visual and involve cultural knowledge that is applied in local contexts, rather than education knowledge that has been imposed on Pacific people externally. According to Sanga (2013), the "indigenous Pacific Island scholars who have developed these metaphors are well aware of the mismatch between educational ideas in schooling and the Pacific cultural contexts in which schooling takes place" (p. 48). Sanga and Reynolds (2020) see that "the use of metaphor is an opportunity to ground understandings in existing knowledge and, as a consequence, to expose educational practice to critique" (p. 269).

### 3.3 Research Methods & Processes

In order to find out about beginning secondary teachers' experiences and perceptions of their first year(s) of teaching, a case study methodology has been selected for this qualitative study within an interpretivist paradigm. The specific methods used in collecting data in research must link to the methodological framework for the research. According to Creswell (2013), "data collection procedures in qualitative research involve four basic types: observations, interviews, documents and visual images" (p. 160). Three methods are used to generate data for the study. These include semi-structured interviews, a reflective journal, and document analysis. Each method will be introduced and a case made for its suitability in this research. At the end of each sub-section, the process used to collect data will be detailed.

Before turning to the research methods selected for this study, I briefly consider the possibility of employing indigenous methods in my research. The most widely known indigenous research method in the Pacific region is Talanoa (Vaioleti, 2006, 2011). Talanoa is described as a mode of communication that is integral to the way in which many Pacific peoples share information, learn and relate to each other (Vaioleti, 2006). Talanoa can be conducted between two or more people on a topic or phenomenon. Since it is to do with groups of people sharing of information, it can be used as a research method to generate data, and it has been used as such in research in different parts of the Pacific. Memua from the Solomon Islands (2011), and Otsuka (2006) from Fiji, among others used talanoa in their research and identified its local appropriateness in their contexts.

Vaioleti (2011, p. 118), states that talanoa may be used between "family, friends, and colleagues," and between people who do not have very close relationship, it may just be a more polite way of acknowledgement, a prolonged hello, or greeting" (p. 118). In this study, the research participants were all graduates of the Vanuatu Institute of Teacher Education (VITE), but I did not have a close relationship with them. At best, using talanoa in these circumstances as a data collection method would be, to quote Vaioleti (2011, p. 118), "somewhat superficial". I need deeper responses to questions to gain a full and rich understanding of data regarding the phenomenon of this study.

Physically, the participants in this project were situated in many different parts of Vanuatu. Although conversational talanoa may have been a locally appropriate method in this context of study because of its Pacific origins, it was not possible to gather participants together to conduct talanoa sessions. Recruitment posed difficulties (described in section 3.7), and ethically, it was important to protect the identities of the beginning secondary teachers, their principals, and their schools (see section 3.6). Because of these factors, I did not pursue talanoa as a method of data generation, and instead relied on more traditional data collection methods. Vaioleti (2011, p. 120) describes “Talanoa faka’eke’eke” as a form of Talanoa where the researcher asks questions and probes for further information. This form of Talanoa is very similar to semi-structured interviewing discussed in section 3.3.1, used in this study. Where cultural behaviours were important to my research activities and data collection, I followed the cultural and religious norms relevant to communities in Vanuatu.<sup>9</sup>

### 3.3.1 Using Interviews in educational research

Interviewing in research may seem a simple and straight forward task, as Brinkmann and Kvale (2015) remind researchers that interviewing involves the “cultivation of conversational skills that an adult already possess by virtue of being able to ask questions (p. 4)”. These conversational skills are used in everyday life, and at our work places when we ask questions of the people with whom we interact. In a work place, conversational questions can be referred to as professional conversational questioning skills or interviewing. Professional interviews can include journalistic interviews, consumer experience interviews, as well as educational interviews in research.

DiCicco-Bloom and Crabtree (2006) observe that interviews are one of the most common methods used in data collection. According to Kvale (1996), “the qualitative research interview is a construction site of knowledge. An interview is literally an *inter view*, an inter change between two persons conversing about a theme of mutual interest” (p. 2).

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<sup>9</sup> Vaioleti also identifies Talanoa faikava as a form of talanoa where “kava is prepared to drink at a gathering” (Vaioleti, 2011, p. 118). It is not appropriate for me, as a Christian woman from Vanuatu, to consume kava.

Brinkmann (2014) agrees that interview is a practice where knowledge is produced through the interaction between the researcher and the participant/s. According to Cohen et al. (2018), the interview is a unique technique to be used in research, and it has three purposes: an interview may be used to generate information in response to the aim of a research; it may also be used to develop or test a hypothesis; and furthermore, it may be used with other methods to generate information for research.

In conducting a research interview in education, there are three main ways of organising data collection: through structured interviewing, through unstructured interviewing, and through semi-structured interviews (Bouma, 2000; Creswell, 2013). The structured interview involves for example a survey form where all questions are the same for all participants in the study. The unstructured interview does not begin with specific questions, but is more open-ended. Structured questions combined with open-ended questions and probing questions in semi-structured interviews. In this study, semi-structure interviews are employed to generate data.

The semi-structured interview is defined by Fraenkel, Wallen, and Hyun (2012), as a structured interview, combined with open-ended questions. The interviewer in a semi-structured interview generally has a limited number of predetermined questions or themes to be explored (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). Although definitions may vary in the research methods literature, semi-structured interviews are generally described as involving a one-on-one conversation. One-on-one conversations mean that the participants may feel less self-conscious when talking about their experiences. Because of this characteristic, the semi-structured interview is arguably the most common form of interviewing in social science and educational research (Menter, Elliot, Hulme, & Lowden, 2011). This study used semi-structured interviews, combining structured questions with open-ended questions or probing questions to find out more about the beginning teachers' experiences of induction. With open-ended questions, I was able to go in-depth and get rich descriptive data from the participants (Whiting, 2008).

Cohen et al. (2018) believe that using an appropriate strategy to collect data may enhance the credibility and trustworthiness of a research project. In this research

project, the semi-structured interview was selected as the main method of data generation. Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2007) note that the interview uses “multi-sensory channels” (p. 349), which include speaking, hearing, and non-verbal channels. When interviewing participants, facial expression shows emotions, which can lead to understandings which are beyond the words which are used. Structured questions, combined with open-ended or probing questions, allow the interviewer to gain deeper knowledge about the interviewee and the phenomena being investigated, with probing questions in particular being a useful way to gain better understanding of the interviewee’s views and explore details of the topic or themes of the interview (Menter et al., 2011; Mutch, 2005; Whiting, 2008). This type of interview also allows for the interviewee to use their own words and in some ways, point to aspects of the study which interest them, including the interviewees’ perceived gaps, contradictions, and difficulties. By doing so, the interviewer gains more understanding about why things are happening the way they do in a particular context. A further strength to be mentioned here is that the design of the interview questions can encourage the interviewer and the interviewee to co-construct shared meanings that may lead to meeting the research aim (Yin, 2011).

To ensure reliability in this study, I created a focused set of key questions to ask each participant; however, as the experiences of beginning teachers appeared not to have been documented previously in Vanuatu, not all questions could be anticipated before the interviews. It was important to be able to ask additional questions when needed. To ensure flexibility, I prepared to ask participants to elaborate on the answers provided to the key questions, through the use of probing questions specific to each participant.

A further reason for selecting the semi-structured interview as the main method to generate data is because of its contextual appropriateness. The semi-structured interview was well-suited to the nature of information that was being sought, where participants were invited to share their experiences and perceptions. Conversation is still the main method of communicating in Vanuatu, and most of Vanuatu’s indigenous languages are not written with any frequency. In my experience as a Ni-

Vanuatu, it is more appropriate to meet participants face-to-face than it is to talk by telephone, or to ask participants to write responses to questions. Participants are likely to be more comfortable when they are face-to-face with the researcher. As previously, described, there are a vast number of languages spoken in Vanuatu, and conducting interviews in languages that suited participants was important. All participants were offered the option of being interviewed in Bislama (Vanuatu's national language), or English (the language of the educational context of the participants). While two participants indicated that they would like to be interviewed in Bislama, when the interviews took place, all participants spoke in English.<sup>10</sup>

While semi-structured interviews may be a popular method of the data collection in qualitative research, and such interviews have been identified as contextually appropriate in Vanuatu, they can also be seen to have limitations. Semi-structured interviewing requires a lot of time and it can be expensive (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015; Kvale, 1996; Menter et al., 2011), because the researcher needs to be in the field, to generate reliable information when conducting the interview. In the case of this research, this involved travel to remote locations. In addition, to carry out a successful interview, the researcher needs to take time to familiarise him or herself with the interviewee, the interview needs to be carried out in a professional manner, and it must be concluded in a polite and unhurried way. It is also worth noting that the researcher must take care to base the conversation around the topic and be mindful of the participant's time (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2011). Another limitation is that this method requires a suitable venue, and travel to that venue. When a suitable venue is not provided, it can be problematic. For example, the interviewee may not feel safe to express him or herself freely when others are present in the interview context. Background noise may make interview recording unclear, making transcription difficult after the interview. Even when recordings are clear, a semi-structured interview may require a lot of time for transcription. In some parts of Vanuatu, a

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<sup>10</sup> The beginning teacher participants in this study all spoke English, and taught through the medium of English. In places during the interviews, features of non-standard English occurred. To facilitate comprehension of the quoted sections of interviews, the English used in interviews has been standardised. Primarily this has involved adding articles ('a', 'the') and standardising verb forms.

female and a male counterpart are not permitted to be together in a closed room. In situations like this, a third person may be required as a chaperone, the door to the room must be left open, or the conversation must take place in an open area/room. Furthermore, asking participants to check transcriptions can be difficult, especially if communication is problematic, or participants are busy. The researcher may end up not receiving feedback from them. I found that Facebook messenger was the most reliable form of communication with the beginning teacher participants, as all of these participants had a Facebook account. Finally, interviewing can be vulnerable to personality differences and power issues, depending on the roles and responsibilities of the interviewer and the participants involved (Johnson & Christensen, 2012; Merriam, 1998). My previous role as a VITE teacher trainer could have put me in a position of assumed power over the beginning teacher participants, and they may have felt anxious about sharing their experiences with me.

Given the limitations mentioned above, it was vital for me to be reflexive (see section 3.7) throughout the research process in order to minimise potential problems. In order for the research interview to be successful, the following procedure was used:

- In the planning stages for the project, I met briefly with the Director of Education Services in Vanuatu to outline my research plans, and then emailed him as well as the Director General of the Vanuatu Ministry of Education and Training, to seek permission formally to enter schools as a University of Waikato student researcher. Permission was granted.
- I used email and Facebook to recruit beginning teacher participants and familiarise myself with them, to establish a relationship while I was based in New Zealand at the University of Waikato. I used email to contact the school principals and negotiate meeting before arriving in Vanuatu. We planned approximate interview times together, and a hard copy of the predetermined interview questions was given to the participants (Appendix I) at least one week prior to the interview.

- When I arrived in Vanuatu, I used Facebook Messenger to set up and confirm interview times with the beginning teachers. In some cases, I needed to call to reconfirm meetings. With regards to timing, the potential participants (beginning teachers and school principals) are very busy people. Sometimes I arrived for an interview and they were busy, so I had to wait for later in the day, or reschedule on another day.
- I took into account cultural considerations in planning the location of each interview. I was able to arrange and conduct one-on-one interviews in suitable and available spaces that the participants identified, including school halls, staff rooms, libraries, in open offices and even under trees outside.
- When I arrived, I took care to be very calm and address each participant politely and appropriately for the Vanuatu context. This meant showing respect to principals and teachers and apologising for taking up their time.
- The interviews lasted for no more than one hour and were audio-recorded. The audio recorder was visible to the participant at all times.
- The predetermined questions were used as the main questions, and shared with the participants prior to the interview. I followed up with probing questions. Sometimes participants shared aspects of their life that I did not ask about directly, and I listened carefully and was alert during the interviews, so as to ask questions emerging from the dialogue (Whiting, 2008).

The participants in this study were invited to two semi-structured interviews of approximately one hour each. Phase one interviews took place from 12<sup>th</sup> of April to 18<sup>th</sup> of May, 2017. This phase was aimed at finding out about the beginning secondary teachers' initial experiences at the start of their first year of teaching. Phase two interviews took place from 18<sup>th</sup> of October to the 1<sup>st</sup> of December, 2017. These second interviews focused on the beginning teachers' journey through their first year of teaching, with a particular emphasis on how they were supported and developed as beginning teachers.

The semi-structured interview format was designed to enable the beginning secondary teachers and school leaders to freely express themselves in the interviews. The interview participants displayed their comfort with the interview process by adding their own ideas and topics that I had not included in my interview schedule. The interview process helped to establish rapport between myself as the researcher and the participants. The flexibility allowed participants to express their views and thereby to enrich the data being gathered during the interview.

### **3.3.2 Reflective Journals**

In education, a reflective journal is a reflective practice technique which is used as an individual activity whereby teachers commit ideas, thoughts, reflections and feelings to paper in various learning contexts (Maarof, 2007). Reflection is generally claimed as a goal in many teacher educator providers to monitor the development of their trainee teacher (Hatton & Smith, 1995). Beebe (2006) noted that reflective journals are used widely by teacher educators, student teachers, and researchers; however, it was only in the late 20th Century that this method became “well documented as a critical and an effective educational tool for tertiary institutions, and professional level education programmes” (Beebe, 2006, p. 3). Dewey, acknowledge as the key originator of reflection in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, explains that quality reflection should originate from open-mindedness, accountability, and enthusiasm toward experience or a situation (as cited in Williams & Xu, 2018). This means that a teacher should approach a reflection with an open mind to improving a particular situation in the future. Postholm (2008) takes a slightly different approach, and defines reflection as thinking in new ways or seeing things from different positions or perspectives.

In educational research, reflective journals can be used to gain rich information from the experiences reflected by a teacher or student (McIntosh, 2010). Maarof (2007) states that a reflective journal “allows critical and in-depth analysis of what a teacher does in his or her teaching and enables him/her to decide on future corrective steps to improving practice” (p. 207). Forms of reflections can be classified as diaries, journals, and auto-ethnography (Anderson, 2012). The reflective journaling technique is widely accepted as a tool in qualitative research (Ortlipp, 2008). The reflective journal is now

widely used in teacher preparation institutes, colleges and universities, and it has been extended to help teachers with their teaching and learning (Beebe, 2006; Schön, 1991).

Researchers understand that reflection on experiences and practices makes the teacher (or the researcher) see clearly where they are, what they have done, and how to do it better. Ortlipp (2008) affirms that keeping a reflective journal is “a strategy that can facilitate reflexivity” (p.695), and sharing a reflective journal provides an opportunity for the researcher to hear the voices of novice teachers as they express the thoughts and changes they experience as part of their learning (Bashan & Holsblat, 2017). Reflective journals help both teachers and student-teachers to better comprehend their experiences and situations (Beebe, 2006; Schön, 1991)

Reflective journals however, are not always of value. The student, novice teacher or researcher may not make enough entries for it to be of help. This behaviour shows that they are not enthusiastic about journaling (Dewey as cited in Rodgers, 2002). Calderhead (1989) comments that “taken-for-granted routines” (p.44), such as societal context, teachers’ own values, may be overlooked. Another limitation relates to language. If the language of instruction differs from the writers’ dominant language, the writers may not be able to express themselves fully (Arthur, 1996). Reflecting through writing is a way of expressing and exploring one’s own stories and experiences (Bolton, 2001), which can produce rich data, but only if a write is comfortable in the written language.

In this study, I employed the reflective journal as a method to generate data from the beginning teacher participants over their first year(s) of teaching, after they graduated from VITE as a secondary teacher. The following process was followed:

- After the phase one interview, the beginning teacher participants in this research were given a notebook to use as a reflective journal. School principals were not included in this activity, since the focus was on beginning teacher experiences.
- Participants were asked to make entries each month. Entries could relate to their lessons, staff meetings, sports events, or other extra curricula activities, and describe problems they faced, and ideas for how to do things differently to improve their teaching in future.

- The journal contained a set of key prompting questions (Appendix II) to provide guidelines to the participants as they wrote their entries.
- Journals were collected after the phase two interviews. Each journal was scanned and then returned to the beginning teacher participant.

In asking the beginning teacher participants to keep reflective journals, I anticipated that the teachers would create a record of how they developed in their new profession through their first year of teaching. Journal entries might also tell me if support was offered to the beginning teachers. All of the beginning teachers used their journals during the year completing a minimum of one entry per month. During the phase two interviews, each beginning teacher discussed their journal entries with me, and this provided an excellent contextual starting point.

### **3.3.3 Documentation Analysis**

The third method of generating data for this study was the collection and analysis of documentation. Bowen (2009) defines document analysis as “a systematic procedure for reviewing or evaluating documents, both printed and electronic (computer-based and internet-transmitted) material” (p. 27). According to O’Leary (2014), there are three primary categories of documents: public records (for example student transcripts, mission statements, annual reports, policy manuals, student handbooks, strategic plans, and syllabi); personal documents (for example calendars, e-mails, scrapbooks, blogs, Facebook posts, duty logs, incident reports, reflections/journals, and newspapers); and physical evidence (for example flyers, posters, agendas, handbooks, and training materials). Document analysis is a vital tool for data generation. It can be used to triangulate research findings with other methods of data generation which have been used (Bowen, 2009). Documents from different organisations can be collected and analysed according to the theme.

Document analysis is used in different ways in educational research. It can be used to provide the researcher with information about the setting or the context, and it can be used to follow-up on a point or idea that emerges from an interview, or as a means of gathering supplementary research data (Bowen, 2009). When using documentation in educational research, and in cases where the documents are not publicly available, permission must be sought from the authority concerned. In most cases, Ministry of

Education personnel, or the principal of a school can be asked for permission to access documents and use these in research (Langdon, 2011).

Documentation analysis is a method that gives credibility to other methods. Like any other method, it has its strengths and limitations. A benefit of document analysis is that it allows the researcher to access information that would be difficult to get in other forms, because people may not want to talk about the document's contents, or may not be available. Documents can provide useful background information and history about a research context. A major advantage of this method is that it is not expensive, and it may produce previously unknown information that can be used in the research (Bowen, 2009; O'Leary, 2014).

A limitation of documentation is that the information contained in documents may be biased, either because a researcher is selective, or the documents are limited, or hold a specific focus. Another issue concerns challenges to credibility. For example, officials may become gatekeepers, and bar access to documents regarding the research topic. In such cases the researcher may not be able to fully report on the case or setting. Attempts to access documents can create conflict for a research practitioner. In cases where an issue or topic is sensitive, the researcher may not be welcomed to view the documents (Bowen, 2009; Cohen et al., 2018; O'Leary, 2014).

In this research, document analysis was planned for the purpose of researching previous practices in schools and at the Ministry of Education and Training in Vanuatu. I informed the Director General of Education (Appendix III) that I was planning to engage in document analysis as part of my research project. Principals were also informed through their research information sheet about the possibility of document collection and analysis (Appendix IV).

A small number of documents which are not easily available to the general public were identified as relevant to this research project. These documents included a number of documents related to School Based Management, as well as the newly finalised National Teachers Development Plan (Vanuatu Ministry of Education and Training, 2018b), Acts, and an updated draft of the Teaching Service Staff Manual.

The analytical processes applied to the data generated from the three research methods is provided in the next section.

### **3.4 Analysis of project data**

Qualitative research aims to generate understandings of human experiences. Knowledge of human experiences is passed on to researchers through data generation activities such as the semi-structured interviews, reflective journals, and documentation. Such research data must then be analysed. In this section, a description of the analytical processes applied to the data generated to address the research questions for this project is offered.

Data analysis is the most complex phase of qualitative research (Thorne, 2000). According to Nowell, Norris, White, and Moules (2017), each qualitative research approach has specific techniques that apply during data collection. However, when doing analysis, the researcher “becomes the instrument for analysis, making judgments about coding, theming, decontextualizing, and recontextualizing” (p.2). Qualitative data analysis seeks patterns within the raw data (Cohen et al., 2018), and then categories are formed, and interpreted. In order to find patterns, the researcher needs to spend time reading and re-reading the data, and through this process, codes and categories or themes are developed (Cohen et al., 2018).

The analysis of the data collected for this project began in the field. As noted in the research literature, when interview is taking place, analysis is also happening (Cohen et al., 2018). When out in the field, looking at the setting of participants’ schools already engaged me thinking about the context, making connections, reasoning, and hearing from other teachers. I started making connections while interviewing and simply observing the school campus in general during the time I was on the school grounds. When being asked questions, participants were interpreting the questions before giving their responses. Likewise, I was also doing some interpretation while I was listening attentively to each participant.

After collecting interview data, the next step was transcription. In research, interviews must always be transcribed. Transcription represents spoken data in a written form

(Bloor, 2006). The transcription process involves close observation of the data. When transcribing, the researcher is able to become immersed in the data and get deeper understanding of the phenomenon (Cohen et al., 2018; Grudnoff, 2012).

Some researchers pay for professional transcription, as it is one of the slower and more challenging parts of the research process, especially when there are a lot of participants and when the interviews are lengthy. In this study, the primary data comprised a total of eleven phase one interviews and eleven phase two interviews. Additional data was generated through reflective journals from the beginning teachers and documents collected from the Vanuatu Ministry of Education and Training (MoET). For the twenty-two individual interviews, I completed the transcriptions myself. When transcribing, I became familiar with the data. Although there is software available to aid with analysis, I decided not to use it, and instead immersed myself in the data by repeatedly going over them. (Taylor & Bogdan, 1998) cautioned that the researcher gains more understanding of the data when they personally code and analyse them.

After all the interviews were transcribed, I emailed the transcripts to all participants for member checking. Participants had the opportunity to check for meaning and accuracy, and to make additions, deletions and corrections. A timeframe of one month was given to them. If I did not hear from participants within the month, we would agree that the transcriptions were acceptable. Following the first phase interview, five responded to the participant check with changes. For the second phase interview, just three responded. Those who responded did not propose major changes. Although not all participants responded, it was important for me to give them the opportunity to respond. This process is vital as participants can approve (or otherwise) the data before analysis begins. It is a way of demonstrating the credibility of the research to participants, and my trustworthiness as a researcher (see also section 3.5). Culturally, it is important to fulfil promises in Vanuatu, and returning transcripts fulfils an important promise.

Qualitative data analysis is understood to involve codification, classification, and thematisation (Vaismoradi, Turunen, & Bondas, 2013). This involves reading the transcripts several times and identifying substantive parts that were related to the research questions. These parts were classified and coded. Coding is regarded in qualitative study as an effective way to manage data. According to Johnson and Christensen (2008), coding is defined as being the “heart and soul” of all the text analysis (p. 551). To make sense of my data, I drew on the work of Saldaña (2016) for my initial coding of the data and I integrated the ideas of cyclic coding with a more general thematic analysis to put the codes into categories and find emerging themes.

In the first cycle, coding was used to analyse the data. Initial codes were created, and then, in the second cycle, the initial codes were grouped to form categories. The first cycle codes and second cycle categories were revisited several times, and eventually confirmed for further analysis. Although applying the second cycle is considered to be an improved form of analysis, I also utilised procedures associated with thematic analysis as outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006). Nowell et al. (2017) argue that thematic analysis is a useful method for examining participants’ perspectives, which ties in with the aim of this study.

I integrated thematic analysis to gain a better understanding of my data and to gain themes/categories which emerged from the data. As I continued to interact more with the data I came up with my analysis through four processing stages which I call ‘analytic stages’. As I analysed the categories further, I realised that I needed a bigger picture to understand beginning teachers’ experiences. Through this process I was seeking more than understanding of their experiences and the support they received. I sought to conceptualise their experiences through their cultural context, using the lens of the Ecological Systems Theory and interpretivism, considering how beginning teacher development involved interaction with their community and the larger cultural environment as well.

For the reflective journals, the entries were analysed similarly to the interview data. Entries were coded and themes were compared with interview themes. Experiences

recorded by the beginning teacher were used to validate comments that the teachers made in their interviews.

With regards to the document analysis, there were no documents found in schools that were related to the phenomenon – early experiences of beginning teachers. At the MoET level, there were no documents directly related to beginning teachers but there were policy level documents related to the employment of teachers (e.g. Acts, staff manuals, development plans, and donor reports) which were used as reference documents to compare with the experiences of beginning teachers and leaders.

Data analysis is a crucial step in the research process that demands time and revisiting in order to gain a full and rich understanding of the data and what they represent. As a result, it is appropriate for the researcher to justify and make credible the research process. The next section of this chapter considers the credibility of this research.

### **3.5 Maintaining quality in educational research**

Mutch (2005) notes that “in quantitative design research, you need to convince the reader that your study is valid and reliable while in qualitative design, you need to convince the reader that your study is trustworthy and credible” (p. 114). The purpose of this chapter has been to present decisions taken to conduct this research project, concerning the theoretical lens; the research design; data generation; data analysis; and ethical approaches. These decisions give credibility in, and demonstrate the trustworthiness of the research. This in turn enables the reader to have confidence in the research processes and findings.

Trustworthiness in qualitative research may be defined as the “demonstration that the evidence for the results reported is sound and when the argument made based on the results is strong” (LaBanca, 2010). In order to maintain ensure trustworthiness in a qualitative study, Krefting (1991) suggests four criteria to apply to the interpretation of the data: true value, applicability, consistency, and neutrality (LaBanca, 2010). The design and method used must be appropriate to the questions, to give the study true value. The researcher has to clearly document the research decisions, research design, data-gathering and analysis techniques, and demonstrate an ethical approach. Due to

the nature of qualitative research, it is not possible to replicate the study and obtain similar results. For this reason, the term trustworthiness is more appropriate to use instead of validity (Mutch, 2005). Trustworthiness reflects a well-designed study that has findings that are supported by data.

More specifically, qualitative case study data can achieve trustworthiness through the design of the research - its conduct and its research questions; the time spent in the actual interview and the time the researcher spends establishing a working relationship with each participant; and continual alertness to the researcher's potential biases (Hanock & Algozzine, 2006; Mutch, 2005). All these design elements contribute to achieving trustworthiness in a qualitative case study. Hence, within this particular chapter, every effort has been made to provide a rich description of the design of the research in order to enhance its trustworthiness for the reader.

Credibility means the researcher must ensure that the findings resonate with those in, or who are familiar with, the case or setting. Member checking is a technique that can be used to ensure that there is credibility. Transcripts, field notes, and data analyses can be returned to participants to see if they fit within their understanding, and to ensure that the purpose of the study is maintained (Mutch, 2005). In this study I used member checking by returning the transcripts to participants to verify and approve (or modify) the transcription of the audio recording. I have also cross-checked the data from interviews with available policies or procedures and guidelines to maintain credibility. Further, because there were two groups of participants used in the project, these being beginning secondary teachers and principals, it was also possible for me to check for consistency between the groups.

The trustworthiness of a qualitative study can be increased by maintaining high credibility. The findings of research that give transparency and trustworthiness demonstrate strong ethical considerations (Menter et al., 2011). The design and methods used in this research were robust. The interviews generated rich data from the experiences and perceptions of the participants. The beginning teacher participants had time to jot down information about their experiences in their

reflective journals, providing another method to generate data. This means that both a method triangulation and data triangulation (Johnson & Christensen, 2012) were employed in this research, to enhance the credibility and trustworthiness of the findings.

A weakness of qualitative research which must be acknowledged is 'researcher bias', due to the nature of qualitative research as exploratory and open-ended (Johnson & Christensen, 2012). As a researcher I am aware of the potential for bias. In this research, I am an insider in the Vanuatu educational context, with my own history of experiences and understandings of the context. In order to avoid research bias, I aimed to be reflexive throughout the research process, and question my own assumptions about the context. Reflexivity is a concept that is linked closely with qualitative research because of its nature, and it is related to the practice of ethics (Gillam, 2004). I made every effort to conduct the study in a way where my previous positions in the context of the research were minimised. This meant that the project recruitment was challenging (as discussed later in section 3.7), but it allowed me to minimise the potential for coercion in recruitment, which would lead to other problems in turn, including ethical issues. It is important for me to maintain trust and positive relationships with project participants, as well as members of the Vanuatu educational community. When I complete my doctoral studies, I must return to work in the Vanuatu education context, as a condition of my doctoral scholarship. Being aware of my eventual return to Vanuatu, I have taken care in planning this project, in conducting myself in the field when collecting data, and in reporting and discussing project findings in subsequent chapters of the thesis. Ethical principals have been at the centre of the design of this research, and are addressed in the next section.

### **3.6 Ethical Considerations**

Ethical considerations are vitally important to the planning of research that involves human participants, with Whiting (2008), emphasising that "the wellbeing of all participants must be a priority" (p. 39). The ethical principles that are integral to studies with humans are: Do no harm to participants, gain participant consent, maintain confidentiality, and maintain trustworthiness through the entire research

process (Cohen et al., 2018; Johnson & Christensen, 2012). In this project, prior to beginning the recruitment of participants and collection of data, it was important to adhere to all necessary ethical processes. These included approval by the University of Waikato's Human Research Ethics Committee, and subsequent provision of information to potential participants about the research purpose, the research activities, and the distribution of the research findings, and most importantly securing informed consent.

For this study, as a Doctor of Philosophy student at the University of Waikato, I am bound by the University's Ethical Conduct in Human Research and Related Activities Regulations. Because my chief supervisor is located in the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, I applied to the delegated Human Research Ethics Committee of that Faculty for ethical approval. Ethical approval was granted in November 2016 (see Appendix V). In the following sub-sections, I draw attention of ethical considerations in this research project, and explain how I enacted the ethical principles that guided this research.

### **3.6.1 No harm to participants**

During the research process, utmost care was taken to protect the participants from any significant harm. The most significant potential harm identified in the ethical planning for the research was harm to the participants' careers, as a result of expressing negative or critical opinions (Cohen et al., 2018; Johnson & Christensen, 2012). There was a risk that participants might offer unsolicited critical data concerning their school administration, Provincial Education office, the Vanuatu Institute of Teacher Education, or the Vanuatu Ministry of Education and Training. Such views, if made public and associated with individuals, could be damaging. In order to protect participants from harm to their careers, several steps were taken. Participants were given a pseudonym, and it was decided that the names of schools would not be disclosed in the research reporting. It was made clear to participants that their interviews would be treated as confidential. Any information that they shared but did not wish to be reported in the research would be omitted. As an additional safeguard, for both phase one interviews shortly after the beginning of the school year,

and phase two interviews at the end of the school year, the plan was made to send transcripts back to participants to review. Participants were asked to check the transcripts, and to identify and remove or amend any comments that they were concerned about. Any remaining information that might put a participant's career at risk would be reviewed by my supervisors and removed if it was deemed that the material was problematic.

Interestingly, when participants were advised that pseudonyms would be used instead of their real names to protect their identities, the participants did not express particular concern. Instead they expressed pleasure at being involved in the research. Their lack of concern for privacy may have arisen because educational research (and indeed research more generally) is not common in Vanuatu. Ethical requirements that are followed strictly in New Zealand are unfamiliar to Ni-Vanuatu. Participants were more interested in learning of the purpose of the research.

While steps were taken to protect participant identities in the research project, the participants were excited about their participation in the project research, and I am aware that they discussed the project and their participation with their colleagues, not only in their own schools, but also colleagues in other schools in Vanuatu as well. I could not control the information that participants chose to disclose to their colleagues and friends about the study. It is interesting to observe that the participants did not feel the need to keep their participation confidential, although I have followed the processes that I originally set up and that were approved by the University of Waikato's Human Research Ethics Committee to protect participants from harm. It may not always be the case that the University of Waikato's ethical principles, which inform practices around for example confidentiality, are a good fit in all cultural contexts.

### **3.6.2 Informed consent**

The design of the research project and ethical processes required that informed consent was secured from participants. Informed consent involves carrying out a research project in which prospective participants have a genuine choice about their

involvement, after they have been fully informed of the purpose of the research (Johnson & Christensen, 2012). Participants must be able to decide freely whether to participate or not (Cohen et al., 2011). Ritchie, Lewis, McNaughton, Nicholls, and Ormston (2014) stress that this is a core principle in social research. In this study, potential participants had the right to accept or decline the invitation to be a participant. I was mindful that my role as a doctoral researcher, and that my previous relationships with any participants might put me in a position to coerce participation. As a former lecturer at the Vanuatu Institute of Teacher Education, and as a long serving secondary teacher, I was concerned that my participants might feel obliged to participate in the project. To avoid the potential for coercion, I gave a careful explanation to participants about the nature of voluntary participation, and ensured that participants understood they could withdraw from the project at any time without negative personal or professional consequences.

On the other hand, I took time to explain to the potential beginning teacher participants the possible benefits of participating in this research, particularly with regards to keeping their reflective journals, but also through opportunities to speak with me, as an experienced teacher and teacher educator, through their first year of teaching. I am confident that the voluntary participation aspect of research was maintained. Only a small number of the potential participants who I approached agreed to participate and not all engaged with the process of checking transcripts (or member checking).

I paid special attention to the principle of gaining informed consent in this study. As a Ni-Vanuatu woman, I am aware that verbal communication and verbal agreements are traditional in Vanuatu and remain highly respected. Asking people to read project documents and sign consent forms is not something that is common in Vanuatu. This is slowly changing but in more rural areas, formal research processes are rather unfamiliar to people. I am regarded as an 'insider' in the research context of Vanuatu because I belong to the context of the study, I have taught in Vanuatu's schools and worked as a teacher educator. Gair (2012) mentions that an insider researcher is likely to have a "common lived experience status as a member" of a particular group (p. 137).

One expectation of insiders in the Vanuatu context is that they 'give back' to participants. Both culturally, and for me personally growing up in Vanuatu, I am aware that I should not just walk into a school, take the information that I need, and walk out without giving anything in return. It is important for me to offer a gift of appreciation to my participants. This is similar to the concept of *koha*, which is a kind of gift used to maintain social relationships among Māori in New Zealand.

I offered my participants small gifts from the University of Waikato, including pens, note pads, carry bags, and tee-shirts. The participants were happy to receive these small items. Also, I considered that the sharing of findings through an executive summary would be well received by the participants. In the final section of this chapter, I detail the recruitment process that I followed in the research, and briefly introduce the participants.

### **3.7 The Research Process**

In this research project, the aim was to develop an understanding of the perceptions and experiences of beginning teachers in Vanuatu secondary schools. Both beginning teachers and the school principals or the school leaders in charge of beginning teachers were recruited in the hopes of learning about informal induction practices in secondary schools. Recruitment was challenging for a number of reasons related to the Vanuatu context. These included:

- limited communication network
- lack of record keeping to locate students
- geographic isolation of schools
- an imbalance of males and females in different roles in education

Regardless of these challenges, I was able to recruit and interview seven beginning secondary teachers and four school leaders/principals. The two groups of participants and their selection are detailed below.

#### **3.7.1 Participant Selection**

Participants were selected using purposive sampling. As I wanted to discover, understand and gain insight specifically into elements of induction, I required a specific sample of participants who were able to provide relevant information

(Creswell, 2013; Merriam, 1998). Purposive sampling is sometimes called judgmental sampling. Johnson and Christensen (2012) state that it is a non-random sampling technique where the researcher solicits participants with specific characteristics and interests to take part in the study.

The purposive sampling for this study was guided by two sampling criteria (Merriam, 1998). In order to access beginning secondary teachers, participants were initially sought from the cohort of secondary teaching trainees (1) who graduated from the Vanuatu Institute of Teacher Education at the end of 2016, and (2) who found jobs as teachers in Vanuatu's secondary schools in 2017. The first criterion was broadened to include trainees who graduated in 2015, in order to ensure that there were sufficient data for the project. The sample selection was quite challenging given that at the end of 2016, the beginning teachers did not know where or even if they would be teaching in 2017. Prior to formal recruitment, the following were consultation steps taken to identify potential participants for the research.

**Phase one:** In the planning stages for the project, and prior to travelling to New Zealand to begin my doctoral studies, I approached trainees of the final year at the Vanuatu Institute of Teacher Education (VITE) personally, to find out where they thought they might be teaching when they finished their initial teacher education. I made this informal query to see if there was any interest in the project. The responses received were all uncertain, with trainees unsure of whether they would have a job the following year.

**Phase two:** By mid November 2016, I had completed the ethical approval process at the University of Waikato, and I began to liaise more formally with potential participants. I travelled to Port Vila, to attend the graduation of VITE trainees. When I arrived, the trainees had already left the VITE campus and were waiting with their parents/guardians for their graduation. It was difficult to make contact. I approached a few trainees in person, making myself available before, during and after graduation. I explained the nature of my research, and asked if the trainees were interested in taking part, of course depending on whether they found work in 2017. Three of the

new graduates indicated they were interested. I gave them a form to record the names and contact details of any other new graduates who were interested in the project, and left the form with them for two weeks.

**Phase three:** When the form was returned, along with graduates whom I had approached in Port Vila during the Christmas holidays of 2016, there were a total of eighteen potential beginning teacher participants. I then made individual contact via telephone and Facebook Messenger with the potential participants and explained the project again briefly. At this stage, in early January 2017, none of the graduates had confirmed teaching posts. I offered advice on places the graduates could visit to get information about teaching. By the end of January 2017, eleven potential participants remained in contact with me, but only three had teaching positions.

**Phase four:** Initially, the research design limited participants to VITE graduates who found employment on Efate Island, in and around Port Vila. Due to the very small number of graduates with employment, I extended the project to cover graduates who found teaching positions in outer island schools, as well as those who were going into their second year of teaching. Two second year beginning teachers agreed to participate, and by end of February, I had a total of seven beginning teachers who agreed to participate in the project.

**Phase five:** Once the beginning secondary teachers were all confirmed, I then contacted their principals and introduced myself and my research project. I invited them to join the project as principal participants. Due to their busy schedules as well as limited internet access, I received responses from four of the principals. These four became the school leader/principal participants in the study.<sup>11</sup> All beginning teachers

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<sup>11</sup> One of the principals said, "Thank you very much for choosing my school to do this research. This is the first ever opportunity that we have had from a person of your calibre and from VITE to come to conduct research and find out about our school". While this principal misunderstood my role as a PhD student, he was clearly very pleased to be contacted. Another principal who I contacted did not end up being one of my research participants as attempts to communicate with him failed. His beginning teacher however, was a participant. They worked at a very remote school. When I visited the school to interview the beginning teacher, the principal also told me that they have very few visitors connected to the Ministry of Education and Training. I was presented with a gift, which I felt so humble to receive, especially because I was not actually representing VITE or the Ministry in my role as a PhD researcher from the University of Waikato.

and principal participants who had agreed verbally to participate were sent an information letter (Appendix IV) outlining the purpose of the research, and the requirements for their participation. The letter also mentioned the possible uses of the information in addition to my doctoral thesis, including conference presentations, and journal articles. The letter stated that participation was voluntary, and that withdrawal from the study would be most timely before transcripts were confirmed.

The sample size for this study was intentionally small, to allow enough time to conduct two detailed interviews with each participant. These interviews allowed for me to reach a detailed understanding of the experiences and perceptions of each participant. This is in keeping with Patton (2014), who argues that “the logic and power of qualitative purposeful sampling derives from the emphasis on in-depth understanding of specific cases: information-rich cases” (p. 53).

### **3.7.2 School involvement in this research**

Given that Vanuatu is the world’s most at risk nation country according to the Commonwealth Vulnerable Index (Vanuatu National Assessment Report, 2010), and has the highest level of disaster risk globally (Day et al., 2019), I initially planned to gather data in a combination of urban and rural schools on Efate Island. Natural events could cause interruptions to my research and could mean that data collection would not take place within the project timeframe. My scholarship also did not provide funds to travel domestically within Vanuatu. However, issues with recruitment, described in the previous section, meant that I had to extend my sampling location from Efate Island to other provinces of Vanuatu.

The schools from whom participants were drawn included both the urban and rural schools. Based on the prime criteria of beginning teacher participants who were graduates from VITE in either 2015 or 2016, five schools from four of the six provinces in Vanuatu were included in the research. All the schools were Anglophone (English-

medium) secondary schools. One of the schools was a Church-Government assisted school while the other four were Government run schools.

Equality of gender and a variety of school settings was also a priority in recruiting participants. I aimed to include at least one school with a female principal, and at least one school in a rural setting. In the end, all the principals in this study were male. This was a result of matching principals to schools where the beginning teacher participants found employment, and the contextual reality that most leadership positions in schools are held by males. Two of the schools were urban areas while the remaining three were rural schools.

### 3.7.3 About the participants

In the experience of the researcher, the approximate number of females in secondary teacher education has outnumbered males in the last five years at the Vanuatu Institute of Teacher Education. This however, does not transfer to leadership roles. Anecdotally, most of the male graduates from VITE go to remote schools to begin their teaching, and there are more male secondary school principals appointed than female principals.

Information about the beginning teacher participants is presented in Table 3.1. The table shows that at the time of data collection, there were five secondary teachers in their first year teaching. Of the five, three were female and two were male. Two other beginning teachers were in their second year of teaching and both were females. Additionally, of the female beginning teachers, three were from Penama Province, one from Sanma Province, and another one from Tafea Province. Of the male beginning teachers, one was from Penama Province, and the other from Malampa Province.

| <b>Participant<sup>12</sup></b> | <b>Sex</b> | <b>Position</b>    | <b>Year in field</b> |
|---------------------------------|------------|--------------------|----------------------|
| <b>Kylie</b>                    | Female     | Classroom Teacher  | 1                    |
| <b>Viviane</b>                  | Female     | Classroom Teacher  | 1                    |
| <b>Sheena</b>                   | Female     | Classroom Teacher  | 1                    |
|                                 |            | Head of Department |                      |
| <b>David</b>                    | Male       | Classroom Teacher  | 1                    |
|                                 |            | Deputy Principal   |                      |

<sup>12</sup> Pseudonyms were used for all beginning teacher and principal participants in this research.

|                |        |                   |   |
|----------------|--------|-------------------|---|
| <b>Ray</b>     | Male   | Classroom Teacher | 1 |
| <b>Lucille</b> | Female | Classroom Teacher | 2 |
| <b>Nelsa</b>   | Female | Classroom Teacher | 2 |

*Table 3.1: Beginning teacher participants*

Details about the principal participants are provided in Table 3.2. Of the principals in this study, two were from Penama Province, one was from Malampa Province, and another was from Tafea Province.

| <b>Participant</b> | <b>Sex</b> | <b>Year in field</b> | <b>Year as principal</b> |
|--------------------|------------|----------------------|--------------------------|
| <b>Moses</b>       | Male       | 23                   | 18                       |
| <b>Aaron</b>       | Male       | 34                   | 28                       |
| <b>Joshua</b>      | Male       | 28                   | 20                       |
| <b>Caleb</b>       | Male       | 4                    | 4                        |

*Table 3.2: Principal Participants*

It is important to note that in the context of this study, principals take up principals' roles in an *ad hoc* fashion. Out of the four principal participants, three of them became principal to meet a need, rather than as a result of engaging in leadership training or through a formal appointment process. As noted previously, gender equality was considered in the project plan but in the end, responses and criteria for recruiting principals did not allow for gender equity among principal participants. With more male principals, and more female beginning teachers, gender was relatively balanced as a whole, with a total of six male and five female participants.

As the sole researcher in this project, I recruited participants, conducted all interviews, and transcribed all data personally. The interviews were conducted in English although as noted in section 3.3.1, the participants were given the option of doing the interview in Bislama (Vanuatu's national language). Prior to the interview, two of the participants expressed a wish to use Bislama, but when the interview took place, they chose to speak English.

In the next chapter, I turn to the findings identified through the analysis of the data generated for this research.

## CHAPTER FOUR - BECOMING A TEACHER IN VANUATU

### 4.1 Introduction

This research explored the induction experiences of seven beginning secondary teachers who were in their first or second year of teaching in Vanuatu secondary schools. Questions were raised in individual semi-structured interviews to gain an understanding about the perceptions of beginning teachers regarding their induction experiences. Reflective journals were used to follow the personal experiences of the beginning teachers in their first year, and documents related to teacher development and induction were also collected from various organisational units within Vanuatu's Ministry of Education and Training, and analysed. To gain a fair and balanced understanding of teacher induction practices in the context of the study, four school principals were also interviewed during the research. Three of the principals had more than five years' experience of leading secondary schools and one was in his third year of leading a school. These principals had employed beginning teachers in the past, and at the time of the interviews, had one or more beginning teachers at their school. For the purpose of reporting the findings, most of the data reported in this study are from the semi-structured interviews. Reflective journals completed by the beginning secondary teachers contained a rather small number of entries in comparison with the amount of data produced in interviews. The limited documents collected from the Ministry of Education and Training are used as reference documents to compare with practices and experiences of the beginning teachers and their principals.

In chapters four and five, the findings of this study are presented. This chapter is organised around three key areas of findings. The first of these concerns how the beginning teachers in the study came to choose teaching in the Vanuatu education system as a profession, with findings presented in 4.2. The second key area of findings identifies pathways to employment for the beginning teachers. These findings are presented in section 4.3. Finally, the third key area of findings addresses the experiences of beginning teachers as they entered their school contexts to take up teaching roles. These findings are related to informal induction practices, and they are presented in section 4.4.

## **4.2 Entering into Initial Teacher Education: Choosing teaching as a career**

Until now, there appears to be no specific research into the factors that influence beginning teachers' decision making about taking up teaching as a profession in the context of Vanuatu secondary schools. This section of findings presents the different factors that influenced the beginning teachers in this research to choose teaching as a career. The findings are presented in three subsections, and include factors which influenced decision making to become a teacher, the challenges that beginning teachers were faced with in entering the teaching profession, and lastly, the perspectives of principals on beginning teachers' motivations and preparedness to teach in Vanuatu schools.

### **4.2.1 Deciding to become a teacher**

The reasons that teachers enter into the teaching profession can be multiple and diverse. They can often be extremely personal. However, the findings in this research indicated that there were two critical factors in decision making for the beginning teachers in this research: firstly, the powerful role that each participant's previous educational experiences played in their decision-making; and secondly, the influence of family members.

#### ***4.2.1.1 The impact of prior educational experiences***

The impact of previous educational experiences influenced the beginning teachers' decisions about becoming a teacher. Two of the beginning teachers shared that they made up their minds to take secondary teaching as a career while they were in high school due to the love for a particular subject and having a teacher who inspired them. For example, David was motivated by his love of mathematics as expressed below:

When I was in year 9, the subject that I loved learning most was mathematics. That was the time that I decided to become a mathematics teacher. I was motivated to learn about maths because I loved it. Gaining a qualification for teaching maths would allow me to teach in schools around Vanuatu.

Having favourite subjects at school paved the way for David to become a secondary mathematics and science teacher. David's response suggests that the enthusiasm and interest that students hold in particular curriculum subjects at high school may motivate them to choose teaching as a career.

Prior educational experiences also informed Lucille's decision making about entering teaching as a profession. Lucille admired one of her teachers, and that teacher became a motivation for her to pursue teaching:

When I was at the [...] secondary school, I liked the way my science teacher taught, and decided I must become a science teacher. I did very well and managed to secure a place to go overseas to pursue my dream. Unfortunately, things did not work out as planned, so I returned to Port Vila, but that did not stop me. I then applied to VITE and was offered a place so I took it up to fulfil my dream of becoming a teacher.

This perhaps indicates the influence that significant others, in this case a former teacher, can have on young people's desires and motivations to become a teacher. Whilst Lucille performed well academically in Vanuatu and gained entry into tertiary education overseas, she disclosed in her interview that she struggled academically at the overseas institution. She was unable to complete her qualification. However, this did not lessen her desire to become a teacher, and she was successful in her second attempt at teacher training. This shows her determination to pursue her teaching career after being inspired by others.

#### ***4.2.1.2 The influence of family members***

The influence of family members in the past, present and future generations was a key factor in influencing young people to become a teacher. For example, Ray entered into teacher training because of support and encouragement from his parents. His mother was a teacher and growing up, Ray spent much of his time with his mother in schools, observing and learning about teaching and the daily lives of teachers and students. When asked what drew him to the teaching profession, Ray shared:

I was interested to become a teacher because my mum is also a teacher.

I have always been with my mum as a teacher.

In small communities, having a family member as a teacher is quite common, though for some individuals it may be in an earlier generation. Ray had observed his mother teaching and seeing this as a viable career with potential, made the choice take up teaching.

However, not all family influences are positive. While the findings illustrated that most of the beginning teachers self-selected into the teaching programme to train to become a teacher, one of the participants in this study did not want to take up teaching as a career. Her mother was also a teacher and she expected Nelsa to become a teacher also. Nelsa shared her opinion below:

Actually, I did not plan to become a teacher, but since my mum is a teacher, she wanted me to take her place. My parents really wanted me to become a teacher, so I went to VITE.

Teaching was perceived as a prestigious career pathway in Nelsa's family. Her mother was a teacher and her aunt was also a teacher. However, rather than being motivated to become a teacher, like in Ray's situation, Nelsa's observations of this role did not instil a desire in her to become a teacher. Her parents *expected* her to teach, making the decision for her. As revealed here, parents' expectations can play an important role in a young person's choice of career.

While each individual might have valid and strong motivations for entering into the teaching profession and going to initial teacher education to train for a teaching career, all teaching candidates must successfully meet the minimum entry criteria of the Vanuatu Institute of Teacher Education (VITE). Only when requirements are met can young people enrol as teacher trainees in the three-year diploma training programme at the VITE. The beginning teachers in this study had completed six or seven years of high school - that is, from year 7 to year 12/13. Some spent a year or more at the University of the South Pacific completing preliminary and/or foundation courses before enrolling at VITE. In spite of this long period of education, entering into the

teaching profession was not easy and there were many challenges identified by the beginning teachers.

#### **4.2.2 Beginning Secondary Teachers' perspectives on the challenges of becoming a teacher**

This findings section shares the challenges beginning teachers experienced after deciding to pursue teaching as a career. While there may be many more challenges beyond the scope of this study, the ones that stood out from these beginning teachers were: meeting the cost of teacher education; finding the confidence to enter the teaching profession; and a perceived lack of pedagogical content knowledge expressed by the beginning teachers.

##### ***4.2.2.1 Meeting the cost of teacher education***

Access to finances to pay for study impacted on the choices available to prospective beginning teachers in Vanuatu. As a developing country, funding for education is not subsidized at the tertiary level and it is expensive for individuals who wish to enter initial teacher education. As mentioned in the context chapter, educational participation and success rates are quite low in terms of Western education, at least in part due to the cost of attending school. For some families, only one child will go to school, while other children would stay home and participate in subsistence farming and selling produce in the local markets to make enough money to support that one child. Consequently, all participants highlighted funding as a challenge for them, in realising their professional pathway. VITE is the only initial teacher education institute in Vanuatu and it is run by the government. All candidates who make it through the initial selection process to become a VITE student must pay fees to VITE. Not all parents or relatives can meet and sustain the fees for the duration of three-year training programme. Below is the Institution's Finance Procedures and Guidelines 5.5.1 & 2:

After completing enrolment, fees for the semester must be paid in full before a trainee can attend classes... if fees cannot be paid in full after enrolment, a part payment must be made along with a completed

payment plan which will be signed and submitted by the student's parent(s) or guardian(s) responsible for paying fees [VITE finance procedures and guidelines]

Further to the matter of school fees, some students travel from other islands to attend VITE. Additional fees for boarding facilities add to the cost of their education. Funding access also restricts training decision makings as going overseas costs parents significantly more money than sending one's son/daughter to VITE. As Sheena mentioned:

I should have gone overseas to do my training, but due to no funding, I attended VITE instead.

Sheena had no other choice but to attend VITE. Similarly Ray shared:

I attended VITE because VITE is the only place we can go to learn to become a teacher, and secondly because VITE is in Vanuatu, it is less expensive compared to going overseas, and it is closer to where we live.

Ray considered going overseas, as it would have provided him with a Bachelor degree for the same duration of study, instead of a Diploma. Like Sheena, however, funding was a problem. VITE is the only option for teacher training, as David also shared:

Well, I attended VITE because I could gain a qualification for teaching so that I can be teaching in the schools around Vanuatu. It is very close to my home, where my parents can afford.

Institutions outside of Vanuatu cost more to attend and only a handful of parents can afford such an experience for their children. David revealed that access to funding was an important feature in his decision-making, yet getting into the institution and spending three years there is too much for other parents. A good number of the VITE intake, like David, sleep off campus with extended family members to keep the cost of their education down.

#### ***4.2.2.2 Lack of confidence in Professional Self***

During the time that the participants were at VITE as teacher trainees, they were involved in a programme of learning which encompassed a mixture of pedagogical

knowledge (teaching methods and approaches) and core curriculum content knowledge (for example, science topics). In addition, the trainee teachers participated in, and practiced lead a range of extra activities associated with the VITE boarding house and the campus. There is an expectation that beginning teachers will lead extra-curricular activities (see section 1.5.3) once they enter schools, due to the positioning of teachers as community leaders in the Vanuatu context.

Upon successful completion of their initial teacher training, the teacher trainees are then eligible to graduate. As the final semester of their programme concluded, of the beginning teachers' participants in this study reflected on how they had mixed feelings about their preparedness for classroom teaching. When graduation finally arrived, Ray was already feeling the pressure associated with his future teaching role:

At last, when I finally received my diploma, I felt that there was a burden on my shoulders, because now am a teacher, and I have to deliver to students. The thought was burdensome to me.

Ray shared that upon receiving his diploma, he then realised that he would be in a classroom alone and perhaps doing what his mother had done as a teacher. Although he was only a new graduate and a beginning teacher, he was expected to take charge of a class, and lead other activities within the school as well, like all other teachers in the teaching field. Ray expressed that the thought that this work would be challenging, and he expressed a lack of confidence and preparedness for his role. Becoming more cognizant of his professional teacher identity, Ray could see beyond the theoretical application of his knowledge and realised the enormity of the role he had accepted.

Nelsa, who did not initially plan to become a teacher but was expected to do so by her mother, also shared anxieties about her capacity to teach as she imagined herself in a teaching role:

When I finished at VITE, I actually didn't feel like I'm [ready] for teaching. I felt I can't actually do it. I felt nervous. I just did not feel comfortable.

Nelsa revealed that even after the three years of training, she still did not feel comfortable about starting work as a teacher. Like Ray, she expressed a lack of confidence in her ability to function as a teacher, with all that that entails in the context of Vanuatu.

#### *4.2.2.3 Perceived lack of pedagogical content knowledge to fulfil roles*

All of the participants in this study, upon graduation, felt that they lacked the pedagogical content knowledge (PCK) to fulfil their roles adequately. For example, Vivianne shared:

In terms of content and assessment, I felt I was not yet ready. It was for two main reasons. One is that we did not learn in detail all the topics that are covered in year 7-10. The other reason is because I think I need more practice on how to write proper assessment according to Bloom's Taxonomy, and it may take time to be good at that.

Vivianne was confident in her teaching processes (for the purpose of this thesis only, I refer to teaching processes as the scheme of work, lesson plan preparation, being able to be a teacher figure in front of students, and not PCK), but at the same time she had concerns about other aspects of VITE's programme. Vivianne implied that pedagogical skills as well as curriculum content knowledge and assessment should have more emphasis in the VITE programme. This perspective may align with Vivianne's understanding and experience of Vanuatu's examination-driven curriculum.

Similarly, Sheena shared her concerns about teaching content:

To me, like, after the three years, I am not really well prepared with content, because when I come in [to school], I feel like I'm lost, but I find lesson planning to be easier, even [preparing] my unit plans.

Sheena felt that she was not prepared enough with pedagogical content knowledge but she was more confident with the teaching processes. Sheena expresses a similar concern to Vivianne, implying her expectation that she would receive more content

training at VITE. Another beginning teacher, Ray, also shared concerns about his training in content knowledge:

Content knowledge about the topic was not enough and also [there was a lack of training in] how to deliver certain topics. If I were posted to a school where resources are available that would be great.

Like Vivianne and Sheena, Ray perceived his VITE training to lack in the area of pedagogical content knowledge. His comment about resourcing indicates that his perspective that he could manage in a well-equipped school, although he appears to imply that there is a lack of resourcing in his school. The combined lack of content knowledge and lack of resources are problematic.

The findings revealed all three beginning teachers initially lacked confidence in their abilities as a teacher. Reflecting on their training experiences, the desire to have more core curriculum content in their pre-service programme was clear. However, in initial teacher education, this is very difficult to achieve. Not only does the curriculum undergo changes, but there is not enough time for trainees to cover everything they need to know. The findings indicated that in Vanuatu, teachers are expected to use their skills to further their professional knowledge. It seems they must take responsibility for their own professional learning when they enter their formal teaching roles.

#### **4.2.3 Principals' perspective of beginning teachers' preparedness for teaching**

In this study, four principals were also involved as participants. They shared their perceptions on the entry of beginning teachers into the profession. One topic they responded to concerned the preparedness of the beginning teachers who were employed at their schools. The interview data showed that the principal participants had varied perceptions about the ways in which they believed beginning teachers were prepared by VITE for their roles as teacher. For example - Principal Moses commented positively about the pre-service training:

I appreciate the standard you (VITE) are at now, like, how you train them to be teachers. They are teachers when they come out into the field. They have no difficulty. When I say, “Do the lesson plans, do the scheme of work, do this assessment, meet this due date”, they do it. As I’ve said, that showed something...

Moses revealed that he was satisfied with the training that VITE provided in terms of the teaching processes, (activities such as planning lessons and carrying out assessments within a time frame). This affirmed the beginning teachers’ perspectives that their preparation to participate in teaching processes was sufficient.

However, Principal Aaron observed that the teachers he worked with chose to be teachers because they wanted the prestigious job, and not necessarily because of their love of teaching. Aaron suggested that VITE could potentially strengthen the entry criteria to address this but acknowledged this would be difficult to ascertain a candidate’s passion for the profession. He stated:

In many areas, the training at VITE is okay, but the selection of the candidates is a question which I think personally we need to improve. Some teachers chose teaching but it’s not really their passion. They do not really have the interest but maybe they need the job. So talking about [their] passion is one thing that many teachers need to venture into.

Although Aaron expressed a positive perspective teacher training at VITE, he implied an expectation that teachers would be more committed and passionate about their job and not just teach for the sake of an income. Aaron’s perception may link back to section 4.2.1., where extrinsic motivations for entering the teaching profession were described: in some cases, beginning teachers became teachers because they felt obliged to do so.

Another principal, Joshua, shared positive comments about teaching processes, but was critical of some more practical elements of the VITE experience:

The [beginning teachers] I get are doing their lesson plans well. They are using English correctly and are not hesitant to use it. Their dress code is up to standard and they are performing well. I can't say too much about the training itself but as I enter the gate of the school, it gives me an impression about what is inside the school. VITE needs a facelift. The setting and environment preach a lot, [but this shouldn't be] just theory. If you (VITE) are training teachers, then teachers are supposed to be responsible for keeping the place clean, and doing what is expected of them as teachers when they will be out in the field. There are some parts missing, [in the area of] self-management.

Although Principal Joshua's view is similar to Principal Moses and Aaron in terms of VITE's efficacy in training teaching processes, he commented negatively about the physical appearance of the VITE campus and how this may be a reflection on the beginning teachers' neglecting their responsibilities outside of the classroom. He emphasised that the campus reflects what is happening indoors with regards to the training of pre-service teachers. Joshua proposed that VITE training needs to address some other aspects of teacher development, and that if this is done well, it will be reflected in the clean and tidy appearance of the VITE campus. Joshua seems to imply that there is a lack of attention to the holistic nature of being a teacher in the Vanuatu context, and that training for VITE students need to better consider skills around personal organisation outside of the classroom.

It is interesting to note that although these three principal participants felt VITE was effective in training beginning teachers to engage with teaching processes, two raised concerns about other aspects that they apparently see lacking in the beginning teachers at their schools. These two principals stressed the lack of religious skills in the beginning teachers, which they believe is one of the guiding elements in developing a better leader. Principal Moses commented that, "One thing which I see is still lacking is that Christian Fellowship...Because if Jesus Christ is missing then everything will go missing". The importance of a strong religious foundation is likely to have been mentioned due to the contextual beliefs and experiences of education,

where education has been associated with the Christian church historically, and where the teachings of the church are central to community life (see chapter 1.5). Furthermore, teachers are positioned as community leaders, and in smaller communities are often expected to organise and lead religious activities. If beginning teachers are unable to for example, lead prayers or select a reading for a particular occasion, this would be viewed as a lack by their principals, as well as by the wider community.

The perspectives of the secondary school principals described in the preceding paragraph have drawn attention to religious leadership as an important attribute of teachers. In the Vanuatu context, such leadership is clearly of central importance to the success of a teacher, and it is the context which demanded what this leadership might look like.

### **4.3 Entering the Teaching Profession: Pathways to employment**

An important area of findings in this research concerned the multifaceted and diverse ways the beginning teachers experienced pathways into employment. In this section, the participants' experiences of entering into the teaching profession are presented.

To begin their teaching employment, beginning teachers who graduate from VITE apply to various school sectors in Vanuatu. These school sectors include privately run schools; Church Education Authorities; and the Ministry of Education and Training, which is accessed through the Teaching Service Commission (TSC). As described in the introduction chapter in 1.6, the TSC is the government body that is responsible for the employment of teachers. It is worth noting that the government is the biggest employer of teachers in Vanuatu. In addition to employing teachers in government schools, it also employs the majority of teachers who teach in schools that are governed by the Church Education Authorities. For this reason, this section will focus on the government employment as, anecdotally, the majority of trainees from VITE prefer to be employed by the government. The findings revealed two obvious pathways to enter into the teaching profession: a formal pathway to employment through the TSC and; informal pathways to teaching employment. These two

pathways have been discussed in chapter 1.6.1 of this thesis. The experiences that the participants of this study went through to find employment, and the findings of associated document analysis will now be presented, beginning with the formal pathway.

#### **4.3.1 Formal pathway to teaching- Government recruitment**

The most important finding to recount regarding the formal pathway to teaching through government recruitment is that none of the beginning teacher participants of this study were employed formally by the Teaching Service Commission. The formal pathway to become a teacher specified by the government of Vanuatu is to follow the policies and procedures specified by the TSC. The TSC's policies and procedures are formed from the Teaching Service Act, where the Teaching Service Act No. 38 2013 is amended from the 1983 Act, and governs all teachers paid by the government of Vanuatu. It is stipulated that the TSC is responsible for making all appointments, where an appointment is referring to a vacant position in a school that requires a teacher. The TSC is the authority that appoints a teacher to fill that position. Part 5, Section 34, Sub-section 1 of the Teaching Service Act No. 38, states that "All appointments to the Teaching Service are to be made by the Commission". In addition, sub-section 3 states very clearly that:

If a position becomes vacant in the Teaching Service, any suitable person from within or outside the Teaching Service may be appointed to that position. [TSC Act, 2013]

Following the TSC Act, sub-section 3 above, the 'someone outside' may be referring to a beginning teacher from VITE or an overseas graduate. In this context where VITE is the sole initial teacher education institute, VITE always invites all graduating students each graduating year to apply to the TSC, so they can fill vacant positions. This procedure is also known by schools, as explained by one of the principals, Aaron:

Every BT [beginning teacher] who leaves Teachers' College (VITE) sends an application to the MoET. So, we [principals] call in to ask who is available.

It is evident from Principal Aaron's words that school principals know that there is a formal procedure for appointments, and that VITE follows the formal procedure by asking all graduating students to apply to the TSC. Aaron's comments also reveal that principals take the responsibility of calling the TSC to find suitable teachers to fill vacant positions in their schools. It appears then, that the TSC does not currently appoint teachers as stipulated by TSC Act No. 38, Part 5, sub-section 3. This research reveals this systemic issue. It will be elaborated upon further in the chapter six.

All of the beginning teacher participants in this study followed the prescribed formal pathway into the teaching profession and applied to the TSC before they graduated from VITE. Sheena shared:

We all applied to the Teaching Service Commission and enclosed a reference from VITE. The reference that was made either by the principal or one of the lecturers in our content subjects.

It seems then, that trainees submit an application with a reference to TSC in the hope that they will get an appointment. As stated at the beginning of this section, none of the beginning teacher participants actually received an appointment from the TSC. They all made their own way to find a school to teach in and were taking on a full time teaching load without a formal posting by the TSC. Nelsa reflected on this:

I am not sure what had happened to the posting with TSC...this is my second year, and my friends and I are still waiting.

After all the effort put forward by the beginning teachers and staff at VITE, Nelsa, in her second year of teaching at the time of this study, had received no communication from the TSC about a formal appointment.

Further analysis of the MoET documents reveals that there is in existence a draft Teaching Service Staff Manual developed in 2014 to apply the TSC Act. The manual is potentially an important document which will provide a standard procedure to recruit teachers to fill vacant positions in schools; however, it is still in a draft form, and it is not clear whether it will eventually be finalised and put into use.<sup>13</sup> The older recruitment process continues to be followed, at least by beginning teachers and VITE.

#### **4.3.2 Informal pathways to teaching – schools’ recruitment**

In place of a functioning formal pathway into teaching employment, the informal experiences of beginning teachers in this study provide insight into the current recruitment practices in the Vanuatu education system. A lack of process and clarity in employment postings meant that none of the participants in this study knew where they would be teaching when they completed their study at VITE. This became an uncertainty that the beginning teachers had to deal with after completing their studies. Having heard nothing from the Teaching Service Commission, the participants in this study found informal avenues to enter into the profession and gain employment. For example, Sheena describes how she was approached at home by her local principal:

I did not go formally to the school. I was just at home then the principal came and told me to come over to the school as they were short of teachers. I had to make another application to the school as the school is currently employing me.

After graduation, Sheena returned to her home island and waited for the TSC to send a message of her posting. But while waiting at home, the principal of her local school heard that she had returned in the village, and he made his way to her home to invite her personally to apply to the school to teach. As explained in chapter 1.6.1, when the school employs a beginning teacher, the school board or council decides on how much they will pay the teacher. This is usually based on the school’s budget, which is largely made up of grant money from the government, contributions or donations from

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<sup>13</sup> I had not heard of the draft staff manual being finalised at the time of writing.

parents, and school fundraising. It is worth pointing out here that Sheena's school had a vacant position as calculated by the number and levels of students, hence Sheena got into the teaching profession via an informal pathway rather than via the formal TSC recruitment procedure.

For some other beginning teachers, gaining a position in a school was difficult and in some instances they had to cover significant geographical distances such as travelling from one end of their island to the other to teach, or from one island to another island to find a job. Nelsa shared this kind of experience:

I was at the village, when this principal contacted me to come and teach at the [...] School. One of my friends gave him my mobile number to contact me. I had to travel from the south to this place.

Like Sheena, Nelsa revealed that her school had a vacant position and the principal needed a teacher to fill the vacancy. Nelsa's employment came as a result of a friend providing her contact details to the principal, who then contacted Nelsa. Nelsa is another example of principal looking for teachers to fill vacant positions, instead of being able to rely on the TSC appointment system.

After spending a few years at USP, then three years at VITE, some beginning teachers are mature people who may be thinking of supporting themselves and their young family, as well as giving back to their parents. Consequently, they are not able to wait for an opportunity to arise from the TSC. One such participant shared yet another way of entering a school, this time with a fellow VITE graduate. The two young women decided to visit MoET when they knew it was almost time for schools to open their doors for the 2017 academic year, as recounted by Kylie:

When we went to them at the beginning of this year (2017). They told us, "Here are some vacant positions. If you go and fill any of these vacant positions, we can put you onto the government pay roll."

Kylie's experience showed another way that the beginning teachers found employment. Although they had both previously sent in applications for employment to the TSC, they still had to go in person to the MoET, and inquire about vacancies in schools. Kylie and her friend were reassured by the officer who was responsible for teachers' postings that they would be employed by the TSC. Kylie made contact with the principal and then travelled to the school to take up a position. Although promised a TSC appointment, Kylie remained employed and paid by the school throughout this research project. It is unclear as to why the TSC did not follow up and put Kylie on the government payroll.

In this sub-section, it has been shown that before graduation, all participants applied to the TSC in anticipation of an appointment to fill vacant positions in schools. They expected that this process would result in them gaining government employment, to utilize their three year's training at VITE. However, after the trainees graduated from VITE, none of them were offered an official teaching position for the following year. The TSC did not post any of them as stipulated in the TSC Act, although there were vacancies in schools. Instead, these participants went into the teaching field via various informal pathways: a) by word of mouth to the principal; b) through contacts made by principals and; c) by visiting the MoET office in person. In the case of these beginning teachers, formal pathways lacked clarity and the processes for following the formal pathway were unclear. Requests were not recognised and as a result many beginning teachers used informal pathways to enter the teaching profession.

#### **4.3.3 Informal pathways to teaching - Principals' perspectives**

The principal participants in this research reflected on pathways into employment for beginning teachers. The two principal participants whose perspectives are shared in this subsection have been in their positions for more than 20 years. Their perspectives cover not only their experiences of their new beginning teachers at the time of the study, but also their observations of those they have worked with over their careers.

Regarding pathways to teaching, in the years after political independence was gained in 1980, teachers who graduated from VITE were posted directly to schools at

graduation. Teachers who come from initial teacher education institutions outside of Vanuatu applied to TSC and waited until they were given a position. This process of teacher recruitment continued until the beginning of the new millennium. The process is not documented formally anywhere but it was a known practice in the Vanuatu education system. Sometime in the new millennium, the process of recruitment began to change and the informal pathways to employment that beginning teachers described have been adopted widely.

Principal Joshua shared that it was his responsibility to recruit teacher and fill vacancies within his school, from among recent graduates.

At the beginning of the year, firstly we look for teachers according to the vacancies, from Teachers' College (VITE) or Fiji or graduates from anywhere.

Principal Joshua confirms that the older process, where the TSC appointed beginning teachers to fill vacant positions, is not in use. Principal Moses expresses dissatisfaction with the informal processes that schools must now make use of:

I remember in my time, it was different. At graduation, we were given our appointment (by TSC) and put on the [government] payroll at the same time that we began teaching. But after that it was different... since the new millennium, it's been like that. It should improve and it must improve. That is one thing which they (TSC) must do.

Moses confirms that there used to be a clear formal pathway into teaching employment in Vanuatu. Teachers went to VITE knowing that when they graduated, they would have a job in a government primary or secondary school. There was no uncertainty until the year 2000. It appears from this research that the responsibility of employing teachers now falls predominantly upon the school principals.

The current informal pathways into teaching are time consuming for both the beginning teacher and the principal. Principals have to spend time locating potential

employees. There does not seem to be a competitive process of applying for teaching jobs, where candidate qualifications and attributes are carefully assessed.

The current informal pathways do however, appear to have one important advantage over the older formal system. When principals recruit directly, they initiate professional relationships with their beginning teachers by making direct or indirect connections in their search for a new teacher. These professional relationships will continue to develop on the beginning teacher's first day at their new school.

#### **4.3.4 Informal pathways to teaching – consequences for beginning secondary teachers and secondary school principals**

The use of informal pathways into teaching described by the beginning teachers and principals in the previous subsection has important consequences. These consequences relate to remuneration for teachers. The beginning teachers in this study identified that accessing their teaching salary was difficult. This impacted on their views of themselves as qualified teachers as some felt they were not fairly remunerated for their work. Here is Kylie's experience:

At first, it was 6,000 vatu fortnightly, then we realised that we were given 6,000 vatu but the primary temporary teachers were paid 8,000 vatu. So we decided to ask the council to increase the amount.

Regarding the remuneration of teacher, there are formal procedures to access a government salary in Vanuatu. These procedures are linked to the formal appointment process where the Teaching Service Commission formalises the posting of teachers in schools. The beginning teachers in this study were not formally appointed by the TSC, and as a consequence, their salaries were not paid by the government. Instead, an informal system of remuneration was used by individual schools.

Vivianne shared the awkwardness of being paid by the school:

One thing I find not so comforting is that I am paid by the school. I had to go see the bursar twice a month for little payments.

Below was an experience shared by one of the beginning teacher participants about promises of recruitment and payment made by the officers in charge of teachers' postings, which is an office under the Education Services Directorate of the MoET:

At the beginning of the year [2017] when we went to them, they told us, "Here are some vacant positions. If you go to those vacant positions we can put you onto the government payroll...". They made some promises but it never happened.

Towards the end of her first year of teaching, Kylie tried to find out how to be put onto the government payroll. She had taught for a year on a very low salary and the promised government salary had not eventuated.

Before yesterday [end of 2017] when we went again, and they [the officers at the MoET] told us, "No, we could not recruit you... but... there are some spaces here. You have to contact the principals yourself if you want to go to those schools."

The response the beginning teachers received above suggests that if they returned to their school of employment, they would likely continue to be paid by that school and not by the government. It is unclear why some teachers, and some positions are transitioned onto a government salary, while others are not. The process does not have any transparency from the perspective of teachers.

Most of the beginning teachers in this study were teaching in their first year; just two were in their second year of teaching. The school principals in the study confirmed that they were paying salaries for both first and second year beginning teachers. Principal Moses explained the situation for his second year teacher in 2017:

This graduate of 2015 is still without an appointment letter and salary. I just forwarded another note to the TSC and copied it to all these higher

authorities. But I still don't know. That is one thing which they (the TSC) must do.

The beginning teacher that Moses referred to has been paid a minimum salary by her school council for two years. With no news from the TSC about a formal appointment and government salary, it seems likely that she will continue in this fashion into her third year of teaching. Principal Moses' experience reveals the practice that he believed had to be followed in order for the TSC to move a teacher into the government payroll: the principal writes a letter to TSC to request the change. Below Principal Aaron described similar understandings:

We write letters and recommend them (teachers in his school) to be on the payroll. As explained earlier, the MoET knew there are vacancies, so they don't have a choice but to make the appointments. So, we give them the recommendation... this year I have 13 teachers that are paid by the school... and we have only five from the whole school who got their appointment from the MoET.

Like Principal Moses, Aaron wrote to the TSC recommending that a teacher being paid by the school be shifted onto the government payroll. In Aaron's case, his school is having to cover nearly three quarters of the salaries of his teachers; only 5 out of 13 teachers are paid by the TSC. When asked why principals were employing teachers to teach and not the TSC, Aaron commented:

If you are managing a school, you want your school to go ahead; [you don't want to wait] for the MoET to send you a teacher. So we looked around for teachers.

Although there were genuine vacancies based on staff-student ratios, schools had to employ their own beginning teachers initially. Aaron did not want his students to go without teachers, so he took responsibility for finding and appointing his own teachers to fill the gaps.

Aligning with the informal experiences of finding a teaching position outlined in section 4.3.2, the principal participants of this study confirmed that beginning teachers were initially paid by the schools. The TSC was not involved in either process. Once beginning teachers were in schools teaching, the principals understood that they should write a letter of recommendation for the beginning teachers to go onto the government's payroll. This process is by no means automatic. In spite of provision in the TSC Act No.38 (2013) to the TSC to appoint and pay for teachers to fill vacant positions, it can take two or more years for teachers to access the government payroll. In the meantime, principals remain responsible for the recruitment and payment of their staff. These findings suggest that there is room for improvement in the areas of recruitment and payment of beginning teachers within the Vanuatu education system.

As outlined in chapter one, when teachers are appointed to schools through informal pathways, individual school principals are responsible for finding funds to pay their salaries. Although the beginning teachers themselves were not been employed by TSC, they offered a few comments and observations about how their fellow teachers proceeded from 'school as employer', to 'TSC as employer'. Without implementation of the formal system of teacher registration and licencing, it seems likely that the beginning teachers in this project will share similar experiences in the future. Vivianne tried to find out about how to transition onto the government salary:

I was questioning about that part, "How do they (the TSC) know that you are ready to get into the system as a teacher?" But there were a handful of us (teachers at Vivianne's school) who got onto the payroll just this year, so I asked them if there was anything done by the MoET (TSC) before teachers go onto the government payroll. They said, "No, there was nothing done by the MoET."

Vivienne's colleagues suggest that there is some kind of automatic process after teachers are appointed by schools. It does not appear that any formal steps are taken. For example, there are no observations or appraisals by school leaders before teachers are placed on a government salary. Vivianne was left with no new information about

what needs to be done to become a TSC employee. In the next section, beginning teachers' early experiences at their new schools are presented, with a view to identifying elements of informal induction practised in their school settings.

#### **4.4 Entering into the School Context: Beginning Teacher Induction**

In Vanuatu, the context of this study, findings from the documents analysis revealed there has been no national induction programme or official teacher registration system since political Independence was gained in 1980.<sup>14</sup> Consequently, the 'induction experiences' referred to in this study comprise the early experiences of beginning teachers, and illustrate their entry into their new school, orientation in the school, and the first days and weeks of beginning teachers at school. The findings in this section shed light on the way that the beginning teachers in this study are settled into their new profession of teaching.

The beginning teachers in this study had varied early experiences in their new teaching roles, which were contextually dependent. The differences between beginning teacher experiences appear to have occurred for two main reasons. Firstly, the majority of the beginning teachers did not have time to plan carefully to receive their students. They either arrived on the same day as the students, or after the students had already started. Secondly, the school contexts and organisational cultures that the beginning teachers encountered are quite diverse, meaning there were different experiences related specifically to their contexts.

In order to examine the early experiences of beginning teachers in schools, this section is divided into three main subsections. Firstly, the beginning teachers' perceptions of their entry into their school are presented. Secondly, the perceptions of the beginning

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<sup>14</sup> Preparation towards registration and licensing of Vanuatu's teachers was underway during the timeframe of this study but it is yet to be fully implemented and it is targeting all teachers in the field. There is no focus on beginning teachers, and steps to shift a beginning teacher onto the government payroll for probation, and then from probation to full registration, were not available at the time that this research concluded.

teachers regarding the reality of teaching in those early days are examined. Finally, principals' perceptions of the arrival of new teachers are considered.

#### **4.4.1 Beginning secondary teachers' perceptions: Stepping into the physical space**

The first day when a beginning teacher arrives at their new school can be a daunting and complex encounter. Stepping into an environment which is new, and forming new relationships, can create significant pressure and anxiety for beginning teachers. How a school prepares for and welcomes new teachers is a critical part of the induction process.

For the beginning teacher participants in this study, most went to schools that were quite new to them and this presented them with high levels of anxiety and feelings of being unprepared when they entered the physical space of their school. For example, Nelsa recalls her first day:

When I entered the school boundary for the first time, I was nervous and afraid. I was informed that I needed to report to the principal on my arrival. I went and saw the principal and the principal then sent me to the HOD who told me the subject and year level that I should be teaching. She also asked me to write a scheme of work for my classes before I begin teaching.

Nelsa's experience showed that initial relational encounters were not always prioritised or the most useful. While culturally it was important to meet and seek support from the principal, there was an obvious lack of professional support for Nelsa. The principal may have believed that handing the beginning teacher over to her HOD would help to develop a new professional relationship; however, further actions to induct and welcome Nelsa into the school context and allow her to develop an understanding of the expectations of her were few and difficult to identify.

Similarly David experienced anxiety and feelings of unpreparedness when entering his school for the first time:

When I arrived, I was nervous and felt like a stranger in this foreign place. It is the first time for me to be on this island. I was then introduced to the principal and staff in the staff room. From there, they told me what to teach and gave me my responsibilities. Because I travelled by boat and I was already late, I asked for a day to rest and plan my first lessons.

David shared that his first encounters in his school were rushed, and due to the need to travel a long distance by boat to his school, he was late, leaving little time to prepare for classes. This also impacted on his ability to form relationships with his colleagues as he had little free time to establish relationships, and only brief introductions to key staff were offered.

Further, external pressures of national examinations in his first week and his lack of understanding about the curriculum placement throughout the yearly programme meant that he underestimated the time required to develop and prepare for the classes he was to teach. Ultimately, these examples (amongst others) highlighted how beginning teachers did not feel that their initial encounters with their schools provided an ideal start to their teaching career.

While some of the beginning teachers had the opportunity to be in their schools before teaching began and before their students arrived, they also shared similar perceptions of feeling nervous as they anticipated the unknown. As Lucille recalled:

On the first day when I arrived, I was quite nervous because I did not know most of the staff in the school. But the principal welcomed me and took me to the staffroom and introduced me to the staff.

Ray echoed the anxieties of the other beginning teachers on his first day:

Although the school is close to my village, I had never come here, so the school is very new to me. Everything inside here is new to me, the buildings and the teachers. So I was very nervous... but the principal

welcomed me and showed me which teacher to work with for English, my Associate Teacher.

The findings demonstrated how important the formation of these initial professional relationships were. Although Ray was anxious, his principal made him feel welcomed and introduced him to his Associate Teacher. This has highlighted an essential element of induction which was deliberately practiced in this school. Having an Associate Teacher minimised the anxieties during those early stages of Ray's teaching, and allowed him to focus his attention on developing professional relationships further, and attending to the planning of his work.

Vivianne recounted a similar first day meeting the principal and her academic dean, although she did not reveal as many nerves:

I arrived here a week before students arrived. When I arrived, I met the principal. He passed me to the academic dean who took me to the staff room and showed me my desk.

Most of the beginning teacher participants have revealed that they were understandably nervous going into their school environment for the first time. Due to the informal pathways of recruitment, beginning teachers arrived at their school at different times. Despite the various arrival times, the lack of induction and the lack of provision of professional support, along with the lack of time to plan and prepare for classes was noticeable. While all of the beginning teachers began their professional relationships through a meet-and-greet with the principal, and sometimes other members of staff, there was limited professional support shown after that. It was obvious that the schools expected the beginning teachers to arrive as fully functional teachers, and they were expected to pick up full teaching responsibilities and get on with their jobs. The contrast between beginning teachers' expectations of their new roles, and the realities of their classrooms is explored.

#### **4.4.2 Beginning secondary teachers' perceptions: Expectations versus the reality of the first day in class**

The participants of this study had two four-week blocks of teaching practice during their pre-service studies. This was when the beginning teachers developed an experience of what teaching would be like. For teaching practice in this context, associate teachers were involved, as they are for many other teacher training institutes. At the end of the final year at VITE, the majority of the participants recalled that they felt ready to begin their teaching. They made comments like "I feel confident" and "I am well prepared to go to the field". At the same time, there were also mixed comments about the preparation that they had. When the beginning teachers entered the teaching field in their new schools, they had their first encounters alone with students. That was when reality struck, and they experienced a 'transition shock' (Corcoran, 1981). Sheena's very honest recall of her first day emphasises the reality of being in a school for beginning teachers:

My first day with students was a disaster. I had to stand in front of the whole student body for the school's orientation. That time I felt very nervous. I felt that I could no longer stand in front of them. It was the first day and there were new students along with returning students, and I was given the task of explaining the school rules to the student body in the school chapel. I was holding onto the school rulebook and the book was shaking... I would have felt so happy if I could just sit, and observe returning teachers go through the orientation with the whole student body. However, with the combined student body, I felt it was too much to stand in front of the whole school on that first day.

Sheena felt she had a terrible start to her teaching. It was only her first day with students and she had to play a vital role - one that an experienced teacher would surely perform more confidently. Sheena was fearful as it was only her first day and she was already being expected to perform like a more experienced teacher. Vivianne commented on being "nervous because I am the only one now in class...", while Ray recalled feeling "scared because I did not know anyone". These feelings of

nervousness and fear suggest that the beginning teachers needed more help at the start of their teaching career, particularly around their first encounters with students. When beginning teachers are nervous, they can be affected deeply, as shown by Sheena above. Below is an experience shared by one of the two participants who arrived after academic year had already started. Nelsa remembers her first moments in the classroom:

I was kind of nervous and when I'm nervous I tend to speak very fast. That was what I felt when I was inside the classroom on that first day. I just introduced myself and asked them to introduce themselves and told them that we will start class tomorrow... I thought I was going to teach but I was too nervous so I only did an introductory session.

This comment revealed that although Nelsa thought she could manage teaching students on her first day, the reality of the setting was quite different to her expectations.

All the participants expressed some form of nervousness at the start of their teaching career. The participants who made it to their new school environment a week or few days before school began had time to prepare to receive their students when they arrived on the first day at school. Below is an experience shared by Lucille about her first day:

On the first day, I just went in, introduced myself to the students and then allowed them to introduce themselves to me. Then the next day we had our class... I felt a little nervous standing in front of them but then I tried to keep my nervousness away. I did not really expect to be nervous when I finished my studies at VITE. I thought I was prepared to teach.

In Lucille's case, she had time to prepare and familiarize herself with the school; however, taking total charge of a class for the first time was daunting. It can be scary, and can make beginning teachers act in uncharacteristic ways. Below is an experience

shared by Kylie. Like Lucille, Kylie arrived at her new school before the arrival of students, but this did not seem to make the first day in class any easier:

My first day of classroom was not good. I was scared because when I entered the classroom every student was looking at me. So I tried to gain confidence and just talked. It was hard for me but I tried my best just to talk. I tried my best not to focus on the students. I tried not to let the students see that I was afraid standing there talking to them. I spoke out loudly so that they can see that, "She is not afraid, though she's new, she still can teach". But deep inside I was very nervous and I missed my words and taught something totally different to what I prepared in my lesson plan for my first day....

Kylie shared that the reality that she encountered on her first day of her teaching was unpleasant. The eyes of her students upon her made her felt apprehensive. Although she had prepared to meet her students, when the day arrived, she lost confidence to implement her plan. The shock of being in sole charge of the class affected her performance as a teacher.

In the next section, principals' perceptions of the first day with their new beginning teachers are considered.

#### **4.4.3 Principals' perceptions: First day orientation**

The principal participants of this study have had experiences with beginning teachers throughout their leadership careers. This next section shares how these school leaders believed they supported their beginning teachers into the teaching profession. The majority of the principal participants in this study showed some aspects of leading induction practices in their schools. Three out of four principals completed a basic orientation with their beginning teachers as revealed by beginning teachers above. Below is a basic orientation plan outlined by Principal Joshua:

When we get one from Teachers college (VITE) or Fiji or teacher graduates from anywhere, we always welcome them. We always make them feel like they are part of the school... Firstly I pass them on to the Assistant Deputy Academic, and they then are passed on to their HOD, who shows them their desk and assists with other departmental matters like showing the classes they are responsible to take. They then get introduced to all staff... we have to make sure they introduce themselves to us, we introduce ourselves to them, and we all introduce ourselves to the full student body when they arrive.

Joshua revealed that he provides a basic orientation to beginning teachers. For the principal, formal introductions were an important element of entry into a school. Interestingly, this practice echoes community practices that happen in village settings in Vanuatu, when someone new comes into a village. Joshua's focus on this meet-and-greet element of induction is clearly influenced by the cultural context in which he is living.

Principal Aaron describes offering a similar orientation for his beginning teacher:

The beginning teacher came and saw me. I welcomed her and took her to the HOD to take care of her.

Like Joshua, Aaron asked the HOD to take care of his beginning teacher when she arrived at school. Again, introducing the beginning teacher to the HOD is showing an element of orientation. The beginning teacher comes to know that the school has a line of management and learns who to report to for teaching processes.

Below is another principal's perception of orientation and basic induction. Principal Moses has the most complex informal induction programme of the four principals involved in the research. In addition to meeting the beginning teachers, he employed processes to provide the beginning teachers with essential information about the school and their duties:

At the commencement of the academic year, the administration ensures that the beginning teachers are given the teaching staff handbook to assist them with how to undertake their duties and responsibilities. [We] make them comfortable, yes. We need to give them a sort of orientation and give them the school information that they need. From there they can move up. School information is like school policy, school rules and school disciplinary policy that are contained in the teaching staff handbook. They need to feel at home, having the confidence to cook the food like a teacher and deliver it to the students.

Principal Moses explained that his administration has a teaching staff handbook that is provided to all beginning teachers in his school. He also notes the importance of making beginning teachers aware of school policies, and that teaching and learning practices are important to him. When asked whether he had anyone in his school structure that is appointed to take care of beginning teachers, he responded in the affirmative, describing the appointment of Associate Teachers or mentors for each of the beginning teachers:

Yes, we have someone appointed to help beginning teachers. Ray right now is working with another English and Social Science teacher. That is his Associate. Lucille also has her Associate. Yes we do have that... We know that they are trained, they are fully trained. But to deliver what is there, we know they have teaching practice but they need to work alongside experienced teachers. If [there are] any difficulties, they come and seek assistance from them (the Associate Teachers). In preparation and lesson planning, they crosscheck with each other, ensuring that the planning is appropriate... Interaction, this is good. They need to get themselves in order before they start moving on doing things that, at the end of the day, the impact will be seen in the students.

In his school, Principal Moses arranged Associate Teachers for his beginning teachers. He seemed to have a system worked out to support his beginning teachers. He revealed his understanding of the lack of practice that the beginning teachers have

when they first begin in the classroom, and indicated that he had developed a mechanism to support beginning teachers. Moses appeared to understand the importance of induction. He revealed the many elements of induction that he had developed and applied in his school context.

In contrast to Principal Moses, when asked about support for beginning teachers, Principal Joshua said that “No one in particular is appointed, but it’s under the responsibility of HODs (Heads of Department)”. Joshua did not have any Associate teachers but instead used his HODs to take care of his beginning teachers. The other two principals in the study also used HODs and/or their deputy principal to carry out the orientation for beginning teachers in their schools.

Reflecting on the experiences of beginning teachers, Principal Aaron commented:

We need to be serious about supporting beginning teachers. We need to assist them to fall into the system so they can build up their standards. You know what’s happening here: sometimes we rely on them to do it. So many teachers do not admit their issues with teaching and we identify these through other means... we have overlooked this area in the past and since we begin this conversation, it opens up the idea of how important an induction programme [will be to] help education in Vanuatu... During my time as principal, I did not see any support by the MoET for beginning secondary teachers... It’s not a priority... we just overlooked that area, where it should be considered. It should be a concern.

Aaron’s reflection reveals his view that beginning teachers need to be looked after professionally. While professional support has been neglected in the past, Aaron acknowledged that it should be considered a priority, so that beginning teachers can provide the standard of education that schools expect. He further revealed his view that the lack of professional support derives from the Ministry of Education and Training. Aaron demonstrated an awareness of the importance of support for

beginning teachers; however, without leadership in this area, it is clearly difficult for principals to enhance professional support for beginning teachers.

## **4.5 Summary**

Three key findings have been reported in this chapter, concerning the ways that the beginning teachers in this study have chosen teaching as a career, the pathways that they followed to gain professional employment as teachers in Vanuatu's education system, and the experiences of beginning teachers as they entered their schools for the first time.

In section 4.2, the findings demonstrated that becoming a teacher in Vanuatu is a complex undertaking that requires the consideration of many factors. Understanding the formative experiences that have influenced a person's decision to enter the profession such as their family members, their previous school teachers, the importance of financial constraints, and the training gained through VITE, shows that each beginning teacher brings with them a personal story. This highlights the importance to teacher trainers of considering what each student brings with them to their training, and eventually to their teaching. These personal stories inform and play an important role in the development of beginning teachers' professional identities.

In section 4.3, the focus of findings was on the pathways which the beginning teachers took to enter professional employment as teachers. The key finding in this section was that informal pathways were being used to access employment rather than documented formal pathways. Each beginning teacher found their own way into a secondary school teaching role. The informal and consequently rushed entry into schools led to a lack of confidence and anxiety about the beginning teachers' practices and ideas of what it meant to be an effective teacher. There was no doubt that this impacted on their understandings of what was expected of them and how they might go about meeting those expectations. While principals were generally happy with the level of preparedness of their beginning teachers, an important contextual finding was

that some principals felt that graduates could improve in their leadership capacity within the religious community contexts where secondary schools are positioned.

In section 4.4, findings related to the beginning teachers' first experiences as they entered their school settings were presented. Importantly, informal induction was found to be limited and contextually dependent. A single element of induction – the meet-and-greet – was found to be present in all of the school contexts included in this study. The beginning teachers were given a brief orientation on their first day when they were welcomed by their principals. This seemed important for the principals and the practice is clearly connected to elements of culture shared throughout Vanuatu, where the chief or head of the house welcomes people. Even the least experienced principal participant welcomed his beginning teachers on their first day. Most principals in the study then delegated the job of taking care of beginning teachers to HODs. There were no formal mentors in the school structure, with the exception of one school where the principal established an associate teacher (mentor) system specifically to support beginning teachers. The HODs, where present within individual school contexts, became *ad hoc* support people where there were no mentors assigned.

As the beginning teachers in this study began their lives as new professionals in the Vanuatu education system, they hastily formed relationships with their colleagues and superiors to support their survival and development in the teaching profession. Significantly, the beginning teachers were not explicitly critical of their informal induction experiences. The meet-and-greet was presented as an expected practice within the context for both beginning teachers and their principals.

In the next chapter, findings related to the challenges, constraints and enablers which impacted on the transition of the beginning teachers into the teaching profession are presented.

## **CHAPTER FIVE - BECOMING A TEACHER: CONSTRAINTS AND ENABLERS OF SUCCESSFUL TRANSITION INTO TEACHING**

### **5.1 Introduction**

This chapter presents the findings pertaining to the challenges experienced by beginning teachers in their teaching practice, along with the support that beginning teachers received and created themselves to help them succeed in the teaching field during their first years of teaching. During the study, all participants were interviewed twice, at the beginning of the school year and towards the end of the school year. Reflective journals were also left with beginning teachers to note down points of interest in their development through their first year of teaching (or second year in the case of two of the beginning teacher participants). The sections covered in this chapter provide evidence of what happens in practice with beginning teachers in Vanuatu with regards to their support and survival.

In section 5.2, I discuss challenges that were revealed in the analysis of interviews and reflective journals. These challenges were experienced by the beginning teachers as they navigated their classroom roles, and included locating relevant resources, dealing with time constraints, experiences and feelings of isolation, student learning and management, and dealing with additional administrative responsibilities.

In section 5.3, I present aspects which were revealed by the beginning teachers to enable them to succeed in their roles. These enablers included accessing and forming good relationships with Heads of Department, engaging in opportunities for professional learning and development, engagement with colleagues, the use of reflective journals, and having access to the internet.

## **5.2 Challenges experienced by beginning teachers**

In Vanuatu, people carry out forms of teaching in churches, in communities, sports fields, and in many other areas of life from day to day. As everyday educators, there may be an impression held by Ni-Vanuatu that teaching is an easy profession. There is, however, a plethora of literature around the challenges that beginning teachers experience in the field. These challenges refute the impression that beginning teachers may have that teaching is an easy job (Tickle, 2014). Education in Vanuatu presents challenges that are generally experienced by beginning teachers, as well as those that are unique to the context.

### **5.2.1 Accessing teaching resources**

An important finding of this research was that accessing the necessary resources to meet curriculum requirements was common challenge for beginning teachers. Resource limitations are broadly experienced in schools in Vanuatu. Impoverished resourcing impacts most subject areas, especially in the more remote islands of the nation. In particular, teaching in the area of science is an equipment intensive task, and science teaching resources in many schools are limited. Running a science programme without a functioning laboratory is a major challenge for science teachers, beginning or experienced.

For the recent VITE graduates in this research, resources in schools were very different to the resources they had experienced at VITE where fully resourced laboratories were provided. Assumptions were made by the beginning teachers that resources would be adequate in the schools where they found employment. Sheena spoke about the challenges with resources that she faced:

There was not much for me to use as resources at school. So, I started finding my own resources. I started asking around if there are any resources that I can borrow to help me to plan my lessons or plan my program of work... I did not feel like I was going to be able to teach all these classes because there were no resources. So it was another burden for me to find my own resources to teach the classes... Some of my resources I had to ask for from teachers at [...] and [...] schools. For

science I looked through the resources I had, and did research on internet, and then gave the summary notes to my students.

Sheena was fortunate to be in school early so she managed to identify her resource challenges and resolve them. However, she did highlight that teaching science relied largely on evidence observed by the human senses and her approach of simply giving summary notes may not have been highly effective as a teaching approach. She would have preferred to have provided students with more engaging and hands-on learning experiences.

Kylie also commented on issues with resources:

I teach English years 9 and 10. That was so hard for me because there were no resources at this school. So I had to wait for a week or two. I called other schools nearby for their resources to get them and [make] photocopies.

Sheena and Kylie both revealed the challenge of accessing resources to begin and support their lesson planning. For Kylie, it took more time to find materials and plan her work. These findings indicate that resourcing is an area that schools might develop in future to minimise the impact on beginning teachers. On the other hand, this experience gave the beginning teachers opportunity to develop new professional relationship with teachers in other schools.

A further example of the challenge of accessing resources was provided by Nelsa, who reported that she turned to her teaching friends for help when she faced issues with accessing resources for her teaching:

Okay, some things I come across may be hard, and some of the things we do not have materials for, especially with science. We do not have science materials. I found it difficult and I usually asked my friends, "How do you teach these types of topics when you do not have materials?"

On a similar note, Nelsa wrote in her reflective journal of issues with damaged teaching resources:

Some of the materials distributed were damaged, for example, mirrors. They were broken and there were no more spare ones to replace them with...

Lucille, in her second year of teaching commented on resource problems, describing how she managed without standard materials and equipment:

Within these two years, we did not have a lot of material, so I tried to download [material] from the internet and also improvise a lot for my experiments. I always used the handy man to cut wood and so forth, and it takes time... Hopefully, next year it will be a lot better as some materials have just arrived to use in our lessons next year.

In his context, Ray described his struggle to access technology:

Another challenge is that there are not enough computers to use for lesson preparation and the internet. Many teachers do their work on the computer and they do not have enough of them (computers) for us all.

It is even more challenging when there are no resources for subjects that beginning teachers were not trained to teach but were assigned nonetheless. Kylie shared her experience of being unable locate materials to prepare students for a very common examination topic:

We covered all the notes, but we did not have a textbook about chickens, so that is a problem. I told the students, "I am sorry but I don't know how to teach chickens because I do not have a text book. When I go to Vila, I may find one." I told the principal, but he did not get me any text books. So I will have to find a text book when I go to Vila to help them. There are always questions on chickens in the exams... so I think [the answers will be] all blank in their exam papers.

Kylie was concerned that her students would not be able to respond to examination questions as she was unable to teach the topic. Even the principal was unable to locate materials for her. This shows a lack of access to resources for a simple topic (chickens) that is relevant to daily life in Vanuatu.

### 5.2.2 Time Constraints

In the context of this study, where the education system has an examination driven curriculum, completing the year's syllabus is vital. For this reason, time for learning becomes an important factor in fulfilling expectations each year. However, the beginning teachers in this study revealed several challenges with time including: external factors outside of their control, for example, the South Pacific Mini Games; the pace of students' work; students travelling and missing school; and time required to plan. In the year of data collection, the mini South Pacific Games were held in Vanuatu. The Games had a great impact on all schools throughout the country. Annually, schools closed their doors between the last week of November and the first week of December. Due to the South Pacific Games, the Ministry of Education and Training (MoET) issued notices to schools for them to close early. Teachers were requested to help officiate at the Games.

The beginning teacher participants in this research were particularly impacted by the time available for teaching and learning in a year when schools closed early. Vivianne described the challenge of completing her year's work:

This year is quite short due to the mini South Pacific Games. We were really rushing as we were approaching the end of the year. It came to a time where I had to stop planning my lessons because time was too short. We were squeezing everything together. For example, in one lesson we had to cover one to two topics at once because of limited time. Exams were also coming up. We were working against time. My aim was just to cover everything before the exams.

Working in an examination driven education system, Viviane described how she tried to complete the content that she was expected to cover with her students before they sat their examinations. As described in chapter 1, for teachers throughout Vanuatu, national examinations are very important. They serve as gatekeepers to the next level of student education. The Games were a particular challenge in 2017 that added to the time pressure experienced by teachers.

Kylie felt the same time pressure:

Because of the mini South Pacific Games, and the learners being slow, I have one last book left to cover. I will have to run extra classes next year to complete that social science book. I know extra classes are the only way to catch up.

While the mini South Pacific Games may seem to be the main cause of time pressure for Viviane and Kylie, Sheena reported her time pressure more generally:

I found out that I had not done much when semester was about to end. I covered the term one topics but I did not go through the term two topics, because the students learn very slowly and I have to follow their pace... Another thing that drags us back is that we have to copy notes on the blackboard and wait for students to... copy all the notes. You go through the notes with them, then give them exercises to do. Doing this takes up a lot of time.

Sheena revealed that pace of student work is a critical factor in losing valuable teaching and learning time. It can also be seen that a lack of resources contributed to the slowness, with handwritten teaching and learning materials.

Ray shared how time pressures impacted on his work from the perspective of student logistics:

We do not have enough time to run extra classes as some students travel to school daily from different villages and [using] varied forms of transport. Another challenge here is that during the two weeks break, it took some students a week or two extra to return to school the next term. Therefore, we did not have enough time to complete the syllabus.

MoET's decision to close schools early for the mini South Pacific Games in 2017, classroom teaching resources, and infrastructure challenges in Vanuatu can all be seen as contributing to time pressure on beginning teachers. While more experienced teachers may be prepared for such happenings, and plan accordingly, the new VITE graduates were not prepared.

### 5.2.3 Feelings and experiences of isolation

Beginning teachers in the Vanuatu context may be sent to schools on different islands, far from their parents and immediate families. For most beginning teachers, the school setting, culture, and community will be new. As shown in chapter four, when beginning teachers arrive at their new schools, a basic introduction to staff and to the school is usually carried out. The preparation of work for the teaching year would have been an important priority for the beginning teachers when they arrived at their schools. While Ray and Lucille were provided with help in the form of an Associate Teacher, the other beginning teachers did not have specific help, and this led to feelings of professional isolation, and a desire for more professional support and guidance.

David expressed his experience of isolation:

I really need help from teachers who are senior and have been in the field for a longer period than me, but I did not really have that in my subject area, as I am teaching at the senior level.

Viviane reflected on the benefit of observations that she experienced during teaching practice:

It is one year now, and one of the things that would really help me is observation from my HOD... to observe my classes and make recommendations. As it is my first year of teaching, I don't know if I am teaching correctly or not. I can reflect on myself but it would be good to hear other views. So it would really help if someone observed my classes... I said this because at Teachers College, we learn that. At micro teaching, teaching practice, we teach and you tell us what we did well and what we need to improve on. Then the next time, we do it and we reflect on that. So I see that it helps and I think it should happen in the real thing (in classroom teaching).

Beginning teachers like Viviane have experienced how observation and the provision of feedback has helped them develop as teachers in the past. She refers back to her

time at VITE, where she participated in teaching and observation with her peers. They were also observed by the lecturer. Vivianne placed value on observations and feedback to help her grow professionally.

Sheena expressed a similar perspective on observation:

I've never been observed. I asked if someone can come to observe my lesson but no one turned up... instead I observed an untrained colleague who said he was new to teaching and thought he was not doing well. He asked me to go in and observe his class, because he had been observing me doing daily lesson plans for my lessons. So I used my papers from Teaching Practice from Teachers College to observe him.

Although wanting observation herself, Sheena was instead asked to support a colleague who was teaching without a qualification. She agreed to observe him, knowing from her own experience how useful observation was for her. She perceived that observation would support her development in teaching, and it seems that her colleague felt the same. It would appear that Sheena was fulfilling a role that would usually be completed by an experienced teacher, because of her VITE qualification.

Kylie also wanted an experienced teacher to offer her professional support, but because she was not getting it, she confessed to sometimes abandoning her duties as a teacher:

Sometimes, when students don't understand me or when I cannot cope and became angry, I don't go in to teach for one day. Then I go back the following day as I feel that it is not the right thing to do. I go back. I realised it is not good, so I will try to improve it next year.

Kylie's decision to abandon her class in the face of teaching challenges is very concerning, and perhaps highlights how the lack of support has led to feelings of professional isolation and frustration. It is clear that Kylie understands it is not appropriate for a teacher to leave her post, and yet without support and guidance, Kylie is at times unable to cope with her duties.

Furthermore, David had left his family on another island and travelled to a new island to teach. He mentioned that he felt like a 'new kid on the block', not knowing the place and the people. That was a feeling of geographical isolation that David experienced. He said he tried to overcome the challenge by telling himself to adapt and get use to the place. His resilience in a difficult situation may have helped him through those feelings of isolation.

It is noteworthy that Ray and Lucille, the two beginning teachers who were assigned an Associate Teacher by their principal, did not make similar comments about isolation and a desire for support from within their school contexts.

#### **5.2.4 Student learning and behaviour management**

During pre-service training, trainees are taught about the uniqueness of a child as they learn and develop. Applying this theoretical knowledge in a real life situation is part of the development of a beginning teacher. However, the participants in this study expressed difficulties in applying this understanding of development, in a context where the curriculum is examination driven. In a comment about student learning that echoes concern about time constraints reported in the previous section, and the lack of support that was evident following the basic orientation to schools, Sheena recalls:

It was middle of term two and I had not started the term two work, because the students learn very slowly and I have to follow their pace. I did seek help and advice from my two senior colleagues but they said, "We also have the same problem."

Development theory becomes meaningful when beginning teachers engage in teaching practice. In the face of challenges with student learning, Nelsa made very good use of her reflective journal, noting how she would improve her lessons to accommodate unique learners:

So, I learnt that inside a classroom, all students are unique. Some of the students are:

- Smart (so whenever you give them exercises to do they can just go ahead and do the activity)
- Slower (it takes some time for them to actually start an activity and then complete it)

So, in the future, to improve, this is what am going to do:

- I. Always provide extra activities for the smart students.
- II. If they complete the extra activity, tell them to help their friends who are still facing difficulties with the activities. This is because some students learn best from their friends than their teacher.

Student classroom management is one of the core aspects of teaching and learning practice, as learning can only take place effectively if the classroom is under control. Nelsa reported a challenge with this aspect of teaching and learning in her first year in the classroom:

Last year, I felt more scared than I do now. I had really bad days last year but this year, it was better... It was quite challenging, especially to do with students' behaviour inside the classroom seeing that it was my first year of teaching. But somehow with the help of the other teachers, I managed that and pulled through that year. It was successful... the challenge which I face this year is the large number of students inside the classroom. I have forty-two students in my classes and then I had another ten added to the classes because of the volcano victims.

Nelsa reports an improvement in her classroom management over her first and second year of teaching, although her very large class presented new challenges. The already high student numbers were exacerbated by a natural event. The volcano victims that Nelsa refers to are evacuees from Ambae Island at the time of the 2017 eruptions. As described in the first chapter, Vanuatu is vulnerable to natural events, and when these occur, they pose additional challenges for teachers.

Lucille also commented on large classes. She described unruly behaviour in certain age groups:

I teach an average of 35 – 37 students in the classes that I take...I used to find it difficult to manage them and last year teachers' always talked about the year 7's and year 8's as being the noisy classes. They (the students) didn't behave properly in the class room.

Kylie reported difficulties of introducing pedagogical approaches learnt at VITE, which differed from what the students usually experience (rote/teacher-centered) learning. Shifting from rote learning to more collaborative and innovative pedagogical approaches can be challenging, as Kylie shared:

Here, most students don't get involved much in group work, so I did try but at first it didn't work out properly... They didn't know much about doing group work so I had to explain why you have to do group work, ... [and] that it will help you to work together, [and] help your friends that are not working well. So as time passes, I see it's getting better...

Although the approach from VITE was a better approach pedagogically, Kylie felt a lack of adequate relevant content knowledge and secondary school content knowledge. She assumed that managing the behaviour of the learners in her class might be easier with more knowledge of human development. She shared her perspective that her male colleagues have an easier time in the classroom:

VITE taught us child development for primary teachers but not teenagers. They have to teach us how to deal with those teenagers too, because they are difficult to deal with, especially females. I think male [teachers] are okay talking to students but for us females it will be a bit

difficult to do... I sometimes get angry with students for not doing their work and I just walk out of the class...

In the previous section, Kylie confessed to abandoning her classroom entirely in the face of overwhelming isolation. Here, she described a student management strategy – stepping out of the classroom – that she developed to calm herself down when the students made her angry. It seems that Kylie would have benefited from support in the area of behaviour management skills in the classroom. Her lack of skills and knowledge led her being unable to cope. Kylie shared that in her experience, it is more difficult for female teachers to handle the teenagers in their classes than for male teachers. She has the impression that male teachers are listened to and obeyed more readily than female teachers. This may reflect cultural attitudes, where in many of Vanuatu's small communities, men have traditionally held leadership roles.

### **5.2.5 Managing administrative duties alongside teaching**

In this section, findings are shared with regard to the extra responsibilities assigned to beginning teachers on top of their teaching duties. Varied school cultures and settings affected expectations of the beginning teachers, although all of the teachers in this study were given something extra to take responsibility for during the school year. This findings presents an important contextual reality for newly qualified teachers in Vanuatu – beginning teachers are expected to contribute to schools inside and outside the classroom.

Nelsa reported in her reflective journal an experience related to classroom administration:

As a teacher, it's our responsibility to always take the attendance of students in our classes. One of my weakness is that I failed to record my students' attendance for this term (the final term of the year). When it comes to report writing, especially to do with number of absences, it is very difficult. The figure which I put is always not accurate. It is given

by the other teachers... it is not really good. So, now I learnt that as a class teacher, taking the student attendance is very important because it's important for report writing.

Although this is a matter of classroom administration, it is a responsibility that is new to beginning teachers. As a vital duty of a teacher, clear instructions to Nelsa about what is required of her as a class teacher would have been helpful. Nelsa did not understand this responsibility, and there was no one to guide her. It was not until she came to writing reports that she understood the importance of record keeping in the class teacher role. Nelsa's experience shows the importance of having an Associate Teacher or mentor for beginning teachers, to provide guidance.

Lucille was given a range of extra responsibilities, including staffroom coordinator, assistant medic, and class teacher of year 7. Lucille explained her extra responsibilities:

For class teacher: every Wednesday morning we have devotion centre in the class room and I need to go through classroom rules in the class room. And then [I go through] some of the things that the students need to know like announcements. If the principal did not make an announcement during our assembly on Monday, then he has to photocopy it, and then we deliver it during the class devotion time, after the devotion.

For assistant medic: if the students are not feeling well then they have to come and see me... and Mrs. M to give them Panadol, or medicines or we can send them to the dispensary for a check-up...

For staffroom coordinator: I need to see that the staff room is clean all the time. And I sometimes choose students... during work parties in the afternoon to help me to clean up the staff room.

Lucille commented that as a beginner in the teaching field, she found it stressful: "Doing all these extra responsibilities, and the teaching load, was so much for me. I felt that it was too much as I was new to teaching."

David was asked to take on a senior leadership role in his school, and entered his teaching career as a Deputy Principal in his first school. He expressed how being assigned that role affected his teaching negatively:

The administration responsibility is a challenge... yes, it is a challenge because it is a lot of work. So sometimes if I don't carry out my responsibilities properly or carefully, the principal has to come and remind me. I have a lot of things to do. If [there was] no admin role, I could concentrate more on my teaching.

As a novice in his school environment, and new to the education system, it was not surprising that David found his leadership role challenging. He understood the impact that the extra role had on his teaching, and his comments suggested he had some regrets that he was placed in the deputy principal role.

Meanwhile, Sheena was put in charge of the teachers teaching Mathematics, Agriculture, and Basic Science who make up the department called MABs. She commented:

I didn't know how I can ask for meetings. So I went and asked my deputy principal about my job description and he said, "You have to schedule meetings, send out notice with agendas for each meeting, and during the meetings, if they [the teachers in the department] come up with problems or needs, then you have to help them or suggest ideas." It is quite a challenge for me because most of them are senior teachers. So I just sit and listen to them and give little comments to help, and then we move on.

According to Sheena, when she was placed in this leadership role, she did not know the basics of calling and running a meeting. She lacked teaching experiences and felt that assuming a leadership role like this required better leadership mentoring. It was only her first year as a teacher and she was assigned to be the department head for MABs. Her comments indicate her awareness that she was not prepared for the role.

Kylie was given the role of Assistant Deputy Academic Principal. In this role, she was asked to assist the Deputy Academic Principal (DAP), and travel with the DAP to attend a workshop. The DAP did not want to travel alone on a boat, followed by a three-hour journey on a rough road. Kylie accepted the role for that specific purpose:

The principal asked me to accompany the DAP because of safety reasons. On our return, I was given the Assistant Deputy Academic position. It is a new position they have given me... Now that the DAP has transferred out, I said, "No, I will not take up the position but remain an assistant because I have lots to catch up with next year."

Holding the assistant role put Kylie in the position where she was asked to step into the DAP role next. Unlike David and Sheena, she was able to decline the more senior role, although it does appear that by accepting the roles and responsibilities, the beginning teachers believe they are doing the best for their school. There is an impression that the beginning teachers will learn and grow by gaining these kinds of experience.

Vivianne was asked to be the year 9 Mathematics coordinator on her arrival to her new school. She stated:

It's my first year but it's already a lot... I do not know why they chose me. [There are] a lot of responsibilities in just the first year for me. I was a bit nervous but I told myself, I will follow whatever they said, and... it can be a good experience for me.

The beginning teacher participants who shared insights into their extra administrative roles all experienced stress with the extra responsibilities that they were given in their first year. They accepted their responsibilities when asked; however, these responsibilities had an impact on their teaching. Some felt that they did not have enough experience as a classroom teacher to manage a whole class, yet they were asked to take on responsibilities which required them to also oversee more senior and experienced colleagues. They took on the responsibilities without any mentor to support them to grow professionally in their administrative roles as young teacher leaders. This was very stressful for them.

In brief, the beginning teachers experienced a number of different challenges as they navigated their first years of teaching. These challenges were part of their formative experiences as new professionals. I now turn to reporting the strategies that the beginning teachers in this study developed to help them survive in their new profession.

### **5.3 Surviving as a beginning teacher: Enablers**

This section looks at the factors that supported beginning teachers through their early careers, as they tried to find ways to enable them to survive. In the previous chapter it was seen that the principals handing their beginning teachers over to senior members of staff on their first day in the school. Three of the four principal participants indicated that they did not provide much professional support for their beginning teachers and the beginning teachers confirmed this lack of professional support in their accounts of their first years of teaching. In spite of the lack of support, these beginning teachers did not entirely walk away from their teaching duties. Instead, they remained to the end of their first year of teaching. In this section, key enablers identified in the data, that served to help beginning teachers make it through their early years of teaching, are shared.

#### **5.3.1 Accessing and forming effective professional relationships**

The Head of Department (HOD) role is a leadership role that most secondary schools in Vanuatu include in their school structure. The principal participants in this study have acknowledged using HODs to take care of their beginning secondary teachers. It transpires that 'caring' in this context is primarily to do with orienting beginning teachers with essential information about the school, including the classes that the beginning teachers will be responsible for.

However, the beginning teachers also indicated that their HODs were helpful with their teaching. Working alongside their HODs, or with other HODs in the school context, aided the professional growth of beginning teachers. The relationships built with senior colleagues enabled them to carry out their teaching duties and other responsibilities of being a teacher in their schools.

Below is an acknowledgment from Lucille:

I learned from my HODs. When I needed help I went to the subject HOD to ask, and they did help where possible.

Lucille's school was a bigger school with two different departments for Lucille's two teaching subjects – a Mathematics department and a Basic Science department. Most schools would have a combined Maths/Science HOD. Nelsa's first day experience also involved her meeting with her HOD regarding what subjects she had to teach. Other beginning teachers mentioned "HODs" amongst other people who helped them through their beginning years of teaching.

As most schools use HODs for orientation and other professional responsibilities for beginning teachers upon their arrival in schools, beginning teachers not only acknowledged the role of HODs in helping them settle into their schools but they also demonstrated an understanding of the HODs' responsibilities. Thus, the beginning teachers called on HODs when they needed their help with teaching or other areas. Viviane elaborated on this point using an incident that she encountered which was quite sensitive:

I don't know but I think I followed the procedure by taking the first step from me as the subject teacher to the HOD. The HOD will decide where to go from there... To me I would say, when situations arise, the best thing to do is to talk with the student and inform the HOD, that would be the first step. Then it would be out of my hands.

Viviane revealed her understanding of line management within her school, which is a vital development in a beginning teacher. Beginning teachers need to know which door to knock on when a difficult situation arises.

For some small schools, beginning teachers are the HODs themselves, so they do not have the privilege of working alongside an experienced HOD. Schools may regard beginning teachers with their VITE qualifications as more educated and capable than untrained and unqualified teachers who are filling vacant positions. They welcome the newly qualified beginning teachers to share ideas to help their school. Sheena, who

was given the role of HOD in her small school, was able to work successfully with other HODs, as she shared below:

For the HOD [role], we always discuss strategy - ways to run interesting classes... we looked at the examination graph sent from the Examination Office in Port Vila. We found out that our students are very weak in mathematics...

Sheena revealed the importance of being professional involved with, and working collaboratively with other HODs. She was able to continue her growth as a teacher by learning and being informally mentored by others who were in similar roles. Sheena's success in her HOD role was enabled by the good relationships she developed with her colleagues. At the same time, asking a beginning teacher to perform an HOD role is a significant expectation of someone so new to her profession.

### **5.3.2 Individual professional learning and development**

Accessing information and furthering professional development, while challenging, was an essential element of success for a beginning teacher. The beginning teachers in this study spent time reading when they found things difficult and there was no one to help them. Reading is seen as another way of enabling beginning teachers' to cope with challenges. Sheena talks about reading to enhance her independence as a teacher:

I realised I have to read more so I do not depend on my colleague, and now the students are more comfortable with me and so I am teaching the class alone.

Sheena revealed how uncomfortable she was feeling when she was able to teach just a few hours of her subject and her colleague had to teach the remaining hours. Her class was a senior class in her school (year 10). She depended on her colleague whom she co-taught with. Reading helped Sheena improve her self-confidence which enabled her to teach the class by herself even though it was at a senior level.

Other participants described similar experiences of using reading to better survive the challenges of being a beginning teacher. Ray commented that, “as it is my first year, sometimes the topics are new to me, and I spend more time reading and trying to find more information...” Like Sheena, Ray found reading to be helpful. It enabled him to understand more about topics that he was not familiar with. Another beginning teacher used her notes from Vanuatu Institute of Teacher Education (VITE) as a reading resource. Lucille said, “When I get confused about something, I always go back and look for my notes from VITE”. Lucille read through her notes to find and recall the information that she needed to teach students.

Beginning teachers revealed that reading the books that they have purchased for their training at VITE or find amongst the schools’ limited resources, and going back to their VITE lectures was of great help in their first year of teaching. In place of very limited professional support, reading was one of the ways to the help beginning teachers to teach unfamiliar topics.

### **5.3.3 Engaging with colleagues through multiple means**

The beginning teachers highlighted the importance of building effective relationships with their colleagues in the schools they were employed in. This was also the case for peers from VITE who were now also part of the education system. These colleagues were helpful when the beginning teachers approached them. When they first arrived at their new schools, some of the beginning teachers may not have felt comfortable asking their new colleagues questions. Instead they would use Facebook and Messenger to contact their colleagues in other schools and discuss their problems. In this way, they found answers to questions regarding their teaching. Kylie recounted how she communicated with her VITE peers:

I was thinking about my VITE friends (colleagues), but they were not here. They were in other schools far away from me. So for me to need help, I just have to call or contact them on Facebook chat, asking them, “Can you help me with how to teach this topic or that?” When I need help I just have to contact them.

Kylie managed to get help from her VITE friends who were now teaching in other schools. Nelsa found help from her colleagues within her new school environment:

Well, with the help of my colleagues... they encouraged me, and their experiences of how they were in their first days helped me to overcome the fear and all the nervousness. Their help enabled me to cope with my situations inside the classroom.

Nelsa acknowledged how her colleagues shared their own challenges with her. She was fortunate to have colleagues in her school who empathised with her situation.

Sheena explained how a colleague supported her through an unsuccessful teaching experience:

I entered the classroom and thought my plan would be carried out but then it was not... I stressed that I expected my students to be in the classroom before I entered, so I can begin on time and complete the plan that I have for the particular lesson... My friend advised me to be patient with them.

Sheena expected her students to do as she instructed and was upset when they did not. As shown in the literature review (section 2.3), beginning teachers leave initial teacher education with self-concerns, and when they arrived at their schools, they tended to have high expectations of their students and of themselves. Having advice from a more experienced colleague or friend may become very helpful when expectations are not met.

David described how his colleagues were important role models for him as he developed as a teacher:

I learnt from my colleagues that time management is very important. In the afternoon, after class they would come into the staffroom and prepare their lessons for [the next day]. That is what I saw in them, so I tried to copy or imitate how they did things to help my teaching.

The actions of more experienced colleagues informed David's activities, which helped him in his teaching. Ray shared in his reflective journal the experience of approaching colleagues for advice:

As a teacher, I prepare and deliver my lesson to students. Sometimes I give advice to naughty students... other times I have to seek assistance from other teaching colleagues..., especially on how to cope with those naughty students' behaviours.

Ray revealed that although he tried to support his students, his lack of experience meant that he needed support himself. Ray was fortunate that his colleagues were helpful in that regard.

The reasons that beginning teachers have approached their colleagues indicates that they have a range of concerns arising from their new classroom experiences. Their concerns can affect them positively or negatively, depending on how they are developed professionally. Without support, beginning teachers may be tempted to give up when their plans are not successful. With support, the challenge of being a beginning teacher can become an opportunity to develop strong professional relationships, as Vivianne demonstrates:

My colleagues are very helpful. I would not say just one of them but most of them. Most of them have helped me a lot, in the sense that when I have a question, I just go to anyone who is in my department and I know they can help me. I would go and ask them for help and they help me a lot.

Vivianne, like most of the other beginning teachers in this study, described encounters with her colleagues very positively. It is telling that Kylie, who seemed to have the greatest difficulty in coping as a teacher, did not refer to her fellow teachers as a source of support. She had to go further afield to address her concerns, using technology to access her former VITE peers as mentioned earlier in this section. It is worth noting that this is an example of different school setting. Kylie is in a school where there are

no senior teachers that she can turn to for help. She is the teacher who is teaching the content subject in the senior class, although she is only a beginner teacher.

When I came here I thought that there was a teacher that will help me in teaching, but there was no one, so I tried my best just to do something...  
I was given English 9 and 10. Oh, that was so hard for me...

In general, then, colleagues are an important source of support for beginning teachers. Where support is given, it may suggest a strong teaching and learning team, working within a positive school culture. Where there are no colleagues available to provide support, beginning teachers may struggle with all aspects of teaching and learning.

#### **5.3.4 Using Reflective Journals**

In this research project, reflective journals were given to each of the beginning teachers at the end of their phase one interview. Within the research, the purpose of the reflective journal was to serve as a method of data generation, where the beginning teachers would note their progress over the year of the study. Interestingly, in the phase two interviews, all seven beginning teachers commented on how the reflective journals helped them professionally through their early year (s) of their teaching career. Below is Nelsa's experience with the journal:

One thing that I see which is very useful in my teaching is the reflective journal that you gave me. I reflect on lessons, especially with managing students' behaviour. After I reflected on my lesson, then in my next lesson, I tried to follow exactly what I wrote down from my reflection. I found that it has worked.

Nelsa discovered that the reflective journal helped her improve the management of student behaviour, allowing her to focus on how her teaching practice and her student learning to improve.

David commented on the value of the journal to his development as a teacher, particularly with reference to developing reflective teaching practice, but also with leadership:

The reflective journal helped by making me reflect and improve. So yes, it helped a lot with my teaching inside the classroom, and it also helped me with my responsibilities and roles.

David found the journal helpful as he performed his teaching duties, along with his Deputy Principal responsibilities. The opportunity to reflect on his decisions and lessons was valuable to him through his first year of teaching.

Reflective journaling was seen as a form of professional support that brought more meaning to teaching, and helped to improve future challenging situations as revealed by Vivianne below:

The reflective journal did help. Because sometimes I just teach from one room to another, day in, day out and I do not really think or reflect on what I do. So the journal helps me to recall what I did and reflect on the challenges or situations that I faced during the day, week or month. When the situation comes the next time, I handle it better based on the reflection that I made previously.

Sheena also found the journal useful to her development as a teacher, saying:

The reflective journal is very helpful. You, yourself have to know who you are and what you are doing by reflecting on yourself and your teaching.

Sheena believed the journal supported her to develop her teacher identity, as she observed that the reflective journal helped her to understand her own teaching.

Nelsa, one of the second year beginning teachers, made this concluding remark about the professional value of the reflective journal:

Before we finish, I just want to say thank you for the reflective journal that you have given me. After I have worked with the journal, I have improved with my teaching and learning. I just wish that other teachers can also have this. There are some teachers in this school who really

want this, and they want me to print [the journal prompts] and give it out to them so that they can have access to this, and they can also do their own reflective journals and reflect on their own lessons and see how they can help the classes that they're teaching.

Although intended as a method of data generation, the reflective journals clearly had an impact on the individual beginning teachers, and beyond this, to some of their colleagues, who saw the professional value of the thoughtful engagement with one's teaching practice that the journals provided.

### **5.3.5 Using the Internet**

In a context where professional support was sometimes lacking for beginning teachers, technology became a form of support for some. Lucille described how she used technology to support her teaching:

Within these two years, we did not have much material, so I tried to download [resources] from internet and also improvise a lot for my experiments...

Lucille was in her second year of teaching. Having experienced a lack of teaching resources in her school, Lucille learned how to conduct an experiment through watching videos on YouTube. She used videos to teach herself, and she also showed them to her students to understand science concepts. Sheena, another beginning teacher reported, "When I found that I could not answer or help them (students and staff in the MABs department meeting), I just went on the internet to find solutions."

Kylie also made use of online resources:

I did some research on internet to find ways to teach. The internet helps me so I can teach better inside the classroom, as I am teaching a senior class.

In Kylie's school, the senior class refers to years 9 and 10. Being the subject teacher of a senior class, Kylie was in a leadership position. She was the teacher that other teachers could go to for help; however, Kylie herself needed extra help as a beginning

teacher to teach this senior level in her first year. She used the internet to get information to aid her teaching as there were no other senior teachers who she could turn to.

All the above beginning teachers identified the internet as a form of help. We can see that the resources that teachers access contribute to their professional development. We are unable to make a judgment about whether the information located by beginning teachers was of good quality or not, and this kind of quality assessment was not within the scope of the research. Significantly however, the internet has been important for these participants, scattered through Vanuatu's islands, in their first year(s) of teaching. It was a way to sustain professional and personal relationships as well as access teaching material and information to develop their pedagogical content knowledge.

### **5.3.6 Other enablers**

In addition to the enablers mentioned in the previous subsections of section 5.3, the beginning teachers in this study made mention of a few other enablers not included under those themes. These involved participation in sports programmes, and educational training. These additional enablers had a big impact on the beginning teachers who encountered them.

Involvement in extra-curricular activities supported the beginning teachers to embrace their new roles. Sports is positioned as an extra-curricular activity within the Vanuatu education curriculum. Within the hierarchy of the curriculum it is not given the same status as English or Mathematics, and in secondary schools it is regarded as a non-core subject. In spite of this, Ray shared how taking part in sports helped him in his teaching:

I have attended sports programmes and it helped me... attending sports programmes in school and out of school made me able to organise. I can now organise sports activities, and give advice to students on the playground. I have also learnt [new information] from some of the meetings that we attended.

Ray found that being involved in sports improved his organisational skills. Sports also supported him to develop positive and trusting relationships with his students as well as with other colleagues involved in sports. He developed skills that he was not able to develop while at VITE, and thus broadened his knowledge of how he would deal with students in different situations.

Sports programmes can also contribute to other aspects of development for beginning teachers. When asked what helped Nelsa during her first year in the teaching field, she included sports in her response:

I am not really good in working amongst a crowd. One thing which helped me is... looking after students during the SSSA (Sanma Secondary School Sports Association). Sports helped me overcome some things, like fear inside me. I was able to work with teachers from other schools. We collaborated well because of students. I began to express myself. Initially, talking with strangers or other people is not my type (of activity). I only talk to people I know. This event made it possible for me to talk and share ideas together.

For Nelsa, attending a sports programme made her gain confidence as a teacher and develop her self-esteem. She reported feeling better able to express herself to others. This is a very useful skill that she will draw on as she encounters others in her role as a teacher and a community leader.

Another enabler mentioned by two participants in this research was training, or professional development. There was no specific professional support offered to the beginning teachers by schools or higher authorities within the Ministry of Education and Training during the research period. However, two participants mentioned that they attended some kind of training which consisted of helpful elements. Nelsa described it as an *ad hoc* training session that she attended with some Australian educators passing through the region:

So far there have been no workshop or training, but I remember the time when there was a yacht that came over. There were some expatriates from Australia who came over and went into one of these classrooms (in

Nelsa's school) and talked about how they teach some concepts in maths... about how we can get students to understand the particular concept. That was helpful to me.

Nelsa's description of the training session demonstrated that schools may be flexible in welcoming such impromptu talks, perhaps because they do not have scheduled professional development workshops. Nelsa commented that the talk, which was just an hour long, was a help to her as a mathematics teacher.

Kylie also described attending a workshop:

I attended a workshop because they appointed me to be the Assistant Academic Principal for the school. All Academic Principals attended this workshop in [...]. They (workshop attendees) were reminded about how to work, and they discussed ways to help schools. So this workshop has helped me in my teaching career in terms of, like, you need to get your unit plans and teaching lesson plans (and) be sure your plan is carried out. After that workshop, when we came back, we had to inform other teachers about it. We are all trying to work on what my colleague and I learned at the workshop. The workshop also reminded me personally about my plans and how to manage the school in terms of academics.

Although Kylie was only in her first year of teaching, she was given an administrative role and attended a workshop in that role. With only a few months of experience as a teacher responsible for a whole class during each lesson or class period, Kylie had to become responsible for the academic work of other staff members as well. Although very new in the job, this leadership position opened up an opportunity for Kylie to engage in professional learning that she found personally useful in her first year as a beginning teacher.

Appointments of junior staff to leadership positions in schools is not new in the Vanuatu context, especially in smaller schools in more remote areas. A variety of leadership roles held by the beginning teachers in this study were described in section 5.2.5.

## 5.4 Summary

The findings presented in this chapter revealed that the beginning teachers experienced a variety of challenges in their first years of teaching, and coped with their challenges using an equally varied array of enablers. When faced with inadequate resources, a school year that for some beginning teachers was shortened at both ends by a late arrival, and then by an early closure to accommodate a regional sporting event, the beginning teachers experienced feelings of isolation and frustration. They struggled to manage their student learning and behaviour. Difficulties in the classroom were exacerbated by the sometimes significant additional responsibilities that were assigned to each beginning teacher.

In the face of these challenges, the beginning teachers in this study successfully employed a variety of strategies to help them survive and to make sense of their new teaching, administration, and leadership roles. Through their first years of teaching, the beginning teachers experienced the perception of professional development. Whether the actions taken by the beginning teachers positively impacted their teaching practice and enhanced their professional development is an important new question that has emerged from the findings of this research project. Having presented the key findings from the study, I now turn to a discussion of the findings in relation to the literature in chapter six.

## CHAPTER SIX - INTERPRETATION AND DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

### 6.1 Introduction

This qualitative study set out to find out about the experiences and perceptions of beginning teachers after they graduated from the Vanuatu Institute of Teacher Education (VITE) and entered Vanuatu secondary schools as new professionals in their early career years. The perceptions and perspectives of seven beginning secondary teachers and four of their principals from five secondary schools across four provinces of Vanuatu were investigated.

Chapter four reported findings concerning the entry of beginning teachers into initial teacher education, and pathways to employment following graduation from VITE. The findings highlighted the significant influence of formative experiences which motivate individuals to become teachers, and shape their teaching practices. In section 6.2 of the discussion, it is shown that the influences on beginning teachers are powerful in reproducing socio-cultural and pedagogical norms and expectations within the education system in Vanuatu.

Chapter five reported more specifically on the challenges encountered by beginning teachers in their early years, and the enablers that beginning teachers drew on to survive their experiences in schools. The cultural context of Vanuatu provided unique challenges as the beginning teachers attempted to meet the cultural and professional expectations placed upon them while still transitioning into their new teaching roles. In section 6.3, discussion focuses on the challenges of entering the teaching profession for beginning teachers, and the need for beginning teachers to be agentic in building relationships, and managing the varied challenges of their school contexts.

In this chapter, the findings are considered more broadly, and Bronfenbrenner's (1979) Ecological Systems Theory is applied as a lens through which to better understand the experiences and perceptions of the participants in this research. In section 6.2.3, the beginning teacher is viewed as an individual with a history of educational and personal experiences that informs their understanding of teaching, and their

professional identity development at the level of the microsystem. In section 6.3, the complexities that beginning teachers experienced as new professionals are considered with particular reference to the importance of relationship building at the level of the mesosystem. This idea is developed further in section 6.4, where Bronfenbrenner's (1979) Ecological Systems Theory is seen to need modification in order to conceptualise the experiences of the participants in this research. In section 6.5, formal induction is proposed as a way to support beginning teachers within the mesosystem, and to allow for an enhanced understanding of the exosystem. Finally, in section 6.6, a contextually appropriate metaphor is offered as an explanation for professionals in the Vanuatu context, to support understandings of beginning teacher experiences, and to provide a rationale for a formal induction programme in Vanuatu secondary schools.

## **6.2 The reproduction of socio-cultural norms in education: the influence of prior experiences and the Apprenticeship of Observation**

As beginning teachers embark on a teaching career, they encounter new and different experiences. These experiences help to shape their professional identity as they become teachers. However, while these new professional experiences are important, the influence of formative experiences and the motivations that beginning teachers bring with them when they come into teaching cannot be overlooked. The findings from this study revealed the complexity of the motivations of beginning teachers as they enter into the teaching profession and develop their sense of professional identity. The beginning teachers' early experiences of education lay the foundations for the formation of their professional identities, underscoring the importance of reflecting upon formative encounters with education as a whole, as well as encounters with educators within the education system itself.

### **6.2.1 The importance of prior educational experiences**

In the findings of this research, it was identified that prior educational experiences motivated some of the beginning teachers to choose teaching as a career. According to the education literature, motivators to enter the teaching profession fall into three groups, altruistic, intrinsic, and extrinsic (Fokkens-Bruinsma & Canrinus, 2014;

Sinclair, 2008; Tustiawati, 2017). The motivators discussed in this section fall into the extrinsic category, where extrinsic is defined as “the influence of significant others” (Tustiawati, 2017). The finding from the Vanuatu context, that some beginning teachers were motivated by their prior educational experiences to enter teaching, is in line with research carried out in the early 1980s in developed countries by Lortie (1986) and Joseph and Green (1986). These researchers found that secondary teachers in particular played a significant role in motivating secondary students to go on to train as teachers.

The experiences that beginning teachers have of learning throughout their primary and secondary school years are powerful (Lortie, 1975; Schempp, 1989). Scholars including Alexander et al., (1994), Daniel and Ferrell (1991), Joseph and Green (1986), and Schempp (1989) found that the influence of a prior teacher stays with beginning teachers when they enter initial teacher training institutions. It also remains when beginning teachers put theory into practice in the classroom. This influence is conceptualised as the ‘apprenticeship of observation’ (Lortie, 1975; Schempp, 1989).

Although personal experiences of education are known to influence teachers, it is not clear that the influence is always a positive one. There is evidence that “teachers who do not examine their own schooling experiences or address their own assumptions and frames of reference in meaningful ways, are likely to teach as they were taught, and perpetuate practices that are familiar but which may not actually serve students well” (Abbiss, 2019, p. 4). The work of Loughran (2007) draws on Lortie's (1986) seminal work to highlight the powerful influence of the apprenticeship of observation, whereby new teachers have been exposed to and have observed teaching but may not necessarily know or understand the pedagogical reasoning and thinking behind the actions of their teachers. As such, they form their own ideas about the practices of teaching based only on what they have observed and experienced. In this way, the teachers are reproducing existing educational norms inside their classrooms. With no requirement for observations or critical review of their actions, the same pedagogical practices continue to be employed in classrooms. In the context of Vanuatu's education system, where participation is low by the time students reach secondary

school, and success is limited, the apprenticeship of observation may be a contributing factor to the difficulties that teachers encounter in improving educational outcomes: that is, prior educational experiences that result in low achievement are reproduced by teachers in the absence of alternative pedagogical models. This situation reflects a cultural norm in Vanuatu, where the reproduction of culture is an important mechanism to preserve indigenous belief systems in Vanuatu's diverse communities. In education, however, it creates a tension between existing and accepted pedagogical practices, and the aspiration to improve educational outputs, which may require changes to existing practices.

### **6.2.2 The influence of family members**

The findings of this research indicated that a second extrinsic reason that the beginning teacher participants choose teaching as a career was the influence of family members, particularly where those family members were themselves teachers. Like the influence of prior educational experiences, the influence of family members is an extrinsic motivator. This finding from the Vanuatu context is echoed by a study from the United States. Joseph and Green (1986) identified parental influence as a motivator for becoming a teacher. More recent research however, that looked at motivators to enter the teaching profession in developed countries, has revealed a gradual movement away from the importance of parents as motivators to enter teaching (Perryman & Calvert, 2020; Tustiawati, 2017; Watt et al., 2012). Rinke, Mawhinney, and Park (2014) found that teachers in the United States of America, the United Kingdom, Australia and New Zealand are more motivated by altruistic and intrinsic motivators rather than extrinsic motivations. For Vanuatu, this appears to be the first study that has considered motivators of beginning teachers. Whether the international trend away from parents and/or educational experiences as motivations will be seen in Vanuatu's future is unclear at this stage.

In relation to the extrinsic motivations of former teachers and one's own family, in the context of Vanuatu, a career in teaching is highly esteemed. As described in the introduction to this thesis, holding the position of a teacher is viewed within the wider Vanuatu community as prestigious. Anecdotally, children whose parents are teachers

are likely to have travelled with their parents to different parts of their home island, or even to other islands and other provinces, as their teacher parents are posted to different schools during their careers. These children have the opportunity to experience many other cultures in Vanuatu's diverse indigenous contexts. It is well known in the field of human development literature that childhood experiences have a significant influence on the child's development (Bergin et al., 2018), and in the case of this research, it appears that having parents (and extended family members) as teachers influenced some of the participants to choose teaching as a career.

A reason that family is such an important motivator in the Vanuatu context may be linked to the importance of respect within the cultural practices of the many different groups of people who make up Vanuatu (Barbour, Wessels, & McCarter, 2018; McCarter & Gavin, 2014). Traditionally, younger people are meant to respect and follow the instructions and advice of older people. Vanuatu people in general remain very reserved and respectful of elders due to this special tradition. Nelsa's life choices were an example of the importance of respect in Vanuatu culture, where she did not want to become a teacher at first, but due to the culture of respect for elders, she followed their request and trained as a secondary teacher to meet their expectations.

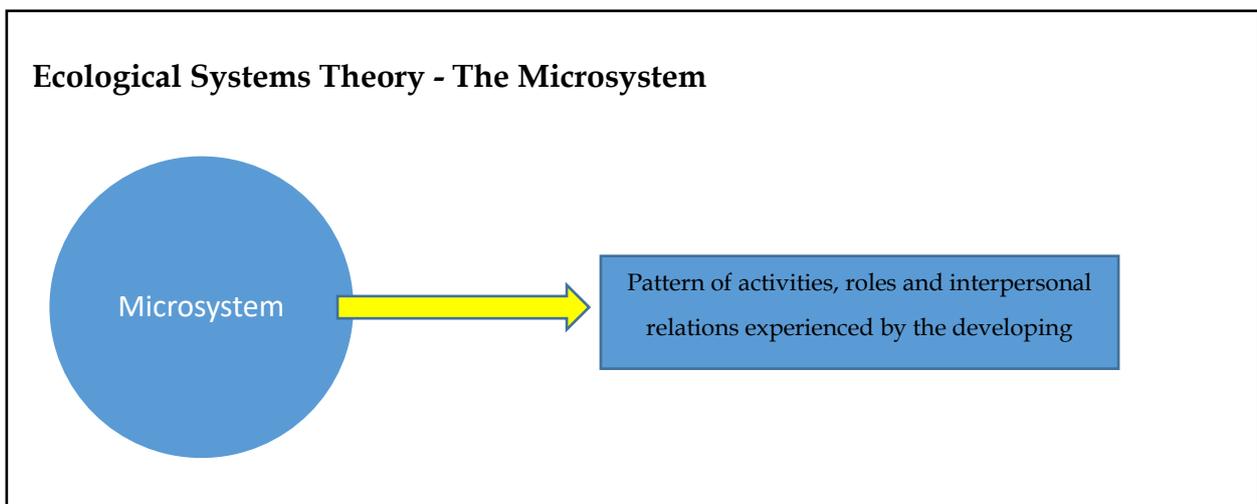
### **6.2.3 Early professional identity formation and the Microsystem (Bronfenbrenner, 1979)**

The extrinsic motivations of former teachers and parents (or extended family members) as educators, point to the importance of the apprenticeship of observation within the Vanuatu context, where this has an impact on the early formation of the professional identity of beginning teachers. Lortie (1975), states that being a school student is like serving an apprenticeship because of the number of years students spend at school with their teachers. During the apprenticeship of observation, while the students were contemplating teaching as a future career, they were at the same time beginning the process of forming their identity as a future teacher (Lortie, 1975; Rinke et al., 2014).

As students proceed on to initial teacher education, their identity as a future teacher continues to develop. To become a teacher, and an effective one, teachers need to

know who they are and what they want to achieve (Gibbs, 2006). According to the findings of this study, all beginning teachers were in the process of forming a professional identity. The process experienced by the beginning teachers is one of the development stages that was discussed in section 2.3 of chapter two, where beginning teachers were observed to be concerned about themselves and their own actions (Fuller, 1969; Fuller & Brown, 1975; Kagan, 1992).

In applying Bronfenbrenner's (1979) Ecological Systems Theory as a lens through which to understand the early experiences of the beginning teachers in this study, it appears that the apprenticeship of observation, and the associated development of an early professional identity, are situated within Bronfenbrenner's (1979) first level – the Microsystem. In the first level, shown in figure 6.1, the development of an individual is influenced by their immediate setting where people can readily interact face-face. At this level, the individual does not develop alone but rather is understood to develop with the experiences and influences of their environment.



**Figure 6.1:** *Beginning Teachers in the Microsystem. Adapted from Bronfenbrenner (1979).*

According to Bronfenbrenner (1979), the microsystem includes the family, school, neighborhood, or childcare settings of the developing individual. Bronfenbrenner (1979) identifies the home and school as two significant institutions that influence the development of individuals. In this research, these two institutions provide the key

extrinsic motivators for young people to enter teaching as a career. Beginning teachers, as the individuals in the microsystem, form their ideas about practices of teaching based on what they have observed and experienced from their own school teachers, as well as from their teacher family members.

Learning at the level of the microsystem can be problematic for beginning teachers, as the beginning teachers may reproduce the socio-cultural and pedagogical norms and practices that they have observed and previously participated in. Concerns around participation and success within Vanuatu's education system, particularly at secondary levels, indicate that change is needed to ensure that beginning teachers are able to develop their pedagogical practices and provide enhanced experiences for the new generations of secondary students who are entering Vanuatu's schools.

### **6.3 The complexities of entering into the teaching profession**

The findings of this research showed that the context of Vanuatu provides unique challenges for beginning teachers. In this section of the discussion, these challenges are considered with respect to the literature on the importance of relationships in the school context, the 'transition shock' experienced by beginning teachers, and the need for beginning teachers to develop professional agency to manage the varied challenges of their school contexts.

#### **6.3.1 The importance of developing and maintaining professional relationships**

Relationships are vital in the development of a teacher as teaching deals with other people – a teacher needs to know how to relate to others and to build professional relationships with others (Frelin, 2010; Kitchen, 2009; Yusof et al., 2016). Frelin (2010) considers relationships in teaching as “central to the process” (p. 4). Professional relationships are important in a school community. Furthermore, the educational literature indicates that positive relationships between teachers within a school are important for effective schooling (Hargreaves, 1994; Tynjälä & Heikkinen, 2011). It is helpful for beginning teachers to begin the development of professional relationships in the early years of their career.

Relationship building in schools concerns the staff, the students, and parents/guardians. Frelin (2010) pointed out a Swedish study carried out by Skolverket in 2005, that discussed about the importance of trustful teacher-student relationship with secondary students. Students at this level are quite vulnerable and teacher-student relationships are deemed valuable. These relationships enable students to better attain their goals. This research further illustrates the importance of relationships and especially, the importance of guiding a beginning teacher into developing the professional skills to handle relationships with secondary students. For the purpose of this study, the professional relationships of beginning teachers with their teaching colleagues are considered; however, it is important to be aware that research shows that professional relationships between teachers and their students impact upon student performance. To generate the positive relationships needed to grow professionally in one's teaching career, the contexts where teachers develop their professional attributes are vital.

The findings chapter revealed that the beginning teachers in this study were working in challenging contexts. Some arrived at their schools at the same time as the students, and others arrived after the first term had started. When the beginning teachers entered their new schools, they were expected to take up their full-time role as a teacher, with little time given for them to establish themselves in the schools and form meaningful relationships with colleagues. In Vanuatu, schools are situated in both rural and urban contexts. In these settings, there is great diversity in terms of buildings, staffing, teaching resources, school size, school communities, indigenous languages, and school cultures. Schools can be isolated geographically, and communication networks may be inconsistent. The diverse circumstances and sudden isolation from family, friends, and even one's own language community, can be very challenging for beginning teachers. Good relationships amongst members of the school community are paramount in order for each school to operate effectively and efficiently, yet it seems that insufficient attention is being given to the development of positive professional relationships.

Closely related to the timing of the arrival of teachers into their new schools is the first-day experience. The findings of this study showed that the beginning teachers were met and welcomed into their schools by their school principals. They were then handed over to their HODs or presented to the full staff. The meet-and-greet for beginning teachers in the Vanuatu context is culturally important, and makes them feel welcomed into their new school. It offers a first opportunity to initiate professional relationships between the beginning teacher and members of the school community.

The meet-and-greet can be understood as part of an orientation programme (Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership [AITSL], 2016; Brannen, 2014). Beyond meeting their new colleagues, beginning teachers need help to understand the formal and informal operations in schools. Formal operations concern documented policies, practices, and procedures while informal operations concern cultural and the administrative matters (Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership [AITSL], 2016). Most of the beginning teachers in this study did not appear to experience a full orientation. Indeed, one of the beginning teachers was asked to provide orientation information to new students, before she understood the information herself.

The exception involved one particular school where the principal employed a detailed orientation for beginning teachers. He arranged a meet-and-greet for new teachers and their Heads of Department, and he described providing a school handbook which covered school operations. These are two essential elements of an orientation programme.

Identified in all schools in the study, the meet-and-greet experience is important to the beginning teachers, and it also appears to be of importance to the principals. The meet-and-greet reflects an element of Vanuatu culture. Anecdotally, and in the experience of the author, it is culturally important to have the chief or the head of the family or the head of the house (male figure), or a church leader (male or female figure) welcome a newcomer. The church is central to the lives of most Ni-Vanuatu, and as such, growing up in the church provides a space for young women in Vanuatu to build the confidence to lead in other contexts, such as in schools.

A formal welcome, or meet-and-greet event, is a widespread practice in Vanuatu communities. Since there is a lack of formal documented procedures guiding principals on the orientation of beginning teachers on their arrival at their new school, the principals perhaps felt that it is only proper to draw on this cultural practice and apply it to their school context.

In section 3.7.3, where the principal participants of this study were first introduced, it was noted that in the context of this study, principals take up principal positions in an *ad hoc* fashion. They may not experience any leadership training. Because of this, it is possible that the principals in this study were not made aware of the individual needs of beginning teachers, and the types of support that could be offered to beginning teachers as they develop professionally. In the absence of formal training and a formal orientation process, the principals largely reproduce their cultural experiences of leadership, and employ the meet-and-greet element of orientation.

### **6.3.2 Accepting the challenges of the first years of teaching**

There is a plethora of literature around the experiences of beginning teachers. This literature tells us that beginning teachers face diverse realities in schools and communities that cannot be anticipated in teacher training (Corcoran, 1981; Farrell, 2016; Feiman-Nemser, 2003; Ingersoll & Strong, 2011; Kaufman & Ring, 2011). Outside of Vanuatu, there has been a focus on the challenges that beginning teachers encounter (Kearney, 2014; Jarvis & Algozzine, 2006; Flores, 2001; Walsdorf & Lynn, 2002). In Vanuatu, a developing island state, the challenges that beginning teachers face, and the approaches beginning teachers take to survive, were found to be varied and contextually dependent. The beginning teachers however, appeared to accept the challenges that they faced as a part of the reality and expectation of a teacher's role in Vanuatu.

When beginning teachers arrive at their new school, and have to lead a class on their own for the first time, it is not unusual for them to experience anxiety (Grudnoff, 2007). The findings of this study revealed that the first day in front of a class was difficult for beginning teachers. First day nerves were exacerbated when the teachers arrived with little or no time to prepare. An important contextual factor in this study, and finding

of the research, was that the school principals in this study had to recruit their own beginning teachers, rather than being able to rely on the Teaching Service Commission to post teachers to their schools. A direct consequence of this was that the process was *ad hoc* and some of the beginning teachers arrived after the school year had started. The educational literature shows that when teachers arrive late into a school, this can result in “rushed implementation of curricula, and poor quality of learning for both the beginning teacher and students” (Paraide, Kukari, Kelep-Malpo, Mugup, & Pes, 2012, p. 14).

International studies in general reveal that beginning teachers face challenges and stresses during their early career years from the shock that they experience in their new profession (Farrell, 2016; Knowles, 1988). Specifically, (Corcoran, 1981; Dotger & Smith, 2009; Lang, 2001) all mentioned the ‘transition shock’ that beginning teachers encounter during their early years of teaching and observe that the shock can stay with beginning teachers for some time during their teaching. Without support, the transition shock experienced by beginning teachers is likely to affect both the teachers, and their professional development, in negative ways.

The findings of this study revealed that the beginning teachers felt overwhelmed by the early challenges they faced in their new schools. While not unusual for beginning teachers, this was compounded in this context due to physical and professional isolation, and limited support offered by their colleagues. For the beginning teachers in smaller rural secondary schools, they were the only ones teaching their subject, and there were no colleagues with whom they could form close professional relationships. Although each beginning teacher in the study was formally welcomed to their school, it is clear that most of the beginning teachers were then left on their own, soon after their arrival. This situation is somewhat similar to the situation for beginning teachers in New Zealand, in the 1970s. Main and Hill (2007) mention that at that time, schools in New Zealand were using an “individualistic approach to induction” (p. 117) where some beginning teachers experienced being ‘thrown into the deep end’ in their early career years. There were some tutor teachers, but little support was given to beginning teachers. In this research, the findings of this project showed that there were no tutor

teachers or formally appointed mentors, and indeed there was very little evidence of support for beginning teachers after the initial meet-and-greet and introductions.

Just as the apprenticeship of observation can lead beginning teachers to reproduce prior educational experiences, working in isolation can lead beginning teachers to experience higher levels of anxiety and a lack of confidence to try new things in their practice, and thus they may reproduce less effective practices (Ryan, 1986), as they draw on their memories of their experiences from former schools. Feiman-Nemser (2012, p. 50), considering the physical organisation of schools, observes that “the isolation of teachers in their classrooms makes it easier to stick to comfortable practices without having to justify them”. Such practices then maintain the *status quo* within the schooling context and beginning teachers have no opportunity to receive input, even from their colleagues, that might lead them to change their teaching practices.

Coping with the workload of teaching has been identified as a key challenge for beginning teachers, as reported in a survey of research on challenges by Kearney (2014). In this study, it was found that workload also was a significant challenge for beginning teachers; however, the workload issue was exacerbated by what appears to be a contextual practice. When the beginning teachers in this study made their entrance into the teaching profession, they were expected to carry the same workload as more senior teachers. There was no teaching release time. This is a contextual challenge which all of the participants faced and accepted. It appears that this contextual practice is partly based on a cultural belief where younger members of society are expected to obey people who are older than them, and to do what they are asked. Anecdotally in schools, this practice applies even when existing teachers are younger than the beginning teachers, but are more experienced than the new arrivals. This aspect of educational culture led the beginning teachers in this study to accept the full workload that was assigned to them as an expectation of their new job.

Feiman-Nemser (2003) advises that beginning teachers are still learners and that they need to be guided into appropriate teaching behaviours, so they can be effective in the classroom. While most of the beginning teachers did not receive specific support and appeared to accept the realities of their contextual circumstances, an important finding

in this research was that one school principal did have a support mechanism in place. This involved assigning an experienced teacher to each beginning teacher in their subject area. This experienced teacher was called an Associate Teacher, and the role appeared to be that of a mentor, who the beginning teachers could go to for support and guidance. Having a mentor is likely to help beginning teachers to develop professionally. This important role is picked up on in section 6.5.

### **6.3.3 Additional responsibilities as a contextual reality**

Having already seen that workload was a challenge for the beginning teachers in this study, the findings of this research also showed that many of the beginning teachers in this study were given additional administrative duties on top of their full teaching load. Service is an important contextual practice within Vanuatu. That beginning teachers are given significant administrative roles before they have experience as a teacher can perhaps be explained as an outcome of a societal attitude in Vanuatu which is informed by the colonial perspective that academic qualifications are perceived as more valuable than experience (Hindson, 1995). Recalling that there are many unqualified teachers in Vanuatu schools (see section 1.6.4), I suggest that the administrative workload is allocated to beginning teachers because they come to their new schools with a VITE diploma qualification. This three-year qualification was first offered in 2010, and produced graduates between 2012 and 2019. The qualification is higher than the previous two-year certificate qualification which would have been held by any teachers who were both qualified and experienced.

“Excessive responsibilities” featured in Australian studies of the challenges experienced by beginning teachers (Kearney, 2019, p. 3). The challenges of administration can become problematic for beginning teachers. In particular, giving beginning teachers more senior administrative roles (such as David in this study, who was given the role of Deputy Principal in his first year of teaching at a rural secondary school) may not promote positive professional relationships between beginning teachers and the school community. Beginning teachers have limited experience of both teaching and school administration (Brock & Grady, 1997). Administrative and leadership roles require personnel with experience. In their early career years,

beginning teachers still need opportunities to progressively gain professional teaching experience. Additional administrative roles can be a barrier to beginning teachers focusing on their teaching practice and pedagogical skill development.

#### **6.3.4 Agency and resilience as a personal response to professional challenges**

In spite of the challenges that teachers face, teaching remains an attractive career pathway and large numbers of trainees continue to enter the teaching field in Vanuatu. The findings of this research demonstrated that beginning teachers in this study found ways to cope with the challenges they faced through the first year of their teaching career. When taking a closer look at the enablers employed by beginning teachers, they show us that the beginning teachers in this study largely worked in isolation, supporting themselves through their own agency to fit into their school system and grow in the profession. The main enablers that the beginning teacher participants used were:

- Reflective journals: completing personal reflections after classes to enhance future lessons;
- Reading resources: reading text books, college notes, and any other available materials sourced personally, from the school, or from nearby schools to find information;
- The internet: using the internet when reception is clear to source information from peers, and using search engines;
- HODs: going to HODs (and designated Associate Teachers) when help is needed.

It is noteworthy that beginning teacher agency involved a range of interactions, from interrogating their own experiences, to engaging with a variety of available resources, and expanding their access to resources through their peers, teachers and HODs from within the larger school community, as well as accessing the international educational community online. The beginning teachers actively used the above enablers to help them cope with their challenges. These enablers highlight a pattern of beginning teachers encountering difficulties, and then looking for solutions in a reactive manner. While many different enablers were employed by the beginning teachers, they were

consistently in response to, rather than in anticipation of, the difficulties that the beginning teachers faced.

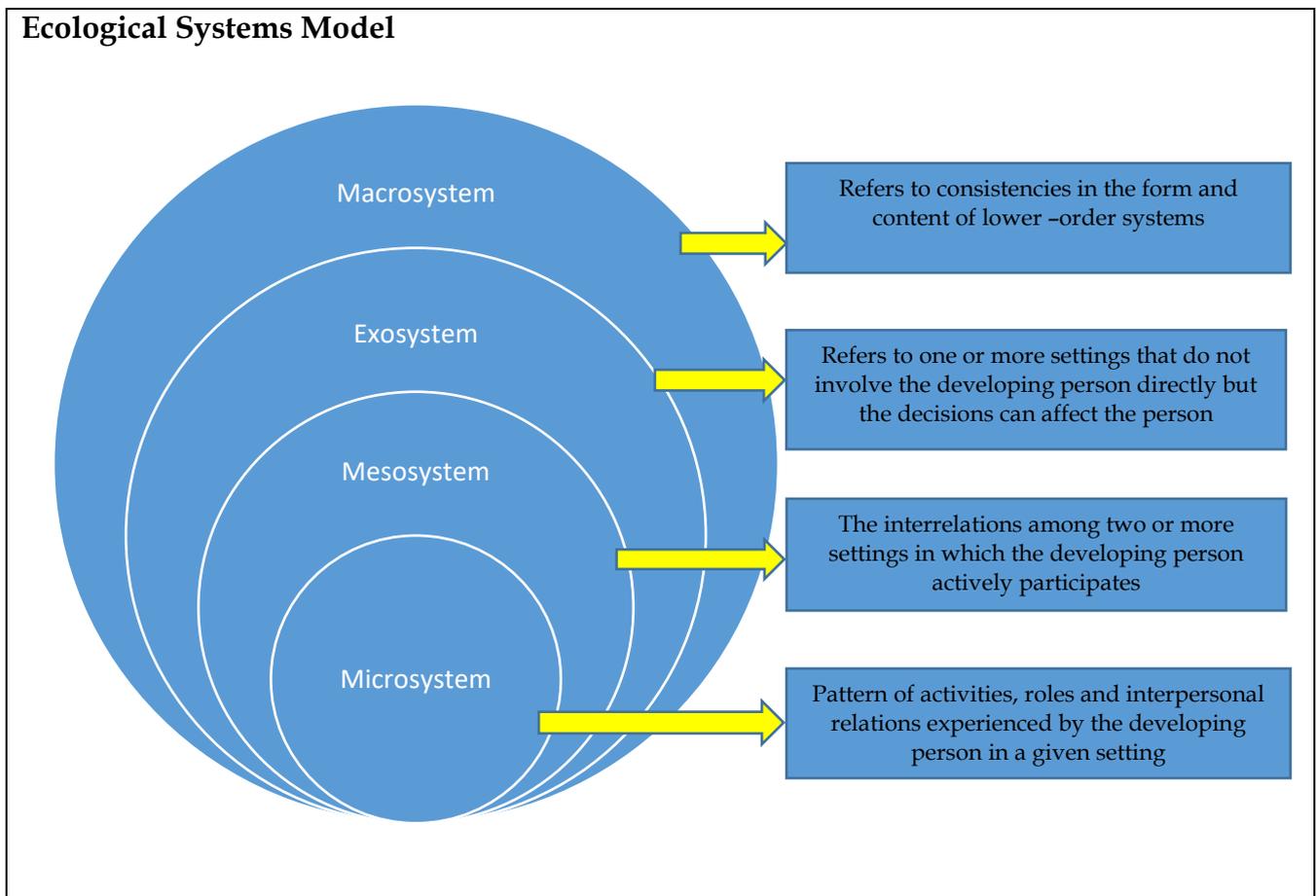
In the context of Vanuatu, self-sufficiency is expected of individuals, and indeed, it is a necessary attribute of individuals who survive in the challenging physical environment (Méheux & Parker, 2006). The survival strategies of beginning teachers may be likened to the strategies that generations of Ni-Vanuatu have employed in response to natural events. For example, when crops are damaged as a result of cyclones, earthquakes or volcanic activity, Ni-Vanuatu take action to gather useful resources and continue their gardening practices; they do not wait for help to be given (Feeny, McDonald, Miller-Dawkins, Donahue, & Posso, 2013; Méheux & Parker, 2006). Feeny et al. (2013), mentioned that one of the ways that Vanuatu people survive after natural disasters is to draw on “traditional support mechanisms” (p. 11).

In a context where self-sufficiency is a necessary characteristic for survival, it is perhaps unsurprising that this research has revealed the importance of agency for beginning teachers. The resilience that enables citizens of Vanuatu to survive significant natural events appears to be equally relevant in the educational context. The beginning teachers demonstrated their capacity to generate personal agency to successfully address the challenges they encountered in their schools.

#### **6.4 Beginning secondary teachers’ experiences through the lens of the Ecological Systems Theory**

In section 6.2.3., the first level of Bronfenbrenner’s (1979) Ecological Systems Theory was employed to understand the beginning secondary teachers’ experiences of the apprenticeship of observation, and the early development of their professional identity, with these two aspects of teacher development being positioned within the individual teacher’s microsystem. In this section, Bronfenbrenner’s (1979) full Ecological Systems Theory will be applied to further support understandings of the experiences of the participants, as they enter their new profession. Bronfenbrenner’s (1979) work is applied to understand the beginning teachers’ experiences in the sense that the individual teacher (in the microsystem) can be viewed within their immediate school context (the mesosystem), within their wider educational context (the

exosystem), and within the system of beliefs about education in the cultural context of Vanuatu (the macrosystem). These levels are displayed in Bronfenbrenner's (1979) Ecological Systems model, repeated in figure 6.2 below



*Figure 6.2: Ecological Systems Model (Repeated from figure 3.1)*

Bronfenbrenner's theory, modelled in Figure 6.2, indicates that above the level of the microsystem, we would anticipate finding a mesosystem comprising interrelationships that the individual is actively participating in. Professional relationship building, along with the mentoring of beginning teachers in their early career years should be positioned within this second level of the Ecological Systems Theory. In this level, the mesosystem, teacher development should continue as the beginning teacher forms relationships that allows him/her to connect with others who belong to the school community.

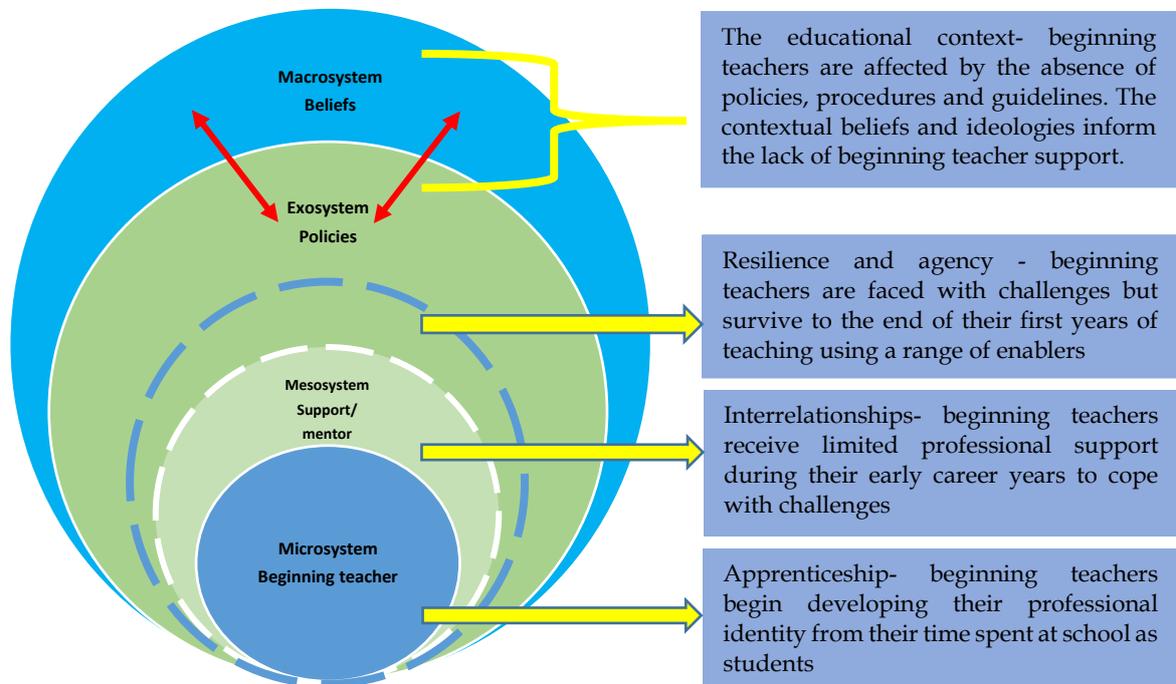
This study has shown that relationship building is begun with a meet-and-greet by the principal, the beginning teacher, and sometimes also other members of staff. However, relationship building is not further facilitated by schools, and beginning teachers are largely left on their own. Where beginning teachers are assigned administrative duties and leadership roles over their more experienced (but less qualified) colleagues, relationship building may even be hindered.

The findings of this research point towards a weakness in the mesosystem of Vanuatu's educational context. In figure 6.3 below, I represent this weakness with a **white dotted line**. The beginning teachers performed their professional duties to fulfil the requirements of the syllabus and curriculum with limited professional support, operating largely in isolation in the larger educational context.

The beginning secondary teachers in this study can be understood as responding to the lack of a robust mesosystem with their own agentic behaviour. I represent this beginning teacher agency in figure 6.3 with a **blue dotted line**. This line shows a new level in the Ecological Systems Theory that has emerged through an examination of the research findings. As a result of the limited support shown to beginning teachers (shown with the white dotted line), beginning teachers were forced to draw on their own resilience and exercise agency during their first years of teaching to survive their teaching load along with their additional administrative responsibilities.

In the period of this study, the beginning teacher participants were functioning as independent agents within the Vanuatu education system. There was a lack of policy that would ensure that support was made available to them by their schools. Instead, there was a general cultural expectation that every individual would simply do what was needed to survive as a professional educator.

## Ecological Systems Model of Beginning Teacher Support in Vanuatu (2017)



*Figure 6.3: Ecological Systems Model of Beginning Teachers' Support in Vanuatu (2017)*

In the context of Vanuatu, relationship building within the school community at the level of the mesosystem must be understood within the wider educational context (the environment that indirectly affects beginning teachers) at the level of the exosystem, and the system of beliefs that inform culture at the level of the macrosystem. The wider educational context, in which the TSC Act provides for but does not implement recruitment, hinders the entry of VITE graduates into schools. This in turn can negatively affect their developing professional identities as well as their opportunities for relationship building.

While educational policies and the wider educational environment do not directly connect with or influence beginning teachers, decisions made by the MoET certainly affect the experiences of individual beginning teachers in schools. At the level of the

macrosystem, consistency in the setting is expected. Unfortunately, there is little evidence of consistency in Vanuatu – there are no relevant policies that specifically refer to beginning teachers beyond the TSC recruitment policy from VITE into schools, and this makes beginning teacher professional development problematic.

Beginning teachers face challenges, some of which relate to their own inexperience in the classroom and school context, suggesting inconsistencies at the level of individual within the microsystem. There is a lack of support provided by schools for beginning teachers to accommodate for their inexperience, which suggests inconsistencies at the level of the mesosystem. The need for support is not recognised in the wider educational context of Vanuatu, and has not been mandated by the MoET, indicating inconsistencies at the level of the exosystem. And finally, Vanuatu places high value on personal agency in the face of challenges, which transfers to the expectation of personal agency of beginning teachers as new professionals, signalling an inconsistency at the level of the macrosystem. Without consistencies at and between all levels of Bronfenbrenner's (1979) Ecological Systems Theory, the system will not work effectively. This is certainly the case for beginning teachers in the Vanuatu education system. In order to achieve positive change in the experiences of beginning secondary teachers, it appears that the mesosystem needs to be strengthened. In the next section of this discussion, I discuss the potential for induction as a means to address the identified weakness in Vanuatu's educational ecology.

### **6.5 The role of induction in supporting beginning secondary teachers**

From the discussion in section 6.3 of the experiences of beginning secondary teachers in their first years of teaching, it is reasonable to conclude that the Vanuatu education system expects a lot from its beginning teachers. The educational literature argues that pre-service training should not be the end of a teacher's professional learning, and there is evidence that the professional learning of a teacher should include pre-service education, induction, and then continuous professional learning development (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011; Wilson, Rozelle, & Mikeska, 2011).

Feiman-Nemser (2003), a theorist in the area of professional development for teachers, cautions that "if proper support for their [beginning teacher] learning is not provided,

they may leave teaching or stay clinging to practices and attitudes that help them survive but not serve the education needs of students” (p. 26). This may be true for beginning teachers who depend on their own agentic actions to survive their first year of teaching. While their individual efforts can certainly be praised, there is no system in place to evaluate their actions. It was reported in the findings of this thesis that the majority of the participants in this study did not have their professional performance evaluated by any senior authority during their year of teaching; however, all of the participants were satisfied with their achievements in the classroom. This is where Vanuatu needs to be cautious. Beginning teachers may successfully reproduce practices that they are familiar with, but these practices may not necessarily be helpful to student learning. Kagan (1992) cautions that if beginning teachers repeat the same practice throughout their teaching career, they may not be as effective and professional as teachers who go through effective induction programmes and continuous professional development. Thus, their students, who are the future of a nation, will bear the consequences of poor teaching (Knowles, 1988; Ryan, 1986).

In 2018, the Vanuatu Education Support Programme in one of their reports about teacher training observed that, “while student[s] would benefit immensely from input of effective teachers throughout the instruction process and can be a source of inspiration and motivation for students, identifying such teachers in the context of Vanuatu remains a huge challenge” (VESP, 2018, p. 2). The findings of this study help us to understand the scarcity of inspiring and motivating teachers. Vanuatu teachers are not being provided with support after graduating from their initial teacher education institution. While the beginning teachers in this study revealed that they wanted to continue to learn, the learning space was not provided to them.

Based on the findings of this study, I propose that formal professional learning pathways for beginning teachers in the Vanuatu context must be considered as an important priority for Vanuatu’s education system. Having formal induction programmes that lead a new teacher to fully integrate into their professional community (Kearney, 2013) is vital to address the gap identified in this work and echoed by the 2018 VESP report quoted above. Such induction programmes may help

to ease the transition shock that beginning teachers face and potentially allow beginning teachers to achieve more in their classrooms than simply survive their first year. The lack of formal induction programmes mandated by the MoET means that professional development and relationship building are at present *ad hoc*, and may simply involve the reproduction of an education system that has documented poor outcomes.

Based on this discussion, I argue that understandings of education in Vanuatu need to shift towards recognising the importance of induction for beginning teachers. Induction would allow beginning teachers to enter their teaching careers with a thorough understanding of the school context, conveyed through a full orientation. They would be assigned a manageable workload, appropriate for their entry into the profession. Supportive and high quality input from an Associate Teacher or mentor would allow them to form relationships, develop critical professional skills, and improve their teaching practices. While the agency of all individuals in Vanuatu's high risk natural environment is essential, in the educational context this agency needs to be monitored to ensure that the quality of education that is provided by teachers, and the associated educational outcomes for students are improving.

Formal induction programmes mandated by the Ministry of Education and Training in Vanuatu, and designed with the leadership of the Teaching Service Commission, which include a full orientation, facilitate relationship building, and ensure ongoing critical support for beginning teachers, would be of benefit not only to beginning teachers, but also to school communities and to the educational system in Vanuatu more generally, where the improvement of educational quality is a primary objective. Feiman-Nemser (2012) claims that induction, when viewed as a longer-term professional development activity within a school, can have positive impacts for the entire teaching staff, saying that, "professional communities are strengthened as teachers across experience levels work together to improve their teaching and their students' learning" (p. 163). As observed by Tucker (2019), "you cannot produce the improvements needed in student performance unless you improve the teaching skills

of your current teachers *and* fully support and make the best use of the new teachers you will want to hire” (p. 139).

### **6.5.1 Mentors as key figures in beginning secondary teacher induction**

For beginning teachers to grow professionally, the literature suggests that having a mentor will enhance their learning as a new professional and help to improve their early experiences of teaching. Without the support of a mentor, it is at this stage that beginning teachers are known to become isolated, and struggle with the reality they face (Farrell, 2016; Feiman-Nemser, 2003) which can lead to problems with teacher development (Jarvis & Algozzine, 2006; Knowles, 1988; Ryan, 1986). In this research, the challenges that beginning teachers described combined challenging features of the immediate school context and their personal limitations, particularly inexperience. In most developed countries, educational leaders have recognised the problems that beginning teachers faced and have addressed these to minimise challenges (Ryan, 1986). However, in this study context, it is evident that beginning teachers’ challenges have not yet been recognised within the larger educational setting or addressed formally through policy and planned actions.

Internationally, research shows that beginning teachers can be mentored using coaching and mentoring programmes, or induction programmes from the very early days of teaching to support beginning teachers to develop professionally (Darling-Hammond, 1998; Feiman-Nemser, 1996; Grudnoff, 2007). Induction programmes are accepted globally as helping beginning teachers to transition smoothly from being student teachers into being new professionals (Grudnoff, 2007; Main, 2009; Tickle, 2014).

Beginning teachers have been shown to benefit from guidance and mentoring through their practice of teaching to become effective teachers. One of the prominent professors in the field of teacher development, Feiman-Nemser (2003) asserts that “beginning teachers have learning needs that cannot be grasped in advance or outside the contexts of teaching” (p. 26). Going through a teacher training institute will not fully prepare teachers to perform teaching well in their first year in the teaching field. For that reason, it may be suggested that beginning teachers are given additional

mentoring to develop professionally when they start teaching in their new schools. As such, Feiman-Nemser (2003), calls for further support for beginning teachers in the field. Beginning secondary teachers in Vanuatu are also learners and they need to be offered learning experiences when they depart VITE and enter the teaching profession. While some of these professional learning experiences might be offered by individual schools, it seems likely that the small size of schools, and their geographic isolation will mean that localised groups of schools (or 'cluster' schools) will need to come together to provide professional learning opportunities.

As communication networks improve in the future, it will become more feasible to deliver professional learning online, and to make use of the expertise of teachers who may be dispersed widely in secondary schools throughout the more remote islands of Vanuatu. Until that time, smaller rural schools may usefully establish teacher-to-teacher coaching, as encouraged by Rodie (2011) in the context of the Solomon Islands communities.

In spite of the widespread awareness of the value of induction and mentoring, in the Pacific region, Puamau (2007), reported that there were no induction programme in any Pacific island countries. A good number of these island nations had systems of registration and inspectorate systems but Puamau (2007) found no evidence of induction in the literature at that time. However, Deruage (2007), writing in the same year, stated that Papua New Guinea did have an induction programme, incorporated into the Papua New Guinea national inspectorate system. Since Puamau (2007) and Deruagu's (2007) research, a small number of Pacific countries have tried to improve in this area. For example, Fiji established its *Fiji Registration Act* in 2008 (Ministry of Education, Heritage, and Arts, 2008), and a two-day teacher induction programme started in 2015 but mentoring will be incorporated in the future (P. Deo, Personal Communication, May 7, 2018). In the Solomon Islands, emphasis is now placed on developing and delivering formal induction programmes for all new teachers (Vanuatu Ministry of Education and Human Resources and Development, 2009).

In Vanuatu, a formal induction programme has not yet been discussed; however, the Teaching Service Act No. 38 of 2013 was established to "make arrangements for [the]

effective management of the Teaching Service and to provide for the licensing of teachers” (Ministry of Education and Training, 2013). In 2017, the Registration and Licensing Policy was launched (VESP, 2018). At the time of writing, it was reported that there were 4639 registered teachers (ECCE to Tertiary plus admin staff) out of approximately 5,000 teachers active in the teaching profession in Vanuatu (J. Kalotap, Personal Communication, 17 January 2020).<sup>15</sup> Precisely what it means to be licensed and/or registered is not understood. Implications for beginning teachers are also not well understood, as beginning teachers are not mentioned in the registration policy.

As noted in section 1.6.4, Vanuatu Teacher Standards were adopted in 2014. The Vanuatu Education Support Program (VESP) reported that the MoET has not made good use of these standards, and the MoET approved VESP to prepare a new version of these standards, called the Common Teaching Service Standards for Vanuatu. (VESP, 2018). These common standards have now been drafted (VESP, 2018), although it is not known how the common standards will be used in relation to beginning teachers and their registration or licensing.

Returning to the topic of mentoring within induction, all school principals visited during this project suggested that mentoring would be helpful for beginning teachers, and one principal had already implemented his own informal mentoring system with the assignment of an Associate Teacher to each beginning teacher in his school. While this is a very positive initiative to see taking place within Vanuatu’s educational context, mentoring could be enhanced further with a schedule of learning support or a more specific professional development programme that would enhance the relationship between the beginning teacher and their Associate Teacher or mentor.

Given the enthusiasm of the principals in this study for mentoring, it seems that introducing a mentor system in the Vanuatu school structure is locally appreciated and appropriate, as well as being professionally grounded. The mentor would need to be an experienced teacher who has been performing well in their own teaching, is familiar with the specific context of their school, and is working within the beginning

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<sup>15</sup> It is worth noting that the figure of 5000 teachers was taken from the Open Vemis, which is a cloud-based assistant tool that is used by the MoET to collect statistical data from schools.

teacher's subject areas. In small schools, mentors might need to be drawn from other subject areas within the school, or from subject areas in neighbouring schools, to ensure that a relevant and accessible mentor is available. Where experience is lacking among teachers in a specific school setting, coaching could be considered as an alternative to provide opportunities for learning and growth between teachers. Where available, mentors would work with beginning teachers to provide support and guidance towards beginning teachers' professional learning. Alongside formal orientation, mentoring could become an element of the beginning teacher induction experience that is expected within all secondary schools.

## **6.6 Reconceptualising Beginning Teachers' Experiences with a contextually appropriate metaphor inspired by the Ecological Systems Theory**

The discussion in this chapter has led towards the proposal of creating formal induction processes in Vanuatu as a solution to the current lack of professional support for beginning secondary teachers. In this final section, I propose a contextually relevant metaphor to reframe Bronfenbrenner's (1979) Ecological Systems Theory. This model is intended to be used as a means of explaining my research to a local audience in the educational context of Vanuatu.

Before proceeding, published models developed (like Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory/model) to represent research findings seemed very distant from the lives of beginning teachers in Vanuatu and I was motivated to seek an alternative and contextually appropriate model to represent my findings to the Vanuatu education community. There are a small number of indigenous models/metaphor that have been developed in the Pacific Region as mentioned in chapter 3.2.3. Another one of these is the use of the metaphor or the katnat metaphor by Maezama (2016). The katnat is a fruit tree that bears "fruit all year around, with sparsely branched and heavily flowered tree" (p. 123). The metaphor is "used to represent many of the women's understandings of their leadership experiences with regards to social reproduction of nurture and ethical care" (p. 124). For this study, I could not really use this metaphor as it does not really have value in my society. I adopted Bronfenbrenner's model as a

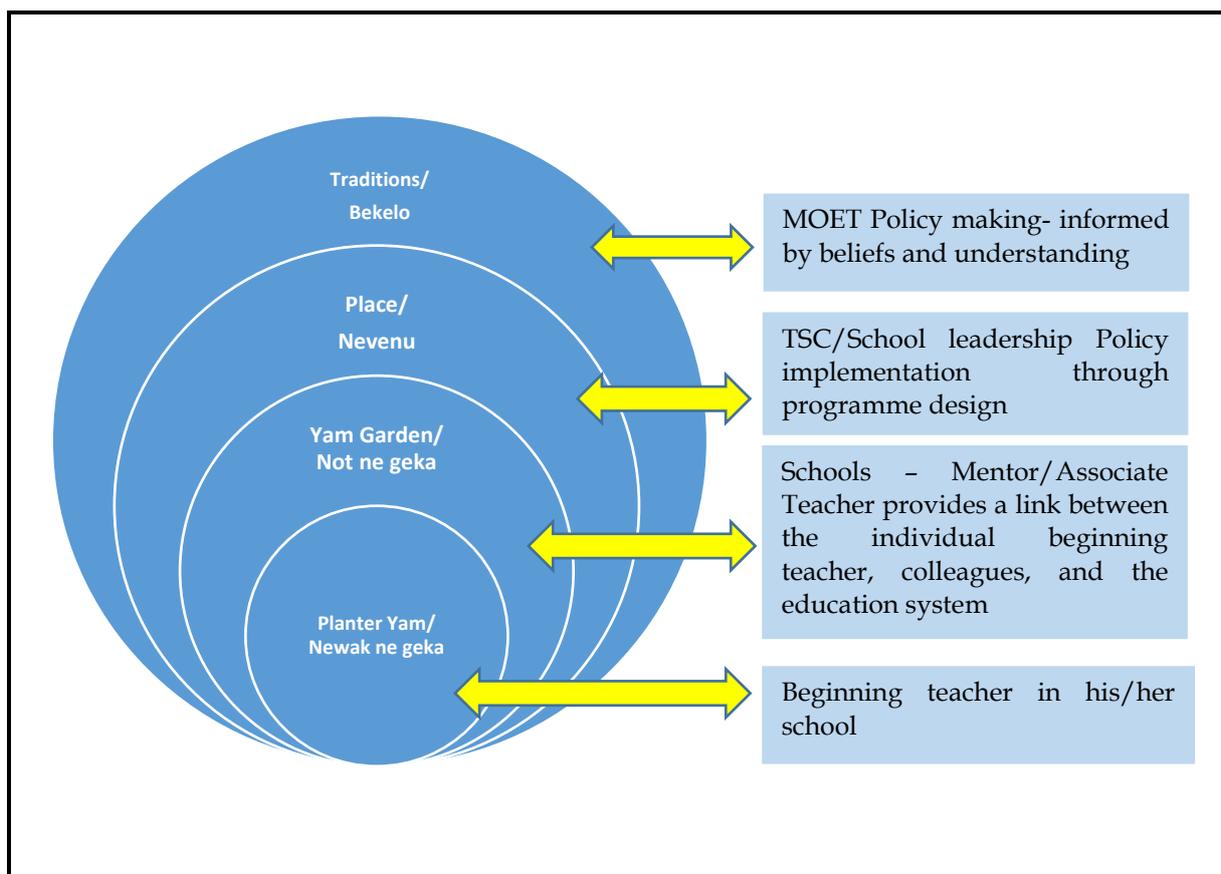
lens to view the beginning teachers' experiences but realised I need to contextualise it for a better understanding in my context. I then developed a model/metaphor. This metaphor is called the *geka* 'yam' metaphor, using the term for the yam from my indigenous language of Tepërav/Espiegle's Bay on Malekula Island. The *geka* 'yam' metaphor is applied to explain beginning teacher development in the Vanuatu context and illustrate ways beginning teachers can be supported professionally as they enter into their careers as teachers.

Contextually, Vanuatu possesses cultural elements that operate consistently in some domains, such as ideological beliefs about yams, and the practice of yam gardening. In Vanuatu, as in many parts of the Pacific, yams are of great value (Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations, 2010). Within the context of Tepërav/Espigles Bay, Malekula, there are traditions around yam gardens which still exist today in some families and villages. There are cultural beliefs such as, whose yam garden should be planted first in a family, who should do the planting, and so forth. Yam gardening practices are informed by cultural understandings of the way that yams best thrive in the physical context of Vanuatu. If one aspect of yam gardening is not managed correctly, then people understand that the harvest will be affected. The tuber will not develop properly, resulting in a product that might not be of great value. When conditions are right, the small planter yam can grow and produce a healthy and good sized yam, as sketched in figure 6.4. With the tradition of yam planting, there is consistency between beliefs and processes.



*Figure 6.4: A growing yam, by Tasau Tarosa. Used with permission.*

In using the yam metaphor to understand beginning teacher induction, the beginning teacher can be likened to a yam plant growing in a yam garden. This is shown in figure 6.5 below.



*Figure 6.5: The geka 'yam' model of Vanuatu beginning teacher induction*

The beginning teachers who participated in this research, although agentic new professionals, were not always well supported within their schools, and were largely left to survive their early career experiences alone. I propose to use the *geka 'yam'* metaphor to convey the importance and value of beginning teachers to the Vanuatu education system. The value of the yam is closely related to the beliefs and practices that surround its cultivation. Induction introduces a practice to support and add value to Vanuatu's beginning teachers.

### 6.6.1 Level 1- Planter Yams/Newak ne Geka



*Figure 6.6: Planter yams.*

In the Vanuatu context, beginning teachers can be viewed as similar to the *geka* 'yam' that develops under the ground. The *geka* 'yam' develops with the support of its physical environment. Yams are always planted using either whole small healthy tubers or pieces of larger healthy tubers. These planter yams are set aside from the previous year's harvest. They must be mature or they will not thrive. A young tuber is understood to contain insufficient nutrients to grow, and can become infested with insects. Like planter yams, beginning teachers need good nutrients in the form of experiences from their past schooling and the positive impact of prior learning to feed their apprenticeship of observation. Poor experiences may be reproduced by beginning teachers when they enter the classroom.

After yams are planted, it is understood that when the *geka* 'yam' is in the ground, the richness of the soil and other reactions taking place beneath the soil will contribute to its growth. This process is unseen, just as the beginning teachers' inner-self is unseen as they are forming their professional identity. The changes to the *geka* 'yam' under the soil may be unseen, but they are crucial to support the healthy growth of the yam vine when it emerges above the surface of the yam mound. A Vanuatu beginning teacher's apprenticeship of observation, combining home and school experiences, informs their pre-service professional identity formation, which in turn plays a vital role in their professional development during their first years in the classroom.

Gardeners in Vanuatu understand that when a planter yam is not of a good quality, then the yam tubers that are produced from it will not be of a high quality. This relationship between planter yams and crop yield resonates well with understandings of the beginning teacher and the possibility identified in this research of the reproduction of existing teaching practices and educational culture. The apprenticeship of observation and professional identity formation play a vital role in the development of beginning teachers in Vanuatu, and when enhanced, may allow for improved educational outcomes.

### 6.6.2 Level 2- Yam Garden/Not ne Geka



*Figure 6.7: Yam mounds in a new yam garden. Image © Malekula Languages Project, used with permission.*



*Figure 6.8: Yam vines growing in a yam garden. Image © Malekula Languages Project, used with permission.*

When a beginning teacher enters their school as a new professional, having been through the Vanuatu education system as a student, they can be likened to yam vines growing in a *not ne geka* 'yam garden'. This is a new status. The VITE pre-service qualification cannot teach trainees all of what they need to know. Teaching is a practice, so the beginning teacher needs time to develop their practice to become effective professionals. It is at this time that they need to learn new and effective strategies for teaching. If not, there is a risk that they will continue teaching with limited and perhaps ineffective ideas.

A very important yam-planting belief in Vanuatu (particularly in Espiegles Bay) is that the *geka* 'yam' vine does not grow and thrive alone. Because of this, when yams are planted, a central stake is always provided for support. In the absence of the stake, the yam vine will spread over the ground and as a result it can be killed by heat from the sun or it can be strangled by other creeping plants or eaten by insects. If it does survive, its yield will not be good. Just as a beginning teacher can be viewed as equivalent to a planter yam, enriched by its environment, beginning teachers need support in the same way that the *geka* 'yam' vine needs a stake to grow higher and produce a better yield. For beginning teachers, their stake is a mentor or Associate Teacher, who the beginning teacher can work alongside and learn from. An Associate Teacher (mentor) programme has the potential to help the beginning teacher's development. This is where relationship building is essential between the beginning teacher, their assigned Associate Teacher, and the wider school community and educational context. The Associate Teacher or teaching mentor can provide support through their relationship with the beginning teacher, and can connect the beginning teacher to other members of the school community. The teaching mentor can also provide a beginning teacher with protection from negative impacts or influences, just as a yam stake trains the yam vine upwards and away from weeds and pests on the garden floor. With a formal system of Associate Teachers or mentors in Vanuatu schools, the professional development of beginning teachers would be guided as they become classroom teachers during their early years in the profession, just as the yam vine is guided to grow upwards, and thrive.

### 6.6.3 Level 3- Place/Nevenu



*Figure 6.9: Almost mature yam vines. Image © Griffith Harrison. Used with permission.*

While growing, the *geka* 'yam' requires more than a stake to grow on. Yam vines also need sunlight, rain, and shelter. These are provided by the surrounding forest ecosystem. The needs of beginning teachers have yet to be recognised within the Vanuatu education system, but in this study beginning teachers articulated a lack of confidence and teaching resources. As new VITE graduates, they all lacked classroom teaching experience. Associate Teachers/mentors should be able to direct beginning teachers to others to receive input, relevant resources, and professional learning experiences. This work goes beyond the Associate Teacher as a person who is simply available to prop up a beginning teacher in a personal sense. Associate Teachers/mentors should support beginning teachers to thrive.

To extend the *geka* 'yam' metaphor further, yam gardens may be affected by natural events. Storms and cyclones, earthquakes and droughts, are accepted as being a part of Vanuatu's natural environment, and are known to negatively impact upon the healthy growth of yam gardens. While gardeners in Vanuatu do their best to protect their own gardens and personally plan for natural events, there are times when disaster strikes.

Disasters for beginning teachers may include the 'shocking realities' that are experienced during their first year in schools: a high workload, additional administrative roles and extra teaching responsibilities must be recognised and understood as inhibiting the growth of beginning teachers, and consequently negatively impacting upon their students. The setting of the school that the beginning teacher enters and teaches in may present unexpected challenges. Beginning teachers are confronted with the reality of teaching as a career. They have the day to day challenges associated with teaching and learning resources. Just like the yam requiring basic need for sunlight, water, protection, beginning teachers require basic necessities but they do not always have the basic necessities or resources to perform their jobs effectively.

After significant natural events, most times the yam continues to grow. Natural events can be unpredictable. While there are practices that can help gardeners prepare for them, they can't be avoided. The growth and yield of the yam can be adversely affected. The realities of Vanuatu's natural environment mean that beginning teachers must also face these natural events. They can prepare for some events, like cyclones, by packing books, putting shutters on their classroom window, and weighing down the thatch roofs with coconut fronds; but cyclones cannot be avoided. This can affect their professional growth when they are not guided into what and how they should handle their teaching after such events. Decisions made by higher authorities can help to ease beginning teachers' through the realities of becoming an effective teacher in the complex and at times unpredictable context of Vanuatu.

#### 6.6.4 Level 4- Traditions/bekelo



*Figure 6.10: Mature yams as part of a bridal gift. Image © Malekula Languages Project. Used with permission.*

The success of the *geka* 'yam' as a crop depends upon traditions and beliefs/ideology of the people of Vanuatu. The beliefs about processes of yam gardening from beginning to end require that the process is carried out correctly and consistently in order to yield good produce from the planter yam.

Beginning teachers in Vanuatu are functioning without formal policies for their support and protection. Instead, an expectation of resilience both underpins and helps to explain the current experiences of beginning teachers in Vanuatu. A policy that covers the professional development of all of Vanuatu's teachers is needed, and it must specifically include beginning teachers, to signal their need for growth and professional development. To grow professionally, policies, procedures, and guidelines for their support must be developed and implemented. There must be consistencies from the MoET through to individual schools in the treatment of beginning teachers. Only then will students be able to truly benefit from their experience of education.

## **CHAPTER SEVEN - CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **7.1 Purpose of the research**

The purpose of this research project was to examine the experiences and perceptions of beginning teachers in Vanuatu as they entered into the teaching profession. This research investigated how seven beginning teachers in Vanuatu secondary schools experienced induction to the profession. The findings surfaced many unique contextual factors which influenced these experiences. The experiences and perceptions of their principals were also sought on this topic to gain a deeper contextual understanding. In learning about the experiences and perceptions of beginning teachers in Vanuatu, this thesis makes a valuable contribution to the field of teacher preparation and initial teacher education, along with a contribution to the area of teacher induction, informing schools how they can best support novice teachers as they enter into the profession of teaching.

### **7.2 Research design and methodology**

The thesis employed a qualitative case study methodology. This methodology allowed for a rich description of the phenomenon under investigation. The study was an interpretive, qualitative study that drew on constructivism, and employed Bronfenbrenner's (1975) Ecological Systems Theory to interpret and theorise the findings. The study was interpretative as it sought to understand and provide a rich description of how the participants perceived their experiences as they entered into the teaching profession. Meanings were constructed within the educational context of Vanuatu. The work is critical in its interest in uncovering experiences which research participants encountered during their first year(s) of their teaching career.

Seven beginning teachers and four of their principals were recruited for the study. Gender equality was considered in the selection of participants, and both urban and rural schools were involved, to provide a balanced understanding of beginning teachers' lived experiences of induction in well-established schools in different community contexts. Principals' perceptions about beginning teachers' early

experiences in these different contexts also added to the rich data. The primary sources of data were the transcriptions of the twenty-two individual recorded interviews. Data collection through semi-structured interviews was carried out in two phases, with interviews taking place shortly after the beginning of the teaching year, and again at the end of the teaching year. In addition, a reflective journal was left with the beginning teacher during the first phase interview, and the journal was collected at the end of the second phase interview. Documentation related to teachers' support was sought from different departments within the MoET for document analysis. Planned document analysis from individual school contexts did not eventuate, due to a lack of relevant documentation.

### **7.3 Possible limitations of this research**

While this study enabled me to reach a number of new understandings of the experiences and perceptions of beginning teachers and their principals in secondary schools in Vanuatu, the study was not exhaustive, and there are a number of limitations which must be acknowledged.

The study was designed with a case study methodology. Using such an approach allows for the researcher to reach a deep understanding of each participant's experiences. At the same time, it must be acknowledged that there are limitations to what can be learned from a limited number of participants. In particular, care must be taken to interpret the results as being illustrative of individuals within specific contexts, and to avoid making generalisations about all beginning teachers in Vanuatu, in all secondary school contexts.

The context in which this study was conducted is unique, as explained in the introduction to the thesis. This had an impact on recruitment for the study. In particular, there were no records of the whereabouts of VITE graduates following their graduation, and no records of any new postings, because the posting of beginning teachers was not done by the Teaching Service Commission. In order to recruit participants, I had to rely on my personal networks to invite participants into the project.

There were also limitations regarding communication with potential participants, as well as after recruitment, when I was organising the research encounters. This was primarily because communication networks are fragile, and internet access is inconsistent in some parts of the country. As a result, only those beginning teachers and schools with telephone and/or internet access could be included in the study. I was able to ensure that both urban and rural schools were included in the study. However, while gender balance was a consideration in the selection of participants, the beginning teacher participants in the study were almost all female, and in the schools where the beginning secondary teachers found work, the principals were all male. While this was representative of the teaching population overall, it also meant that I could not achieve the gender balance that was planned.

Whilst the sample in my study was comparatively small with regards to beginning teacher research generally, knowing each participant's story about entering into teaching allowed me to deeply explore the experiences of each individual participant. As such, a rich account of their experiences was provided within their own school contexts. This lends credibility to the research.

As noted above, the research design involved document collection and analysis. My plan was to use documents relating to beginning teachers from the MoET and from the schools where the beginning teachers were working. It transpired that the schools did not have any available documentation regarding beginning teachers. The only documents that I was able to access were provided by departments within MoET. In addition, accessing relevant public documents relating to beginning teachers was challenging, and I spent considerable time emailing various individuals requesting information. During the project, I received some hard copies of documents from officers in different departments, and some electronic copies through the MoET website. The documents that I was able to gather were of value in understanding the context of the research. The reality that there were no policies or guiding documents in schools pertaining to the induction or considering beginning teachers was an important finding in itself, and supported the comments from beginning teachers and their principals that indicated a general lack of formal induction processes.

One of the underlying challenges of the project was the tension between the ethical principles and expectations of my host tertiary institution, the University of Waikato, and the ethical understandings of my Ni-Vanuatu participants. I was required to keep the identity of my participants confidential as a form of protection; however, my participants were comfortable to share their involvement in the study with their colleagues and friends. They did not feel the need to conceal their participation. This tension also affected the context of data collection, where there is an expectation of written consent to participate, as well as a belief that privacy is essential during interviews. In the Vanuatu context, oral agreements are highly valued, and my participants were not overly interested in, or concerned about the provision of written information from me. They all signed the written consent forms, but this took place after communicating the project to them over the phone, by Facebook, and in person. The oral provision of information was essential to building a relationship with each participant. Regarding privacy, it was inappropriate for me to conduct interviews with male teachers and principals in private. We were expected to meet and talk in more open spaces, where we could be overheard by passers-by, rather than behind closed doors. To address the tension between Western ethical principles and Ni-Vanuatu understandings, I was guided by local expectations and practices in Vanuatu, and I was careful not to impose the expectations and practices from my tertiary institution, although I did seek written consent from all participants, considering this appropriate in educational settings.

#### **7.4 Key research findings**

The findings of this research demonstrates that entry into the teaching profession and induction experiences are diverse, contextually dependent and often complex. The findings of this study are divided into three main areas that reflect the three sub-questions of this study.

The first key area of findings concerns the formative practices that enabled beginning teachers to take up teaching as a profession in Vanuatu secondary schools. The findings showed that the most important types of motivation for secondary school students to choose teaching as a career is extrinsic, rather than intrinsic or altruistic.

The apprenticeship of observation was a powerful force in replicating social and cultural practices within the school and the wider community. As the beginning teachers were modelling their practices upon what they observed and had experienced previously, there was little opportunity or ability to shift pedagogical practices. Teaching approaches, methods and practices appeared to be reproduced with little critical insight into how things might be done differently. The apprenticeship of observation extended outside of the school context and was found to be relevant in terms of replicating educational and cultural experiences within the home life for several of the participants whose parents or extended family members were teachers. The apprenticeship of observation is important in the Vanuatu context in providing beginning teachers with their understanding of the teacher's role in the classroom and community, and in their understanding of teaching practice more broadly.

An important finding related to the entry of beginning teachers into the teacher profession was that new graduates from the Vanuatu Institute of Teacher Education were not posted to schools according to government policy, but instead followed informal pathways into employment – pathways which were created by individual school principals. Such positions were justified by student-teacher ratios in each school. The informal pathway into employment meant that the new teachers were paid informally by principals and their school councils, using school funds, rather than being paid by the Teaching Service Commission. This created a significant burden for school leaders.

Another important area of the findings of this research concerned the first days of the beginning teachers at their new schools. The findings illustrated that there were no formal induction processes in use in the Vanuatu secondary schools involved in the research. On the first day in schools, beginning teachers were met with an informal meet-and-greet by the principal, before they were shown to their table and assigned their duties. The meet-and-greet appeared to serve as an orientation, which is an element of formal induction processes observed in education systems elsewhere. This

impacted on the beginning teachers' ability to form useful professional relationships with other professionals in their field.

Following the initial orientation phase, the research highlighted how many of the teachers felt isolated. Most of the beginning teachers were left on their own to prepare their term plans and lessons. This indicated a lack of support for beginning teachers as they enter into their new teaching roles. An important exception was one school where an Associate Teacher was assigned to each beginning teachers. This Associate Teacher appeared to be positioned as a mentor by the school principal, although there were no formal records of the interactions between the beginning teacher and the Associate Teacher.

Finally, the findings reveals that the beginning teachers faced significant challenges during the first year(s) of teaching. From the beginning of their teaching experience, the participants in the study were assigned additional administrative duties to perform on top of their teaching. All of the beginning teachers found these additional tasks difficult to manage. Other challenges during the year included working within time constraints, which were exacerbated by contextual factors. In 2017 a key event was the Mini South Pacific Games held in December, which led to school closures in early November, which meant the loss of valuable teaching time. The teachers also faced isolation, which is an important contextual reality. Some of the beginning teachers were working alone in their subject area in their school, and some found employment in schools far from their extended family networks. The schools themselves were geographically isolated, and communication with some parts of Vanuatu was limited. During the year, the teachers struggled with large classes. One teacher's class swelled to over 50 students as a result of a volcanic event on a neighbouring island. Underpinning all of the challenges faced by the teachers was a lack of confidence, and frustration with their lack of experience.

In spite of the challenges, all seven beginning teachers survived through to the end of their first year(s) in the classroom. This brings us to the final key finding: that beginning secondary teachers demonstrated agency and resilience in the face of the

challenges that they encountered. This finding is crucial in that it highlighted that even in the absence of a formal systems of support for beginning teachers in the Vanuatu education system, there is an important place for and desire for greater support and mentoring during the initial year of teaching. These findings create a space for the recommendations that follow.

## **7.5 Recommendations**

As a result of this research, it is now possible to put forward a number of recommendations regarding the support of beginning secondary teachers as they enter the teaching profession. These recommendations target four levels of organisation. At the highest level, Ministry of Education and Training policy is needed to allow for the professional support of teachers in schools. The mandate of the Teaching Service Commission would then be to design and implement a specific professional support programme, or induction programme for beginning teachers. The Vanuatu Institute of Teacher Education should bridge the gap between schools and trainees, ensuring that appropriate teacher preparation is offered. Finally, the leadership within individual schools is needed to implement individual programmes of induction, particularly through the provision of a mentor for each beginning teacher. The detailed recommendations are presented below.

### *Policy Recommendations for Vanuatu's Ministry of Education and Training*

1. Develop policy around the professional support of teachers in schools, covering the support of beginning secondary teachers in their first year(s) of teaching.

### *Recommendation for the Teaching Service Commission*

2. Design induction programmes to support beginning secondary teachers in their first year(s) of teaching. It may be possible to form working groups with key stake holders (beginning teachers, school leaders, VITE educators) to co-construct these induction programmes so that they are

- contextually relevant and not a model borrowed from other contexts which do not face the unique challenges of beginning teachers in Vanuatu.
3. Develop an implementation process to trial the induction programmes in schools.
  4. Develop and provide professional learning opportunities for school leaders to implement formal induction pathways for beginning and new teachers to their schools.
  5. Develop policies and practices which promote well-publicised recruitment processes for teachers across a range of mediums.
  6. Implement existing policy regarding the posting of teachers to schools.

#### *Recommendations for VITE*

7. Strengthen relationships with principal networks across Vanuatu to ensure that beginning teachers are prepared to meet the expectations of school contexts.
8. Review teacher preparation programmes to ensure adequate preparation of trainees for teaching roles. This may include integration of the use of Reflective Journaling across all teacher preparation programmes offered at VITE; and the development and integration of an online resource platform for secondary teachers across all teacher preparation programmes offered at VITE.

#### *Recommendations for school leadership*

9. Enhance professional learning and relationships through the design and implementation of mentoring systems in schools to support induction of beginning teachers. This may include consideration of, for example, enhancing beginning teacher understanding of school policies, guidelines and practices, development of curriculum content knowledge and pedagogical skills including classroom management, development of reflective practice, understanding of professional roles and core relationships within schools.

10. Provide professional learning for experienced teachers to support them to mentor beginning teachers.
11. Refine and personalise support provided to individual beginning teachers.
12. Provide opportunities for beginning teachers to scaffold leadership development and growth to prepare beginning teachers for taking up leadership roles outside the classroom.

## **7.6 Contribution of the research**

This research has made a contribution to literature that is directly concerned with Pacific education, in the under-researched context of education in Vanuatu. Investigating the experiences and perceptions of beginning secondary teachers as they enter the teaching profession, the findings have highlighted the need for formal induction processes, which have previously been overlooked or only implemented on an *ad hoc* basis in individual schools. Furthermore, the research has illuminated the need to strengthen relationships between Vanuatu's only institution of teacher education, this being the Vanuatu Institute of Teacher Education, and secondary school leaders. A strengthened relationship may enhance teacher preparation programmes, and would enable beginning teachers to enter their chosen profession with realistic expectations, pedagogic content knowledge, and more confidence.

In the absence of a formal induction programme in the Vanuatu education system, the research has found that development is required on behalf of the schools with regard to how experienced teachers can best mentor beginning teachers into the profession. Not only do policies need to be created at the level of the Ministry of Education and Training to prioritise professional development and support of teachers, but programmes of professional learning need to be designed and implemented under the leadership and direction of the Teaching Service Commission, which is responsible for teachers in government and government assisted schools. Furthermore, the educators who will be implementing these encounters within schools are likely to need professional development in this new kind of educational leadership.

Through the research, Bronfenbrenner's (1979) Ecological Systems Theory has served as the springboard for the development of an emergent model of beginning teacher development in the Vanuatu context. While useful in terms of development, and in this case, beginning teacher development, Bronfenbrenner's (1979) model did not adequately account for the positioning of the beginning teachers within their educational context during the period of this research. In particular, there was a mismatch at the level of the mesosystem, where beginning teachers were generally left to fend for themselves. By incorporating a mentoring relationship between an experienced teacher and a beginning teacher, it is possible to address the unique contextual elements of Vanuatu's educational context. To assist educators in Vanuatu in understanding the importance of relationships at the level of the mesosystem, and the significance of the larger educational context in the professional development of each beginning teacher, a contextualised *geka 'yam'* model was proposed.

## **7.7 Directions for further research**

While this research has produced many interesting findings and allowed for the formulation of a series of recommendations around support for beginning teachers, much work remains to be undertaken. In the previous section, Recommendation 2 was to develop suitable induction programmes. The process by which the induction programmes are developed offers opportunities for research, with design phases being included as the initial phases of a new investigation. As the induction programmes are implemented in schools, beginning teachers could be recruited into a longitudinal study which tracks their professional development individually, and/or with their mentors.

Within the wider educational context, an essential avenue for further research involves an evaluation of VITE's teacher preparation programmes for efficacy and relevance. Such an evaluation could need to include current teacher trainees, teacher trainers, beginning teachers who have graduated from VITE, and the school leaders who receive beginning teachers. Such an evaluation is timely, given the current efforts to develop a Bachelor of Teaching for VITE.

To conclude, beginning teachers have an important role to play in schools, particularly in the lives of their students, who are the future of a nation. The investigation of my participants' experiences of being a beginning teacher in this research has led me to appreciate beginning teachers as learners who have an immensely complex role to play at a vulnerable time in their careers. Feimen-Nemser (2001, p. 1026) asserts that "new teachers have two jobs - they have to teach and they have to learn to teach". This statement highlights the reality that initial teacher education does not provide for all things that a teacher should know before going into the field. Instead, learning must continue in the schools that the beginning teachers enter as new professionals.

As an experienced teacher and teacher educator, I have reached the understanding that the current context as it exists is showing only limited support for beginning teachers as they enter the teaching profession. The above recommendations for formal induction programmes highlight some of the ways in which it might be possible to shift the systems, policies, and practices in the education context of Vanuatu. Understanding the contextual layers of the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, and macrosystem is also important. As such, I have argued that further attention must be given to the ways in which schools, school leaders, and initial teacher educators prepare and support beginning teachers as they move into their professional teaching roles. In this way, steps can be taken to fulfil the first objective of Vanuatu's newest Ministry of Education and Training Corporate Plan 2018-2020, to "improve the quality of education" (Ministry of Education and Training, 2018).

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## APPENDICES

### Appendix I - Interview Schedules

#### I.A. Phase 1 Interview schedule for Beginning Secondary Teachers in Vanuatu

| Topic  | Domain questions   | Possible prompt questions  |
|--|--|--|
| <b>Background information, and perceptions about BSTs experiences on ITE</b> | 1. When did you decide to become a teacher?<br>2. Why did you choose to go to Vanuatu Institute of Teacher Education (VITE)?<br>3. When you finished your VITE training, how did you feel about becoming a teacher? (Prompt: how prepared did you feel to go into a classroom? What did you think will be easy and what did you think will be difficult in your teaching?)<br>4. From your experience at VITE, what were some important or useful things you learned from your lecturers and tutors about teaching?<br>5. Do you think there were thing/s that you spent time learning that are not so useful in your teaching career?<br>6. Can you please tell me about your current teaching position?<br>7. In addition to teaching, do you have any other responsibilities in the school? | Why?<br><br>When?<br><br>Can you explain further?  |
| <b>Beginning teacher classroom experience</b>                                | 1. Can you think back and tell me about your first day at school?<br><br>2. What happened over the next week or two at school?<br><br>3. Tell me about your teaching experience so far in the classroom with students?   | - What happened when you arrived at work?<br>-Did you teach on your first day?<br>-How were you feeling?<br><br>-Were your experiences what you were expecting?<br><br>- What have you found comfortable to do and what aren't you comfortable with?<br>- How do you get help with classroom work?<br>- Who do you talk about teaching to? What kinds of things do you talk about? |
| <b>BSTs Challenges/enablers</b>  | 1. Can you tell me about some things that you have observed so far that are helping you or not helping you with your teaching?   | -Have you had success at dealing with problems that have arisen?   |

|                      |   |  |
|----------------------|---|--|
|                      | 2. Can you tell me about the leadership of this school?   | <p>-What is the structure of the school like?</p> <p>-Do you have anyone in the structure that stands out as a supporter to you?</p>   |
| <b>Looking Ahead</b> | <p>1. Can you tell me about what you would like to see happening in this school to help a beginner teacher in the future?</p> <p>2. How do you want to see yourself developing professionally through the year?</p> | <p>-Do you believe, a mentor or helper appointed by the school to assist you would be a good idea for BSTs?</p> <p>-If yes, comment on what type of person would be appropriate for this role?</p> |

### I.B. Phase 1 Interview schedule for secondary school Principals in Vanuatu

| Topic  | Domain questions  | Possible prompt questions  |
|--|---|--|
| <b>Background of the Principal/school leader</b> | <p>1. Can you tell me about how you have become a Principal/School leader?</p> <p>2. How many new staff (full time or part time) this year? How many of them are BSTs?</p> <p>3. Approximately how many BSTs have been appointed to your school (wherever you are) in the last three years?</p>   | <p>- How many years have you been teaching?</p> <p>- How long have you been in this school?</p> <p>- How many years have you been a principal? When were you appointed to be a principal at this school?</p>                                     |
| <b>School support for BSTs</b>                   | <p>1. Can you tell me about what you do when you get a new graduate from VITE to your school?</p> <p>2. School culture is to do with beliefs, values, relationships, rules, and attitudes that makes a school what it is like. Can you tell me about the culture that you try to promote at your school?</p> <p>3. Do you think the school culture supports or constrains the BSTs performance? Can you explain your response?</p> <p>4. Can you tell me about any support that the PEO's office and MOET provide for BSTs?</p> | <p>- Do you have anyone in particular whom you appoint to help beginning teachers?</p> <p>- What do they do?</p> <p>- What aspects of the school culture benefit the BST?</p> <p>- What aspect of school culture might be difficult for BST?</p> |

|                         |   |   |
|-------------------------|---|---|
| <b>BSTs Performance</b> | <p>1. How are your beginner teachers getting along this year?</p> <p>2. What can you say about the training that VITE provides according to your experience with the beginning teachers at your school?</p> | <p>- Can you tell me a bit about their eagerness to teaching and their confidence regarding their teaching role?</p> <p>- Why do you say that?</p> <p>- Can you give me an example?</p> |
| <b>Looking Ahead</b>    | What forms of support do you anticipate that your BSTs will need through the year to become effective teachers and colleagues?  | - How do you want to see your BST improve?  |

### I.C. Phase 2 Interview schedule for Beginning Secondary Teachers in Vanuatu

| Topic   | Domain questions   | Possible probe questions  |
|---|--|---|
| <b>Beginning teacher classroom experience</b>               | <p>1. It is now almost end of your first year of teaching, describe briefly how teaching has been for you.</p> <p>2. What are some things you have learnt so far that helped you in your teaching as a BST?</p> <p>3. What are some areas that you feel you still need improving in the future?</p> <p>4. Have there been any changes to your teaching position during the year?</p> <p>5. What other responsibilities have you taken up (or dropped) since we last spoke?</p> | <p>- How do you think you are developing?</p> <p>- Tell me about your best day in class/school as a teacher this year. What lesson did you learn from it?</p> <p>- Tell me about your worst day in class/school this year. How did you cope with it?</p> <p>- Were your experiences what you were expecting?</p>  |
| <b>Induction programmes or support practices in schools</b> | <p>1. Can you tell me about the types of professional learning that you may have been involved in throughout this year? Eg. Observation and feedback of your teaching, professional development for beginning teachers.</p> <p>2. Can you tell me about any other professional support that you get as a beginning teacher? Eg.: Workshops by the school or the PEO's office or the MOET.</p>  | <p>-How does this support you in your role as a beginning teacher?</p> <p>- What about your subject colleague? ; Head of department (HoD)? ; School Improvement officers? ; PEO's office? ; Your colleagues outside of school? ; Your family members</p> <p>- What areas of your teaching or work in this school have you sought advice/help on during this first year of teaching?</p> |

|                                 |  |  |
|---------------------------------|--|--|
| <b>BSTs Challenges/enablers</b> | <p>1. Can you tell me about your challenges for this year and the good things that have helped or hindered your settlement into the teaching profession?</p> <p>2. What have you learned about the leadership structure of your school this year?</p> <p>3. Can you tell me about the professional culture among teachers and leaders at your school this year?</p>                                | <p>- How did you/are you trying to cope with these challenges?</p> |
| <b>Looking Ahead</b>            | <p>1. At this stage, how do you see your future career path in teaching?</p> <p>2. How do you feel that your teacher preparation has influenced your teaching as a career so far?</p> <p>3. Teacher Induction programmes help BSTs to transit from student teacher to classroom teacher better. What kinds of induction activities do you think would support you as you develop as a teacher?</p> | <p>- Specific training?</p> <p>- A mentor?</p>                     |

#### I.D. Phase 2 Interview schedule for secondary school Principals in Vanuatu

| Topic                             | Domain questions   | Possible prompt questions  |
|-----------------------------------|--|--|
| <b>Induction/support for BSTs</b> | <p>1. Can you tell me about the progress of your BSTs this year?</p> <p>2. Can you describe the forms of support that the school has provided for the beginning teacher so far this year? Eg. Observation and feedback of teaching, professional development for beginning teachers.</p> <p>3. Can you tell me about any other professional supports that you provide or facilitate for the beginning teacher?</p> | <p>-How did you use this to support your beginning teacher?</p> <p>-What about subject colleague? ; Head of department (HoD)? ; School Improvement officers? ; PEO's office?</p> <p>- What are some things schools can do to help BSTs continue to develop in their teaching career?</p> |

|                                |  |  |
|--------------------------------|--|--|
| <p><b>BSTs performance</b></p> | <p>1. Can you tell me about how you have been monitoring and assessing your beginning teacher this year?</p> <p>2. What are some of the sources of information that you have accessed to assess the BST this year?</p> <p>3. What do you see is the most important function of VITE for BST? Can you suggest types of learning that VITE might provide for student teachers in the future?</p> <p>4. How would you describe the overall performance of your BST this year?</p> | <p>-How about registration?</p> <p>-e.g. students, parents, colleagues, self-reporting from BSTs.</p> <p>- What are some things you think VITE could include in their programme?</p> |
| <p><b>Looking ahead</b></p>    | <p>1. How do you think Teacher Induction Programme will benefit Vanuatu education?</p> <p>2. What do you think might be some of the potential challenges around implementing a Teacher Induction Programme?</p> <p>2. If you were going to design a Teacher Induction Programme to support BSTs in Vanuatu schools:</p> <p>a) what types of activities would it include?</p> <p>b) what support can schools provide?</p> <p>c) what support should the MOET provide?</p>       | <p>- What are some things you would want schools to do to help your beginning teachers?</p> <p>-What about the funding?</p>  |

## Appendix II – Reflective Journals

### II.A. Reflective Journal Information for teachers

Reflective journals have been used widely in teacher education programs to promote reflective thinking (Clarke, 2004). It means looking at what you do in the classroom or at school, and thinking about why you did it, and whether it works. Reflective journals enhanced beginning teachers' professional development by enabling them to link theory and practice and promote evaluation of their teaching performance (Sinclair & Woodward, 1997). This may mean that reflective journal helps a teacher to think carefully and critically about his or her lesson. For example:

-if a lesson went well we can describe it and think about why it was successful or

-if the students didn't understand a language point we introduced we need to think about what we did and why it may have been unclear or

-if students are misbehaving - what were they doing, when and why?

#### **Your part:**

For this reflective journal, you are encouraged to make two or more entries monthly. You may use two or more questions beside each of the guiding sub-topics to make your reflections. You are free to note any other information regarding the event or situation that you describing in your journal entry.

## II.B. Guiding questions for Reflective Journals

| Beginning teacher classroom experience   | Guiding Questions to help answer  |
|--|---|
| My classroom teaching experiences, eg. Workload, lesson plans, curriculum etc.   | <p>-What did you notice about your teaching this month?</p> <p>-What were some of the challenges you face and what moment did you celebrate in your work?</p> <p>-What are some strategies you are using in your teaching?</p> <p>-What was I trying to achieve?</p> <p>-What knowledge did or should have helped me?</p> <p>-How could I improve for the future?</p>   |
| My classroom management experiences, eg. Class size, classroom discipline, classroom setting/arrangements, etc.                    | <p>-What did you notice about your teaching this month?</p> <p>-What were some of the challenges you face and what moment did you celebrate in your work?</p> <p>-What are some strategies you are using in managing your classroom?</p> <p>-Why did I respond/react as I did?</p> <p>-What were the consequences or outcomes for the student and for me as the teacher?</p> <p>-How did I feel in this situation or setting?</p> <p>-Did my action match my own beliefs and values? If yes- how? and if no- why not?</p> <p>-What knowledge did or should have helped me?</p> <p>-How does this connect with previous experience?</p> <p>-How do I feel about the experience?</p> <p>-Has this situation/incident changed my ways of dealing with a similar situation/incident?</p> <p>-What do I need to do to learn from this situation?</p> |
| My assessment of students learning & my own learning, eg. Approach to the diverse needs of my students, identifying successful and | <p>-What stood out or what was really bad about it?</p>   |

|  |  |
|--|--|
| <p>unsuccessful aspects of teaching, approaches I use to assess my students' performance, etc.</p>                                     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-What knowledge did or should have helped me?</li> <li>-How was the student feeling about their assessment?</li> <li>-How do I know how they feel?</li> <li>-What did I learn?</li> <li>-How could I help them better?</li> </ul> |
| <p>My responsibilities, eg. Academic and non-academic</p>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-What stood out or what was really bad about it?</li> <li>-What knowledge did or should have helped me?</li> <li>-What did I learn?</li> <li>-How could I improve for the future?</li> </ul>                                      |
| <p>Make notes on outstanding or lowest point of each of the sub-topics at least twice or more monthly but not more than five times</p> |  |

## Appendix III – Letter to Director General of Education

Faculty of Education  
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Leadership and Policy  
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THE UNIVERSITY OF  
**WAIKATO**  
*Te Whare Wānanga o Waikato*

23 November, 2016

The Director General  
Ministry of Education and Training  
Private Mail Bag  
Port Vila  
Vanuatu

Dear Sir,

### **RE: PERMISSION TO CARRY OUT RESEARCH IN VANUATU**

My name is Gayleen Harrison Tarosa and I have been teaching as a secondary school teacher, an educational administrator, and a teacher educator in Vanuatu for over 20 years. I am currently on study leave and now am undertaking a research project as a requirement for my PhD study in [the field of Educational Leadership](#) at the University of Waikato, New Zealand. My project is entitled: “Induction: Investigating the experiences and perceptions of Beginning Secondary Teachers (BSTs) in Vanuatu schools”. My study is aimed at investigating how Beginning Secondary Teachers are introduced to the teaching profession in Vanuatu schools, after they complete their teacher training at Vanuatu Institute of Teacher Education (VITE). I am humbly requesting your permission to allow me, as a researcher, to conduct my research involving approximately four (4) principals and eight (8) beginning secondary teachers, in selected secondary schools on Efate and other islands which have beginning teachers.

I intend to carry out interviews on an individual basis using a semi-structured interview schedule. It is expected that these interviews will take up to one and a half hour at the most. The interviews will be conducted during the participant’s free time and not during their lesson hours. Beginner Teachers will be asked to keep a journal of their teaching experiences through the year. Furthermore, I would like to collect documents pertaining to my research topic in schools or Provincial Education Offices, or the MOET office. Such documents may include national policies, regulations, meeting minutes and resolutions. Any such documents will be reviewed as a potential source of additional information about induction of BSTs. Please note that full consent will be sought from the school administration or the person in charge of these documents where necessary.

I will carry out my data collection in two (2) phases. Phase one will be done in term one (1) and phase two (2) will be done in term three (3). I am planning to begin my data collection in

early April, 2017. The data collected will be kept confidential and participation in this research is completely voluntary. Pseudonyms will be used to disguise the identity of each participant and the schools will not be identified in the research findings. The participants will have full ownership of the raw data that they provide.

The research findings will inform my thesis and the link to access my thesis upon completion will be provided to you. Moreover, it should be noted that the findings might be used also in workshops, conference presentations, research articles, and for teaching purposes. It is my hope that the research will be of benefit to the ongoing development in secondary schools especially in the area of teacher development in Vanuatu.

At the University of Waikato, Dr. Julie Barbour, Department of Linguistics, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, phone [+6478384466](tel:+6478384466) ext. 9336 or email: [julie.barbour@waikato.ac.nz](mailto:julie.barbour@waikato.ac.nz) and Associate Professor Dr. Rachel McNae, School of Educational Leadership and Policy, Faculty of Education are supervising my research and can be contacted should further information be required.

Please find enclosed a copy of the University of Waikato Human Research Ethics Committee approval letter for the research.

Thanking you for considering my request. I will patiently await your response.

Yours faithfully,

Gayleen Harrison Tarosa

CC: Director Education Services  
CC: Director Tertiary  
CC: Teaching Service Commission (Chairman)  
CC: Provincial Education Officers

## Appendix IV – Information Sheets & Consent Forms

### IV.A. Information sheet for Beginning Secondary Teachers

Faculty of Education  
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THE UNIVERSITY OF  
**WAIKATO**  
*Te Whare Wānanga o Waikato*

#### ***Title of Project: Teacher Induction: Investigating the experiences and perceptions of Beginning Secondary Teachers (BSTs) in Vanuatu schools***

My name is Gayleen Harrison Tarosa and I have been teaching as a secondary school teacher and a teacher educator for over years now in the Vanuatu Education System. I am currently on study leave undertaking postgraduate study at the University of Waikato, New Zealand. As part of my PhD thesis, I am investigating educational experiences of beginning teachers. I would like to invite you to be one of the participants in my intended research study.

#### ***Research Objective***

My study is aimed at investigating how Beginning Secondary Teachers are introduced to the teaching profession in Vanuatu schools, after they complete their teacher training at Vanuatu Institute of Teacher Education (VITE).

#### ***Information about the Study***

As a Beginner Teacher, you will be aware that in Vanuatu there are a number of changes happening in our education system and one of the main ones is the proposed change by our Teaching Service Commission to have all teachers register and have licence to teach. My research will focus on Beginning Secondary Teachers, and their entry into the teaching profession. Particularly, I am interested in your experiences and perceptions as you enter into the education system. This topic ties closely with teacher registration, and I hope to provide recommendations to enhance professional learning for beginner teachers, which may in turn impact student achievements, resulting in improving education standards for Vanuatu in the future.

#### ***Areas that you will be involved in the Study if you agree to participate***

I would like to interview you in your capacity as a Beginner Teacher in a Vanuatu Secondary School. As part of the data collection process, you will be involved in two semi-structured interviews, which will take up to one and a half hour each. The interviews are planned to be conducted at your convenience, with one near the beginning of the school year in 2017, and

another near the end of the school year in 2017. I will audio-record and later transcribe what you say. Shortly after the interview, I will provide you with a copy of your interview transcript, either as a hard copy, or soft copy via internet. You can review it and propose deletions, changes or additions to the interview transcript. You will have one week to forward any changes to me after you receive the transcript.

During the year, I will ask you to keep a Reflective Journal, to note down your experiences as you develop as a teacher. I will provide you with a journal and a list of possible topics to reflect on. I hope that you will make at least two or more entry per month in the journal, although you may find you have interesting experiences to describe each week. At the end of the year, I will scan your Reflective Journal and return the original to you as a record of your year of teaching.

### ***Your identity in the research***

During the entire research process your privacy as a research participant, and the privacy of your school will be respected and protected as much as possible. This means that your name, and that of your school, will not be mentioned in the thesis but rather pseudonyms will be used, instead. Even with the use of pseudonyms, there is still a possibility that you may be identifiable in the research, given the small size of Vanuatu's education community. Because of this, I will take care to represent your experiences as a Beginner Teacher in a fair way.

### ***What will happen to the research***

When the study is completed, my thesis will be lodged in the Australian Digital Thesis (ADT) database which you can access to view upon completion via this link - <http://www.waikato.ac.nz/library/>. In addition, the research may also be presented in workshops, at conferences, in journal articles, and in my teaching.

Please note that the Director General of Education for Vanuatu and the University of Waikato Human Research Ethics Committee have given permission for this research to proceed.

This research project has been approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee at the University of Waikato. Any questions about the ethical conduct of this research may be sent to the Secretary of the Committee, email [fass.ethics@waikato.ac.nz](mailto:fass.ethics@waikato.ac.nz), postal address, University of Waikato, Te Whare Wananga o Waikato, Private Bag 3105, Hamilton 3240.

Gayleen Tarosa ([ght12@students.waikato.ac.nz](mailto:ght12@students.waikato.ac.nz))

Phone number:

Dr. Julie Barbour ([julie.barbour@waikato.ac.nz](mailto:julie.barbour@waikato.ac.nz))

Dr. Rachel McNae ([rachel.mcnae@waikato.ac.nz](mailto:rachel.mcnae@waikato.ac.nz))

## IV.B. Consent form for Beginning Secondary Teachers

Faculty of Education  
Te Whiringa  
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THE UNIVERSITY OF  
**WAIKATO**  
*Te Whare Wānanga o Waikato*

### **Title of Project: Teacher Induction: Investigating the experiences and perceptions of Beginning Secondary Teachers (BSTs) in Vanuatu schools**

Dear Gayleen,

I, \_\_\_\_\_ (please print your name), of  
\_\_\_\_\_ (please print the name of your school) in Vanuatu have read  
and understood:

- the information about this study provided by the researcher;
- the nature of the research project and have agreed to participate as requested;
- that even if I have initially agreed to take part in the study, I can withdraw consent up to the time the interview transcript is approved;
- that taking part in this study is voluntary;
- that my identity and that of my school will be kept anonymous;
- that all of the information that I provide will be kept confidential and only be used as described in the project information sheet (publication of thesis, workshops, conference presentations, articles, teaching materials).

|                                  |  |                                 |  |
|----------------------------------|--|---------------------------------|--|
| <b>Signature of participant:</b> |  | <b>Signature of researcher:</b> |  |
| <b>Position:</b>                 |  | <b>Position:</b>                |  |
| <b>Date:</b>                     |  | <b>Date:</b>                    |  |

## IV.C. Information sheet for Principals

Faculty of Education  
Te Whiringa  
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THE UNIVERSITY OF  
**WAIKATO**  
*Te Whare Wānanga o Waikato*

### ***Title of Project: Teacher Induction: Investigating the experiences and perceptions of Beginning Secondary Teachers (BSTs) in Vanuatu schools.***

My name is Gayleen Harrison Tarosa and I have been teaching as a secondary school teacher and a teacher educator for over twenty years now in the Vanuatu Education System. I am currently on study leave undertaking postgraduate study at the University of Waikato, New Zealand. As part of my PhD thesis, I am **investigating educational experiences** with your beginning teacher/s. I would like to invite you to be one of the participants in my intended research study.

### ***Research Objective***

My study is aimed at investigating how Beginning Secondary Teachers are introduced to the teaching profession in Vanuatu schools, after they complete their teacher training at Vanuatu Institute of Teacher Education (VITE).

### ***Information about the Study***

As a Principal/School Leader, you will be aware that in Vanuatu there are a number of changes happening in our education system and one of the main ones is the proposed change by our Teaching Service Commission to have all teachers (register) be licenced to teach. My research will focus on Beginning Secondary Teachers, and their entry into the teaching profession. Particularly, I am interested in Beginning Teachers' experiences and perceptions as they enter into the education system. This topic ties closely with teacher registration, and I hope to provide recommendations to enhance professional learning for beginner teachers, which may in turn impact student achievements, resulting in improving education standards for Vanuatu in the future.

### ***Areas that you will be involved in the Study if you agree to participate***

I would like to interview you in your capacity as Principal/School Leader of a Vanuatu Secondary School, regarding your experiences of working with Beginner Teachers. As part of the data collection process, you will be involved in two semi-structured interviews, which will take up to one and a half hour each. The interviews are planned to be conducted at your convenience, with one near the beginning of the school year in 2017, and another near the end of the school year in 2017. I will audio-record and later transcribe what you say. Shortly after the interview, I will provide you with a copy of your interview transcript, either as a hard

copy, or soft copy via internet. You can review it and propose deletions, changes or additions to the interview transcript. You will have one week to forward any changes to me after you receive the transcript.

I am also interested in any policy documents that you may have in your office or archive, which are of relevance to more fully understand your work with Beginner Teachers at your school. Such documents would be public documents such as national and provincial government policies or any other documents related to the subject. These may include policies, open letters, curriculum materials, memoranda and agenda, public meeting minutes, written reports on the subject, public progress reports and newspaper clippings that might appear in the print media or anything else that you feel is relevant.

### ***Your identity in the research***

During the entire research process your privacy as a research participant, and the privacy of your school will be respected and protected as much as possible. This means that your name, and that of your school, will not be mentioned in the thesis but rather pseudonyms will be used, instead. Even with the use of pseudonyms, there is still a possibility that you may be identifiable in the research, given the small size of Vanuatu's education community. Because of this, I will take care to avoid representing you and your school in negative ways.

### ***What will happen to the research?***

When the study is completed, my thesis will be lodged in the Australian Digital Thesis (ADT) database which you can access to view upon completion via this link - <http://www.waikato.ac.nz/library/>. In addition, the research may also be presented in workshops, at conferences, in journal articles or in my teaching.

Please note that the Director General of Education for Vanuatu and the University of Waikato Human Research Ethics Committee have given permission for this research to proceed.

This research project has been approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee at the University of Waikato. Any questions about the ethical conduct of this research may be sent to the Secretary of the Committee, email [fass.ethics@waikato.ac.nz](mailto:fass.ethics@waikato.ac.nz), postal address, University of Waikato, Te Whare Wananga o Waikato, Private Bag 3105, Hamilton 3240.

Gayleen Tarosa ([gth12@students.waikato.ac.nz](mailto:gth12@students.waikato.ac.nz))

Phone number:

Dr. Julie Barbour ([julie.barbour@waikato.ac.nz](mailto:julie.barbour@waikato.ac.nz))

Dr. Rachel McNae ([rachel.mcnae@waikato.ac.nz](mailto:rachel.mcnae@waikato.ac.nz))

## IV.D. Information sheet for Principals

Faculty of Education  
Te Whiringa  
School of Educational  
Leadership and Policy  
The University of Waikato  
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***Title of Project:* Teacher Induction: Investigating the experiences and perceptions of Beginning Secondary Teachers (BSTs) in Vanuatu schools**

Dear Gayleen,

I, \_\_\_\_\_ (*please print your name*), of  
\_\_\_\_\_ (*please print the name of your school*) in Vanuatu have read  
and understood:

- the information about this study provided by the researcher;
- the nature of the research project and have agreed to participate as requested;
- that even if I have initially agreed to take part in the study, I can withdraw consent up to the time the interview transcript is approved;
- that taking part in this study is voluntary;
- that my identity and that of my school will be kept anonymous;
- that all of the information that I provide will be kept confidential and only be used as described in the project information sheet (publication of thesis, workshops, conference presentations, articles, teaching materials).

|                                  |  |                                 |  |
|----------------------------------|--|---------------------------------|--|
| <b>Signature of participant:</b> |  | <b>Signature of researcher:</b> |  |
| <b>Position:</b>                 |  | <b>Position:</b>                |  |
| <b>Date:</b>                     |  | <b>Date:</b>                    |  |

## Appendix V – Ethics Approval

Geography Programme  
School of Social Sciences  
Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences  
Te Kura Kete Aronui  
The University of Waikato  
Private Bag 3105  
Hamilton 3240  
New Zealand



Gayleen Tarosa  
Julie Barbour

General and Applied Linguistics  
School of Arts

17 March 2017

Dear Gayleen

**Re: FS2016-66 Teacher induction: Investigating the experiences and perceptions of Beginning Secondary Teachers (BSTs) during their early years of teaching in Vanuatu Schools**

Thank you for request to amend your data collection to include digital technologies. You now have formal approval for the following research activity:

- use of digital technology (Facebook, Skype, email, mobile recording) to collect responses from beginner teachers and their school leaders in Vanuatu Schools.

We encourage you to contact the committee should issues arise during your data collection, or should you wish to add further research activities or make changes to your project as it unfolds. We wish you all the best with your research. Thank-you for engaging with the process of Ethical Review.

Kind regards,



Colin McLeay  
*on behalf, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences Human Research Ethics Committee.*