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**SCHOOL-BASED PLACEMENT**  
**IN A DISTANCE**  
**INITIAL TEACHER EDUCATION PROGRAMME**

A thesis submitted in fulfilment  
of the requirements for the degree of

**Doctor of Philosophy**

in

**Education**

at

**The University of Waikato**

Hamilton, New Zealand



THE UNIVERSITY OF  
**WAIKATO**  
*Te Whare Wānanga o Waikato*

by

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## ***Abstract***

School-based experiences provide opportunities and challenges for student teachers and teacher-educators in initial teacher education (ITE). Researchers and ITE providers highlight school-based experiences as occasions for learning teaching in a supported environment, practising theory learned through study and theorising their own and others' practice. School-based experiences in distance education require greater emphasis on the importance of partnerships and relationships. For students studying by distance effective communication, community building and professional agency are important in overcoming separation and enabling authentic experiences.

This qualitative study uncovers new knowledge about distance school-based experiences using a combination of interpretive, naturalistic and case study methodologies. It offers a holistic view of the school-based experiences, seeking links and relationships between important factors. The individual and collective voices of nine student teachers, gathered through written narratives and focus group conversations, yielded rich data about their experiences and perspectives of placement in nine New Zealand primary schools. The multiple realities presented were collated to create four collective stories. The students' collective stories were validated through semi-structured interviews with the coordinating teachers and university lecturers who worked with them. A conceptual framework, developed as a model, focused the analysis and interpretation of the data.

While each school-based placement could have been a case study on its own, this investigation found six key factors common to the nine settings. Two findings were of particular significance. First, as earlier researchers reported, the relationship between student and the classroom teacher was critical, even more so for student teachers in a distance school-based experience. Second, student teachers who had the confidence and encouragement to engage with a wider range of professionals created more opportunities to learn teaching. For them the whole school became their 'village' for learning, where children and colleagues were an integral part of their learning community, creating opportunities to interact with a wider range of learners. This allowed them to view teaching and learning through various perspectives. Other findings were, third, that members of school-based

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communities who regarded students as committed, rewarded them with time, support and opportunities for teaching learning. Fourth, support and time provided to all partners in a school-based placement enabled them to better manage the demands of a placement. Fifth, being well-informed as placement leaders (teachers and lecturers) conveyed confidence and signified they understood relevant aspects of the placement, which enabled them to meet obligations in supporting the student teacher. Sixth, I uncovered mixed views on whether student teachers should be placed in a school where they had an earlier experience, for example as a teacher aide or parent helper. Most participants supported the idea of distance student teachers working in a familiar school, a significant issue for prospective student teachers living in small or remote communities in New Zealand.

Finally, the conceptual framework was re-examined in light of the findings. It emerged as an appropriate theoretical model for the purpose of guiding review and development of school-based experiences, especially for those students studying by distance.

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## Chapter One: This study and its context

In starting this research, I felt much like an angler does setting off on his hobby. An angler knows that he wants to catch fish as food or sport; is aware of what is available in his tackle box as he sets off. As the researcher I knew that I wanted to better understand the school-based experiences of the student teachers involved in a distance teacher education programme. My ‘tackle-box’ already contained knowledge about teacher education, student teacher experiences and research methodology. From this start there are many decisions for the angler to make. Should he fish from his boat, on the shore, in the open sea, a harbour or bay to get best results? Should he use a favoured spot or a new one? What equipment should he use? Which rod? Which hooks and sinkers? What bait? These are all important decisions when going fishing and the decision-making is also complex and important when beginning research – settings, participants, methods, etc. Both the angler and myself as researcher needed patience and ability, support and guidance from a range of other people: the courage to take a risk while also considering safety. Also, knowing how long this would take to achieve and just how challenging relates to both angling and research. Is the angler happy with the small blue cod or should he keep trying for an elusive big snapper? If it is a snapper that he hooked, how long should he commit to landing it? When he gets it to the surface, has he ‘caught’ it or will there be moments when it slips away, just as when the research appears to be complete only to discover more to add, revisions to carry out. The parallels between angling and researching were obvious – both admirable and worthy endeavours.

### ***1.1 Motivations for this study of ITE school-based experiences***

I came to this research naturally through curiosity in my work: wanting to be better informed so that the school-based experiences for student teachers in distance initial teacher education (ITE) could be of the highest quality and value. My background and ongoing work and discussions with colleagues in distance teacher education prompted this, in particular, interest in the quality and value of the one-day, school-based experiences for these students. At the outset, I believed

that changes were not needed in the way distance teacher education school-based experiences were functioning at our institution. Rather I wanted to be able to better explain these specific experiences and to share with the wider ITE community and students the factors that might facilitate a high retention and success rate for students and schools. I wanted to discover steps to assist, better establish and maintain distance settings where there would be ongoing success for students. I was aware of the isolation and separation students experienced on distance school-based experiences. They often felt isolated from other students, their university lecturers and the university even though the school-based experience was intended to counter such feelings of isolation. There was also a sense of separation between the university and schools. This separation impacted on the integration of theory and practice and collaboration between placement schools and the university.

I also wanted an opportunity to further explore qualitative research, to build on my knowledge and skills from my Masters degree. Following that first qualitative investigation I pursued some small-scale research projects. In my work I had developed interests in the work of university lecturers completing liaison and evaluative visits to student teachers on school-based experiences, the development of the school-based experiences for on-campus students, distance students' academic life and pastoral support, the role of the classroom teacher as a school-based teacher educator, and the reflective practices of student teachers on school-based experiences. My interest in qualitative methodologies developed further as a result of participating in a study using alternative narrative inquiry methods. The study reported in this thesis was planned to generate findings, theories and recommendations that would advance the existing knowledge on school-based experiences associated with distance initial teacher education programmes.

### ***1.2 My place in ITE and MMP***

I would like to think that my endeavours in teacher education began in 1966 with an interview for a place in Wellington Teachers' College's two-year diploma programme, however it may have started even earlier with my first encounters with teachers and teaching. People influential in my growing years included

teachers from my family and my own schooling, impacting positively on my understanding about learning and teaching. This background may well have guided me first into teaching and then in 1992 into initial teacher education. Up to 1984 I had continued with my own study and then when I moved to teach near the University of Waikato I became involved with student teachers and programmes. Previous to this I was some distance from ITE providers.

In 1996 I was offered the opportunity to teach in the new distance ITE programme for aspiring primary teachers. As a lecturer in physical education at the time I accepted the challenge and, with a colleague, attempted to adapt our oncampus papers. I continued as a course lecturer and visiting lecturer through until 2006 when I was appointed to the position of Coordinator of this Mixed Mode Presentation (MMP) programme. Since then I have continued as course lecturer in two papers, visiting lecturer for a range of base-schools, and programme coordinator. This gave me a thorough ‘insider’s’ view of the programme. However, I knew only from an outsider’s perspective what occurred in base-schools as I visited many and talked with students and teachers. I did not have time or opportunities to rigorously explore the experiences of those involved to ascertain their view of the placement – its value, success, appeal, variables, factors, problems or strengths. This background, interest and work prompted my inquiry to find evidence that would develop my knowledge and verify my speculations.

### ***1.3 Scoping Initial Teacher Education nationally***

In 2005 there were seventeen providers of ITE programmes nationally for primary teachers in New Zealand (Kane, 2005), seven of them universities. Given this number there will be variation between the aims, expectations, modes of delivery, experiences, personnel and programme structures. However each must work within the framework of the New Zealand Teachers Council (NZTC) requirements for teacher registration.

#### ***1.3.1 Becoming a primary teacher in New Zealand***

To become a primary school classroom teacher in New Zealand it is currently a requirement to attain registration through the NZTC. In order to achieve this,

prospective teachers must meet the following requirements: be of good character; be fit to be a teacher; be satisfactorily trained to teach; and have satisfactory recent teaching experience (New Zealand Teachers Council, n.d.). This requires entry into and the successful completion of an approved initial teacher education programme followed by the successful completion of two years supervised teaching in a school. As in many other countries, initial teacher education for primary teaching in New Zealand is “conducted and controlled exclusively by providers external to schools” (Jones, 2001, p. 138). In 2005 about two-thirds of all primary student teacher enrolments in New Zealand were with providers of initial teacher education (ITE) located within seven universities (Rivers, 2006, p. 7). This figure will have increased to about 90% with the further merger between two Colleges of Education with their local university.

The providers throughout New Zealand employ various approaches in the education of pre-service teachers. Most commonly there are two pathways for primary school teachers in New Zealand to gain an approved teaching qualification: a three or four year undergraduate degree or a one-year graduate diploma in teaching. The University of Waikato offers both of these pathways. The graduate diploma is offered on-campus only. A three-year undergraduate degree is offered both face-to-face on-campus at two sites and by distance (or mixed mode). Providers also vary in their emphasis on school-based experiences, from being predominantly school-based in one programme through to university-based with limited school-based time in another (Kane, 2005).

### *1.3.2 Modes of delivery*

Face-to-face is the most common form of delivery of ITE programmes in New Zealand. These typically involve students learning teaching by attending classes such as lectures, workshops, tutorials and seminars. Typically these take place in one central location such as on a university campus although there are variations between providers – in fact between programmes at times. In recent years these learning opportunities have been supplemented and supported by online components. The undergraduate degree and graduate diploma programmes are also supported by school-based experiences (SBE). In her review of ITE policies and practices, Kane (2005) reported that 73% of all primary programmes

were delivered face-to-face in New Zealand with only 16% being delivered by distance, web-based or mixed mode (11% were field-based programmes). Only eight of the 49 different primary qualification pathways were delivered by distance. Students in these programmes distant from the campus learn teaching through a variety of media. Their programme might be offered extramurally through paper or web-based via the Internet. They might also be required to attend residential courses. Terms used for this web-based delivery include flexible, distance, open, elearning, mixed-mode or blended. These programmes also involve some level of school-based experiences.

### *1.3.3 School-based experiences for student teachers in ITE*

In all New Zealand primary ITE programmes school-based experiences are provided for student teachers. They are designed for the student teacher to work closely in a school with one teacher and a group of children over consecutive days so that they can learn teaching ‘like a real teacher’. Typically in school-based experiences (SBE) students are placed with a practising classroom teacher for an extended, concentrated period of time where they have set requirements and tasks to complete while learning teaching<sup>1</sup>. Programme providers give such school-based experiences various names, attempting to capture the distinctiveness of their particular programme components. Researchers and writers use the name variations in literature so it is important to highlight some names and the features of the school-based experience at the centre of this study. When the literature refers to school experiences (SE), teaching practice (TP), practice teaching (PT) or practicum, such examples are typically consecutive days, intensive experiences. For example, the University of Waikato’s Bachelor of Teaching third year students are required to complete an eight-week practicum within a local classroom where the student teacher is required to have “full control” of the class and programme for at least two weeks. In these experiences the student teacher is expected to “become the teacher” for an extended period. Many programme providers also require their student teachers to be involved in teaching practice experiences that are less intense, maybe over an extended period but without the

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<sup>1</sup> In this report the term “learning teaching” is used in place of the more common “learning to teach” as I consider that teaching is so complex and dynamic that student teachers must do more than learn to..., or learn to be..., they must also learn about..., learn through..., learn for..., learn while teaching.



expectation of “becoming teacher” for more than one practice lesson at a time. Such experiences are often referred to as field experiences (FE) or placements. For example, the University of Waikato’s MMP programme requires student teachers to attend one full day each week throughout the first three semesters of their programme. These school-based experiences are the context of this study.

Providing practical experiences for student teachers based in schools is reported by many researchers as critical to the success of initial teacher education programmes (Baxter, 2003). While none argue that these should be discontinued, the extent to which they achieve stated aims is not clear. In their review of available New Zealand literature, Cameron and Baker (2004) found that mostly, those involved in ITE “view the practicum as an essential component of learning to teach” (p. 43): the involvement of schools is viewed by many as “one indispensable part of any teacher preparation program” (Posner, 2000, p. 3). While universities may control the majority of programmes, involving schools and practising teachers is “recognized as an important component of teacher education” (Sutherland, Scanlon, & Sperring, 2005, p. 79). However, the extent to which school-based experiences should be included in ITE programmes continues to be debated throughout the teacher education world and none less so than in New Zealand.

#### *1.3.4 Aims of a school-based experience*

The aims of school-based experiences vary between ITE providers. Based on their research into New Zealand teachers’ colleges in the 1980s, Ramsay and Battersby (1988) reported the stated aim of school-based experiences as integrating theory and practice. In her review of ITE policy and practice in New Zealand, Kane (2005) highlighted that SBEs provide opportunities “for students to implement the learning outcomes of their courses” (p. 105), giving context to their learning. Typically, some students have difficulty relating what is taught in their university courses to everyday classroom practice (Calder, Faire & Schon, 1993), giving these SBE opportunities greater significance. Kane (2005) emphasised that a SBE is “an essential component of ITE and is critical if student teachers are to have opportunities to make sense of how theory and practice are interdependent” (p. 173). All ITE providers are required to meet the NZTC guidelines of a

minimum of 14 weeks total practicum for their programme to gain approval (Rivers, 2006) and Kane's (2005) research indicated that "38% met the recommendation of 20 or more weeks over three years" (p. 162), regarded as adequate time to achieve stated aims.

### *1.3.5 School-based teacher educators*

Evidence abounds regarding the importance of classroom teachers as school-based teacher educators (Beck & Kosnik, 2002; Maynard, 2000; McGee, 1996b) and Posner (2000) suggested that they were "probably the greatest influence on the quality of [a SBE], particularly for the student teacher" (p. 113). Australian based researchers Murray-Harvey, Slee, Lawson and colleagues (2000) identified the quality of the school-based teacher "as a key component of success in the practicum" (p. 33), a view shared by other researchers (Greenwood, Cobley, Mikaere-Wallis, & Fa'afai, n.d.; Timperley, 2001). This importance is also reflected in the appointment of teachers in the 'normal'<sup>2</sup> schools closely associated with some teacher education providers in New Zealand. These teachers are appointed for their classroom experience and effective practice.

Internationally, classroom teachers who work as school-based teacher educators have various titles such as "on-site teacher educators" (Levin & Rock, 2003, p. 138), school-based teacher educators, cooperating teachers, practicum advisers (Clarke, 1997), associate teachers, placement teachers or coordinating teachers. The ability of these teachers to work with student teachers is fundamental to effective school-based experiences (Maynard, 2000). While the title might indicate some difference in the actual role and responsibilities, they are classroom teachers actively involved in one aspect of a student teacher's ITE programme. Primarily schools are involved in ITE because of "the support and guidance teachers provide to preservice teachers in their periods of practice teaching or practicum" (Sutherland et al., 2005, p. 79) rather than any direct input to programmes. The effectiveness of school-based experiences in ITE depends on the number of quality teachers who voluntarily make themselves available as school-based teacher educators. However, in New Zealand the number of

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<sup>2</sup> Normal school is the term assigned in New Zealand initial teacher education, to those schools that work closely with ITE providers, giving student teachers access to children, classrooms and teachers to carry out school-based experiences: sometimes referred to as Laboratory Schools in international literature

classroom teachers who volunteer appears to be declining which raises questions about quality. Clarke (1997) reminded us, “Good gymnasts do not automatically make good gymnastic coaches” and posed the question for teacher educators: “Are we prepared to allow ‘professional readiness’ to mean ‘anyone who wants to volunteer?’” (p. 177). With these issues prevalent nationally, decisions were made in this local programme to address some of these.

### **1.4 ITE at Waikato – a Mixed Mode Presentation**

The programme at the centre of this study is specific to the University of Waikato. While student teachers enrolled in this programme are spread throughout the North Island of New Zealand, the programme is delivered from the Hamilton campus. It is called the Mixed Mode Presentation programme or MMP colloquially.

#### *1.4.1 History of MMP*

The MMP programme had its beginnings in 1995 when a group of principals approached the Dean of The University of Waikato’s School of Education for assistance in providing opportunities for potential teachers in their area to study and teach locally – they needed to sustain a local supply of new teachers rather than have them go off to the city centres never to return. Various strategies had been tried previous to this without great success for a number of reasons such as travelling distance and the timing of opportunities. Following the exploratory work of three staff members (Clive McGee, Nola Campbell and Russell Yates) the programme was made available in 1997 to students in districts some distance from the Hamilton campus including Poverty Bay, King Country and Coromandel. In this early stage, enrolment was restricted to ‘older’ students who lived more than one hour’s driving from Hamilton campus and who were deemed immobile and thus not able to attend lectures in the on-campus programme.

#### *1.4.2 Structure of MMP*

This programme was originally called the Mixed Mode Presentation because of the four elements in its composition – an electronic mode (Internet); an oncampus mode (residential block courses); a school-based mode (placements) and practica. First, the majority of coursework is delivered electronically via the

Internet. Content, which would normally be presented through lectures, workshops and tutorials is made available to the MMP students electronically. This delivery style initially presented many pedagogical and learning challenges to staff and students alike. Not only is material available for students at all hours but also they are required to be well disciplined in reading and interacting with course members – staff and colleagues. Mostly the coursework is available through the Internet but other electronic media are utilised from time to time. This elearning provides students with a great deal of flexibility.

Second, all students are required to attend three one-week residential block courses each year. This aspect of the programme engages students face-to-face with colleagues and staff. For staff it is a valuable time to meet students, cover critical course content, introduce students to course structures and technology and deal with general programme related topics. It is certainly useful for students to meet, interact and network with each other.

Third, these students must attend a local school for a school-based experience. These schools are referred to as base-schools. Studying at a distance means each student is most likely to be in a community without other students from the same programme. On-campus students attend a *normal* school for their teaching practice tasks as arranged by staff through their programme. MMP students arrange to attend a local primary school where they learn teaching through one or more teachers. They attend this SBE for one full day per week throughout the first three semesters of their programme – about 36 full days. During these regular full-day sessions, they may complete required tasks, observe and participate in the general running of the class and school. Such tasks are usually set and supervised by course lecturers and are designed to help students theorise their practice and practice the theory. Students also have ‘free’ time in the class where no tasks are required and they can be independent learners, fitting in with the classroom curriculum and working with the teacher as a professional colleague. Students are encouraged to discuss their in-school day with the teacher, colleagues and lecturers and in some situations a group of students might work closely together on this. The classroom teacher in this programme is not required to evaluate the student. The role is considered a supervisory one, where

the teacher becomes a ‘critical friend’ to the student and engages in such activities as advising, mentoring, resourcing and reflecting.

This placement is not to be confused with the practicum, which is the fourth component of this programme. The practicum is a concentrated period of four, six and eight weeks in this MMP programme, where each student spends the full period working with one classroom teacher learning teaching. During these three practica, students are required to spend full days practising ‘like a real teacher’ in a range of schools and classrooms.

Underpinning the MMP programme is the belief that teaching is a socio-cultural practice (Clarke & Jarvis-Selinger, 2005; White, 2006a). In the first instance teaching is relational and opportunities to develop sound relationships with others is set to occur in all modes of the MMP programme – online in discussions, with other professionals in school-based experiences, on campus and during practica. In addition, teaching is complex so all four modes provide opportunities for students to explore and become embedded in a range of diverse school cultures where ethical, emotional and professional issues will be experienced, especially through the two school-based – placement and practicum. Teaching is also very personal and this programme provides a range of opportunities for individuals to develop knowledge about children, teaching and learning, and to co-construct their understanding of learning and teaching with a range of colleagues, lecturers and teachers. The component modes of this programme provide diverse experiences for learning teaching.

#### *1.4.3 Coordinating teachers in the MMP programme*

At the establishment of the MMP programme, much thought was given to the title for the school-based teachers. The teachers needed a title that set them apart from the role played by teachers in the regular practicum or other school-based experience, as their role was to be different. The title of *coordinating teacher* was chosen as best fit for the role of this teacher as, at the time, it was felt it required the ability to work across the school as well as the expected supervision, mentoring and coaching.

The quality of the coordinating teachers in this MMP programme is dependent on the decision of the base-school principal as in most locations there

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are not too many teachers who make themselves available. The university is obliged to accept whosoever volunteers their services. This is particularly so for the MMP programme, which has student teachers located in schools distant from the Hamilton campus and the choice of school and indeed teacher, was left to the student. The majority of the base-schools associated with this programme are small in roll and teacher numbers. With many of the base-schools being quite remote from the Hamilton campus and programme personnel there is often a lack of connection and accountability between the school and university. The pressures of time and work exacerbate this for both the coordinating teachers and university lecturers: there are limited opportunities to meet and collaborate. Professional development opportunities focusing on the role and responsibilities of the coordinating teachers are not commonly available locally or centrally.

### ***1.5 This study***

This study investigated part of the University of Waikato's Bachelor of Teaching (primary) (BTchg) Mixed Mode Presentation (MMP) programme – a three-year undergraduate programme for prospective primary school teachers offered by distance learning. The thesis of this research project was that the perceived success of the distance primary, teacher-education school-based experiences as a learning opportunity is dependent on the existence of certain key factors such as personal relationships, belonging to the school, commitment to learning, knowledge of all aspects of the programme, support in meeting the challenges and the experiences brought to the partnership by all. This study began within my own journey and will have as its conclusion, formative evaluations that serve to further inform and develop existing practices for partners of SBEs.

### ***1.6 The structure of the thesis***

This is a report of an inquiry into the participants' perceptions about a school-based teaching practice experience and the application of a model to these placements. Chapter One provides a rationale for this study, exploring the intellectual, practical and personal goals identified as the basis for investigating school-based experiences. It describes why I set about exploring the perceptions

of a group of students learning teaching through a tertiary distance education programme.

Chapter Two is a review of the literature on school-based aspects of ITE programmes. The chapter begins by introducing key researchers who have addressed these issues. It then reviews the relevant literature in three sections. Presented first are key ideas relating to distance learning followed by an overview of studies highlighting opportunities for learning teaching during teaching practice experiences. The third section of this chapter explores concepts associated with school-based experiences as a community for learning. Much of the teacher education literature focuses on practicum experiences so while this study is investigating aspects associated with placements the review includes the broader field.

Chapter Three begins to address the question, “What are key factors of a primary teacher education school-based placement?” This chapter outlines the creation and development processes associated with a model representing the key factors. The model was developed as a conceptual framework used to underpin this study.

Chapter Four presents the research methodology and design; qualitative, interpretative, narrative inquiry. It describes the research design in detail with explanation and justification of the evidence gathering strategies used. It includes the research validation looking at strengths, limitations, generalisations, triangulation and ethical considerations. It also looks at the research process in detail. The importance of the inclusion of student teacher voice through narrative and interview approaches is explained and then how I conveyed their collective stories to other participants for critique and validation.

Chapter Five presents the research findings through the words and voices of the participants, addressing the question “How do these perceived key factors link and which factors are critical to a base-school placement?” It begins by introducing the student teachers’ collective stories and is then organised into six main themes that emerged through the process of data gathering, interpretation and analysis. These themes are: *meeting the demands of this distance ITE placement; partnerships through commitment to this ITE programme; clarifying*

*the partners' roles and responsibilities in this distance ITE programme; thinking and talking teaching while on placement; relationship building in this distance ITE programme; and participation for learning in this school-based ITE placement.* The chapter reports the student teachers' viewpoints and includes data from the teachers' and lecturers' interviews as support and comparison.

Chapter Six discusses the implications of the findings with reference to the literature. This chapter sets out to address the question "Which key factors are perceived as critical in a base-school placement in a distance ITE programme?" The discussion is presented in six themes: *the influential relationships in a placement; the base-school as a village for learning; opportunities for reflection on teaching; support for managing the demands; knowledgeable partners being confident; and background experiences in a base-school.* Throughout this chapter the literature from Chapter Two is used to interpret, support, explain and evaluate the findings in relation to the perceptions of the participants. Findings that were not anticipated are presented along with those anticipated but did not appear in the data.

Chapter Seven reviews the study, highlights the conclusions reached from the discussion, applies the model described in Chapter Three, acknowledges some limitations and recommends further research. This final chapter addresses the question "Does the developed model provide a way of explaining a distance school-based placement?" It examines the research implications and contribution, and provides further suggestions. Evaluation of the model highlights how the views of the participants are congruent with (or different from) my own theorising about the factors of school-based placements.

### **1.7 Conclusion**

This research focused on describing and explaining the school-based teaching placement from the perspective of a sample of MMP programme student teachers, coordinating teachers and university lecturers. This chapter has provided the rationale for this research and outlined key aspects of this specific teacher education programme as the setting, and my position as researcher. In my talking with teachers and researchers, the mention of placement immediately conjured up the concept of teaching practicum such as is explored by Kane (2005) in her



review of policies and practices. However, this study was not looking at a teaching practicum but rather at what is called a ‘base-school placement’ in this ITE programme. The next chapter is a comprehensive review of contemporary and seminal ITE literature.

## Chapter Two: Literature review

### 2.1 Introduction

The objective in reviewing literature is to create an overview of the field of study, to be well informed about contemporary and seminal studies and to be knowledgeable about the topic before seeking new learning. This chapter reviews relevant literature, contextualises this study, identifies contemporary knowledge and highlights gaps in the research literature. A range of literature is evaluated, reviewed and analysed, focused on school-based experiences (SBE) for student teachers in initial teacher education (ITE) and aspects of distance education. In their theorising about teacher education, both Loughran in Australia (2007) and Kane in New Zealand (2005), argued that teaching about teaching is complex and demanding, suggesting that the complexity and multi-facetedness is embedded in teaching itself thus requiring in-depth investigation through literature and research. Loughran has written extensively about learning teaching, reporting on studies, typically qualitative, with large numbers of predominantly pre-service teachers. Kane's comprehensive review of New Zealand ITE, commissioned by the Ministry of Education, provides valuable information relating to ITE and practicum in particular. Kane (2005) emphasised that ITE policy requires providers to respond to "the demands and expectations from a number of quarters" (p. xii) including government, schools, communities, students and the teaching profession: it is an intellectually and morally demanding endeavour, reflected in the depth and breadth of associated literature. As Green and Reid (2004) reminded, all ITE is situated in a specific context and it "should always be understood as a situated practice. As such, it is always located somewhere, socially, spatially and historically" (p. 255). I contend that the factors that are critical to the success of the distance ITE primary school-based experiences (SBE) being studied include the provision of real teaching contexts and developing robust partnerships for student teachers to learn the complexities and demands of teaching as a socio-cultural endeavour.

In preparing this review, the task was to locate national and international literature that examined the school-based experiences of student teachers, that

investigated aspects of studying at a distance, and that focused on initial teacher education. In order to ensure that relevant literature was accessed and considered in helping to address the research questions for this study, the following keywords were used. Each term was used independently as well as in combination with others: *initial teacher training, teacher education, initial teacher education; pre-service teaching, teaching practice experience, practicum, field experience, teaching practice, placement, practice teaching; distance learning, online learning, blended learning, elearning; school-based teacher educator, mentor, associate teacher, supervising teacher, cooperating teacher, coordinating teacher; university-based teacher educator, teacher educator, lecturer, tutor, supervising lecturer; student teacher*. Using these terms and phrases, searches were undertaken: through electronic educational databases such as *Proquest, EBSCO, ERIC, IngentaConnect, Informaworld, IndexNZ*, and through the Internet search engine *Google Scholar* to locate published journal articles and unpublished theses; through the websites of teacher education organisations such as *Australian Teacher Education Association (ATEA), Teacher Education Forum of Aotearoa/New Zealand (TEFANZ), Open and Distance Learning Association of Australia (ODLAA), Society for Information Technology and Teacher Education (SITE)*, and *Practical Experiences in Professional Education (PEPE)* and educational research associations such as *NZARE (New Zealand), AARE (Australia), BERA (Britain) and AERA (America)* to locate conference presentations. The selection process used the following filters for screening:

- Relevance to the context of this study – New Zealand, distance teacher education school-based experiences.
- Seminal works and writers in the field of initial teacher education and school-based experiences, nationally and internationally, from English-speaking, developed countries.
- Currency of the literature using post-1990 as a benchmark. With the changes that have both occurred and been suggested in the 20 years leading up to this study it was important to ensure that the majority of the research was contemporary.

The literature is reviewed in three sections, each examining, critiquing and analysing theory, research and practices. The first section examines literature associated with the distinctiveness of learning teaching at a distance. Highlighted is the importance of communication, collaboration and trust within the school-based experience partnership, enabling the professional agency of the student teacher. While these aspects may not be distinctive on their own, together they impact that each of these also has on the potential isolation and/or separation experienced by these students. The second section examines the concept of learning opportunities provided for student teachers involved in teaching practice. In this section the resourcing of school-based experiences in terms of the allocation and management of time and people, and the freedom to practice and innovate in the classroom setting are evaluated. The review investigates the concept of learning teaching in a practical setting, with each student teacher as a participant learner and the implications associated with developing effective learning environments for students to theorise their practice and apply their theories in practice. The third section examines effective partnerships. This section reports on the concept of establishing partnerships in ITE through effective relationships, and in particular, the implications of how relationships impact on communities of inquiry and effectiveness of learning teaching. As part of these partnerships, the roles and associated responsibilities of the partners in SBEs are examined and contextualised for this study, looking at models, understanding, and professional development opportunities.

## ***2.2 Key researchers in framing this review***

In reviewing the literature for this research I have chosen first to highlight and contrast a selected group of researchers, who I believe have had the greatest impact and provide substantial underpinnings in developing my knowledge and understanding in this field of study. Each has researched an aspect directly relevant to my study of a distance, school-based experience for a group of University of Waikato student teachers and yet is different in other ways. Such differences may be the methodology employed, the context of the investigation, aspects of their sample or the conclusions reached from their findings.

Clive Beck and Clare Kosnik's Canadian studies draw many parallels with my own research. First, their focus is typically on the work that school-based teachers do with student teachers on SBE placements. While the programmes they studied were one-year post-graduate diplomas for primary student teachers compared to this three-year undergraduate programme, there were common aspects: the one-day placement throughout the year leading up to an intense practicum; and the effort made by faculty to synchronise the university programme with the school-based programme. In theorising their qualitative studies they draw strongly on a variety of other researchers also common to my study such as Maynard, Zeichner and Bullough. Their data gathering methods were largely surveys and interviews with a small target population of 50 to 100, including teachers, students and university lecturers. Participant involvement from their target group is generally high, more than 50% and within these boundaries, they have not attempted to generalise findings for their readers. While their school-based experiences were in close proximity to the university campus and staff, the context for my study was at a distance. This difference allowed the participants in their studies to have more immediate interactions with the partners rather than the remoteness or isolation of a distance placement. However, the cohort model employed in their programmes was similar to this Mixed Mode Presentation (MMP) programme in that the student teachers studied together, developing a close bond not always seen in other programmes. They made it clear in their findings that key to successful placements is collaboration and communication by all three partners, where the student teacher is treated as *teacher* by those responsible for their learning teaching.

Rosie Le Cornu is concerned with the discourse of practicum experiences and in particular, re-positioning the partners in the SBE as co-constructors of knowledge. In seeking to better understand the functions of the partners in SBEs, her efforts have been to modify the role of what classroom teachers do from one of being 'supervisor' to one of 'co-learner', perhaps unlike Beck and Kosnik who refer to their teachers as supervisors. Her interviews and observations of small samples of primary teachers in South Australia are extensively theorised, giving a sense of confidence to apply her ideas to my own teaching and investigation. She is particularly interested in 'relationships for learning', typically between the

student teacher and classroom teacher, but not exclusively. She has found that given support, agency and affirming feedback, student teachers are more likely to seek opportunities for reflection. Her exploration into how technology might be helpful in developing practicum and learning communities is also relevant to this study.

Mary Simpson researches the area of distance learning in New Zealand. While her writing has focused primarily on one ITE programme involving a small cohort, her reading, research and conference presentations have included other New Zealand researchers and ITE programmes. Her qualitative studies bring a local perspective to the limited amount of literature available on distance initial teacher education and SBEs. Of interest to me has been Simpson's investigation and interpretation of the programme that is at the centre of this study. Many of her investigations have been in collaboration with Bill Anderson, both experienced researchers in regional New Zealand universities. Simpson's findings linking the effective use of technology to facilitate dialogue between the SBE parties for better communication and support for the student, inform this study.

Wendy Hastings' ongoing research employs interviews, narratives and action research to investigate the views of teachers and students in New South Wales. While her work is moving into the emotional aspect of the classroom teacher as mentor, much like Le Cornu she brings a regional perspective to this work. Grounded firmly in international literature, her investigations gathered and analysed data from a relatively small sample, which represented more than 60% of the target population of less than 50. Her case study participants were school-based teachers with some triangulation through student teachers in a one-year post-graduate secondary programme across a range of curriculum areas. Hastings' studies are similar to Beck and Kosnik's in that the goal is to gather evidence for developing their own ITE programmes. Her findings highlight the importance of establishing the SBE as a community of professional learning, where close collegial partnerships and collaboration are the norm.

Clive McGee has researched and written about a range of issues associated with SBEs from programmes at the University of Waikato over an extensive

period. He has studied participants in both oncampus and distance programmes. His qualitative methodology has employed interview, survey and narrative methods. Generally his target population has not been large and his sample has been about 20-25% of a cohort of about 200 student teachers. While his participants have been predominantly associated with primary ITE programmes, they have been in both undergraduate degrees and graduate diplomas. McGee's studies have not been focused only on teaching experiences, also exploring student teachers' experiences working with university lecturers, which gives his work a broader perspective for this study. Of relevance in his work have been issues of: supportive relationships, opportunities to experience the realities of teaching in context, student status and difficulties for ITE students when under pressure to conform, meeting expectations of other ITE partners, and the length and supervision of a SBE. He also found that student teachers responded differently to similar SBEs.

Trish Maynard brings a UK (Wales) perspective to my knowledge of SBEs. Her focus is mainly on student teachers' perspectives in primary schools. Her participating students were working with classroom teachers or as she prefers to call them, mentors, in one-year post-graduate diploma programmes where partnerships between schools and university were well-developed, similar to the local work of Ferrier-Kerr (2005). Maynard's main form of evidence gathering has been interviewing and observation (group and solo) of about 20% of a cohort. Maynard openly acknowledges that her participants volunteered for her studies, raising the possibility that only student teachers with positive experiences and views participated. She made no attempt to generalise from her findings but rather developed a deeper understanding of the students' experiences. Also like many other researchers, Maynard was an integral part of the student teachers' experiences, being their university lecturer, and it may be that such involvement has impacted her data, much as mine may also be influenced. Her conclusions about good practices in mentoring being to provide opportunities for student learning through participation and observation were relevant for this study. Additionally, she contributed knowledge regarding the concept of 'student teacher as learner' raising the value of relationships between the SBE partners. She

highlights how these relationships aid the development of teacher identity and awareness of a growing sense of becoming a teacher.

Peter Lind was also an integral part of his participants' experiences. He completed qualitative case study research by interviewing six triads of student teacher, classroom teacher and university lecturer involved in a three-year undergraduate primary ITE programme at a regional university in New Zealand. This was a small-scale study that employed the voices of participants from authentic contexts to highlight the strengths and limitations of a typical SBE in New Zealand. These authentic contexts were the 'real' classrooms in which a cohort of student teachers completed their practicum. While Lind used narrative inquiry to describe and better understand the SBE in his own programme, he also used his research to explore potential to change the way ITE providers perceive SBEs generally. His writing promotes the concept of SBE as a learning community where values, purpose and roles are openly shared and critiqued. As with other researchers, he highlighted the importance of relationships, communication, support for learning, professional agency, reflection and belonging. His recommendations suggest that learning teaching must be treated as *emotional practice* for each partner rather than just the learning of the technical skills of teaching.

Each of these key researchers contributed to this study and referenced further literature for consideration. Their findings expanded my knowledge and understanding of SBEs, distance learning and initial teacher education. Their research underpinned this study, emphasising the complexity of learning teaching, the conflicting needs and demands of each partner, and the importance of opportunities to practice the realities of teaching in context.

It has not been easy to locate literature that is based on studies that explored a SBE similar to the one in this programme. The majority of literature is about practicum experiences, those more intense experiences, whether in primary or secondary settings. What follows next is a review and critique of the research and writing that focuses on the distinctive feature of this study – the fact that these student teachers are located at a distance from the university's campus and therefore complete their SBE at a distance.



### **2.3 The distinctiveness of learning teaching at a distance**

*Distance education* has been defined as an educational process in which teachers and learners are separated in space and/or time for some or all of the time of study and in which the learning materials take over some of the traditional role of the teacher. Learning materials play a central role, incorporating a variety of media and, in most systems, provision is made for students to interact with tutors and other students as a means of support. (Robinson & Latchem, 2003b, pp. 28-29)

Literature addressing issues arising from programmes delivering ITE using a distance approach in New Zealand is sparse, primarily because such programmes are not common. Simpson (2002) confirmed this, identifying few studies focusing directly on learning teaching at a distance. There is however a growing body of research into learning and teaching at a distance which this review has drawn on. Studies in New Zealand by Campbell and Yates (1997), Simpson (2002) and Delany and Wenmoth (2003) reported on the adaptation of existing programmes to provide direct opportunities to learn teaching within rural communities. While all three of these sources have informed this review, they were limited in that they were small reports of their local programmes. Campbell and Yates reported about this same Waikato programme in its early development. Simpson wrote about the provision of distance ITE in New Zealand at a time when it was still in its infancy. Her comparisons were with a Massey University programme that was based primarily on a paper-based extra-mural model. Delany and Wenmoth's article was a small report highlighting Christchurch College of Education's programme offerings, indicating how the model employed assisted small communities. Interestingly, researchers reported limited international literature available on initial teacher education and distance learning for primary teaching (Moon, 1997; Perraton, 1993; Robinson & Latchem, 2003c). Predominantly, the available distance learning literature focused on programmes developed for in-service teacher education and curriculum reform, especially in the developing world (Perraton, 2000; Wideen & Grimmer, 1995).

The challenges associated with isolation and distance for teacher educators and their student teachers engaged in open, distance and flexible learning have been the primary focus for some researchers. These challenges include the costs associated with 'reducing' the distance (Moon, 1997), the pedagogy of the teacher educators (Craig & Perraton, 2003; Robinson & Latchem, 2003a), maintaining

contact with the learners (Moon, 1997), the utilisation of technologies to engage students (Collis & Jung, 2003; Moon, 1997) and divesting responsibility to the school-based educators (Moon & Robinson, 2003; Pimm & Selinger, 1995; Prescott & Robinson, 1993). Other distance-learning researchers reported on the challenges associated with collaboration between university and schools. Simpson's (2002) comparison of the provision of distance ITE reported few programmes attempting to address partnership issues associated with SBEs for distance student teachers. Anderson's (2004) investigation into establishing effective online learning communities found the impact of communication among students and between partners improved opportunities for collaboration. This past focus on pedagogy, technology, communication and collaboration posed a difficulty for this study in terms of locating sufficient studies specifically investigating distance SBEs.

Student teachers' capacity to manage the isolation is also important (Vonderwell, 2003). With the "infusion of technology" (Campbell-Gibson, 1997, p. 6) to facilitate distance learning, a number of researchers have explored how learners use Information Technologies (IT) to overcome challenges associated with distance. Reducing the 'distance' between student teachers and their teacher educators using technology for online discussions and tutorials was the focus of several studies (Ballantyne & Mylonas, 2001; Bates, 1997; Black & Holford, 2002; Nelligan, 2006; Simpson, 2002). These researchers affirmed Campbell-Gibson's (1997) conclusions that, "providing access to a video signal, a radio band ..., does not automatically result in a successful learning experience" (p. 7). Also, Donaghy, McGee, Ussher and Yates's (2003) online investigation of a sample of distance students shows that more than technology is required to overcome the isolation; human interactions and support is also needed. While technology is important in the lives of the participants in this study, using the technology to facilitate learning is not the focus of this review. Studies in this review reported effective communication, the need for collaboration, the selection of quality settings and managing the isolation as distinctive aspects of an ITE programme available as distance education.

### 2.3.1 *Effective communication in a SBE at a distance*

Communication between student teachers, coordinating teachers<sup>3</sup> and university lecturers has long been regarded as a component of “fundamental importance” for school-based experiences (Hastings, 1996). Such communication includes face-to-face and electronic conversations, discussions and messages, both written and oral. Soliman (2001) identified poor communication skills as one primary reason for frequent breakdowns of collaborations within SBEs suggesting that effort is needed by all partners to “communicate clearly, openly, sincerely and truthfully” (p. 230). Hastings (1996) and Simpson (2002) also reported problems in the SBEs associated with ineffective communication. Bates (1997) and other researchers have suggested that Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) improve access and opportunities for effective communication for distance students (Ballantyne & Mylonas, 2001; Donaghy et al., 2003; Mayer, 2002; Moon, 1997; Perraton, 2000). In distance settings those involved must be effective communicators, able to articulate clearly and effectively.

Conclusively, writers reported that constructive feedback is valued by student teachers on a school-based experience (Beck & Kosnik, 2002; Calder et al., 1993; Clarke, 2000; Field, 2002; Hastings & Squires, 2002; Le Cornu, 2006; Lind, 2004; McGee, 1996b; Murray-Harvey et al., 2000). Feedback from the school-based teacher educators includes communications on planning, practice and reflections to enable the student teachers to improve their performance. They value “feedback on performance, provided it is given in an appropriate spirit and manner” (Beck & Kosnik, 2002, p. 96). Calder, Faire and Schon (1993) in their survey of school-based teacher educators highlighted the improvement of communication skills which would enable them “to provide quality feedback to students” (p. 16) as a professional development need. However, several studies identified marked variations in the quality of feedback, including Macdonald’s Canadian research (as cited in Murray-Harvey et al., 2000), Timperley’s New Zealand study (2001), Williams and Watson’s UK study (2004) and Sinclair, Clarke, Harris and Livermore’s Australian study (2004). Other studies emphasised feedback as essential to learning teaching at a distance, providing

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<sup>3</sup> For ease of reading the term coordinating teacher, taken from the specific University of Waikato programme, will be used throughout this report.

student teachers with opportunities to co-construct their knowledge and reflect on practice (Black & Holford, 2002; Delany & Wenmoth, 2003; Donaghy, et al., 2003; Hall & Marrett, 1996). Without doubt, constructive feedback from both the university lecturer and school-based teacher is critical to a student teacher's development and this issue is heightened for student teachers learning teaching at a distance.

It has been argued that contemporary learners need a critical paradigm shift to allow them to become 'active learning' exponents (Perraton, 2000; Robinson & Latchem, 2003a). Becoming an active learner requires interactions between learners through group work and collaboration, more than passive observations and implementation of fixed techniques and set activities. This shift to expanding learning and increasing dialogue has been reported in distance learning literature including Black and Holford (2002) and Campbell-Gibson (1997) who argue that active learning requires opportunities to interact with others, perhaps using ICT. However, no matter how influential the developing technology may be considered, Campbell-Gibson (1997) concluded that, "technology is not the answer ... it is the all important human infrastructure that provides the opportunity for learners to succeed" (p. 8). ICT can be a conduit for this. The interactions required for active learning and feedback for distance learners may occur mostly with the coordinating teachers but equally, will happen with others not based locally, such as staff and colleagues. Where ITE was considered a collaborative venture between school and university, Soliman (2001) suggested that everyone involved was able to understand the significance and relevance of his or her unique input and therefore active involvement occurred more freely. She highlighted the effort needed on behalf of all participants to interact and communicate to facilitate the move to 'active learner'.

### *2.3.2 Professional agency in a distance SBE*

Student teachers in a SBE gain confidence and professional agency from being treated as trusted and collaborative partners (Beck & Kosnik, 2002; Hoben, 2006; Le Cornu, 2005; Maynard, 2001). Turnbull (2005) defined professional agency as the individual's capacity to "effectively apply appropriate professional knowledge, skills, understandings and dispositions in professional practice

contexts” (p. 207). Other writers (Haigh & Ward, 2004; Peters, Le Cornu, & Collins, 2003) included other characteristics in defining agency such as creativity, choice, responsibility, authority, initiative and self-direction. Similarly, Turnbull’s (2005) small New Zealand Early Childhood case study suggested that if teachers were “expected to be active agents in their profession, then the development of professional agency in student teachers ... is essential” (p. 195) and that such agency was dependent on the SBE environment. Professional agency for a student teacher in a distance SBE is dependent on the establishment and maintenance of collaboration and trust away from the support and guidance of the university-based staff (Delany & Wenmoth, 2003; Simpson, 2002; Ussher, 2003). For a student teacher to achieve professional agency in a distance programme where the opportunities to select quality schools may be limited, university staff must trust that the school will collaborate with the student teacher, providing support for their learning that will give them the confidence needed for teaching.

The importance of collaboration between SBE partners is highlighted in ITE literature in general. Haigh’s (2001) and Hoben’s (2006) case studies of secondary SBEs, and Lind’s (2004) and Simpson’s (2002) studies of primary programmes reported that New Zealand student teachers learned teaching more effectively when collaborating with their university lecturer and coordinating teacher because it helped them to gain a clear understanding of their programme – its value and requirements. In their comprehensive review of New Zealand ITE, Cameron and Baker (2004) found that a collaborative approach to SBE outcomes and processes increased the “likelihood that student teachers would learn from [their] experiences” (p. 45). Their review highlighted that all three partners play an important role in effective collaboration and like Black and Holford (2002), they emphasised that collaborating for learning was significant. Soliman (2001) also suggested that effective collaborations were legitimated by closeness and familiarity. A close relationship between a student teacher and coordinating teacher should be more conducive to effective collaboration and trusting partnerships. Where a student teacher took responsibility for, knew what was to be learned, and collaborated in achieving this learning (Dobbins, 1996; Haigh & Ward, 2004; Hastings, 2004), then he/she became a trusted professional in the

SBE. When learning at a distance the establishment of collaboration and trust contributes to the development of professional agency as student teachers assume greater responsibility for their own learning.

Developing professional agency during a SBE, where student teachers exhibit confidence and competence, is an expectation of many ITE programmes. An investigation with secondary student teachers in local New Zealand schools by Haigh and Ward (2004) found that in any learning teaching opportunity student teachers were expected to develop “professional agency through finding and using their voice and by learning to deal with the (sometimes) contradictory demands of the visiting lecturer and associate teacher” (p. 136). This disposition for a student teacher, showing professional responsibility and authority, was evident in several of the SBE studies reviewed (Haigh, 2001; Hoben, 2006; Lind, 2004; Turnbull, 1995). Developing competence and confidence is a challenge for 21<sup>st</sup> century student teachers, especially those learning at a distance:

- with the trends in ITE programmes to increasing emphasis on experiential and practical learning (Black & Holford, 2002) making SBEs more demanding;
- where there is decreasing freedom and support on the part of the school-based partners to assist in the development of professional agency (Haigh & Ward, 2004);
- when the necessary skills and dispositions required for professional agency are less common in student teachers (Haigh & Ward, 2004); and
- when isolated in a distant SBE, especially where the coordinating teacher is not of good quality (Simpson, 2002).

### *2.3.3 Control over the selection of quality SBE settings*

The number of quality sites available for SBEs in New Zealand appears to be reducing. Quality SBE sites are ‘real’ classrooms where there are no contrived or simulated conditions, where learning is the focus for children, teacher and student teacher. Unfortunately, with an increase in ITE providers in New Zealand, the “competitive context in relation to securing adequate and appropriate placements for students” (Kane, 2005, p. 206) is reported to have had an impact on the overall

quality of school-based experiences, something that cannot be guaranteed. Researchers assert that schools should be carefully selected for SBEs (Potthoff & Alley, 1995; Zeichner, 2002) because quality schools prioritise learning as expected characteristics of the SBE. This problem of selection is echoed in distance literature also; for example, Robinson claimed, “consistency of quality in field experiences is not easy to achieve for widely geographically spread students” (as cited in Simpson, 2002, p. 6).

Researchers suggest that lack of consistent quality might be due to the decreasing number of quality teachers who voluntarily make themselves available as coordinating teachers (Baxter, 2003; Beck & Kosnik, 2002; Clarke, 1996; Hastings & Squires, 2002). It was reported in Kane’s (2005) review that New Zealand ITE providers considered SBEs “at risk because of a lack of suitable teachers willing to be associate teachers” (p. 207). The suggestion is not that all coordinating teachers are of poor quality but that the availability of sufficient numbers of quality coordinating teachers is becoming a problem. Sinclair and colleagues (2004) reported in Australia:

...teachers who undertake the mentoring of student teachers during their professional experiences are often volunteers and despite acknowledgement in the literature of their importance to student teachers’ professional development ..., it can be difficult to attract sufficient, suitably qualified teachers to undertake this role. (p. 50)

Hoben (2006) suggested a correlation between the number of teachers making themselves available, the quality of coordinating teachers and the value of SBEs as a site for learning teaching.

Several ITE studies suggested that SBE quality was directly related to coordinating teacher quality (Beck & Kosnik, 2000; Clarke, 1997; Gray, 1999; Hastings, 1996; Potthoff & Alley, 1995). Clarke (1997) and Bullough (1997) suggested that SBEs were established with little regard to teacher quality but this is not reported as normal practice in New Zealand (Kane, 2005). As the classroom teacher is often an unknown component of the SBE, ITE staff must have confidence in the school to provide a teacher of quality (Robinson & Latchem, 2003b). No literature was located that reported studies into determining the quality of coordinating teachers in a distance ITE programme. A mentoring intervention by Ballantyne and Mylonas (2001) studied 100 ITE mentors involved



with remote Queensland SBEs and concluded that online mentoring workshops enabled the coordinating teachers to provide “a higher quality of student learning” (p. 271). This support was beneficial to both student and coordinating teacher. Simpson (2002) suggested a distance SBE should be supported by quality people “familiar with the teacher education programme (who) can help the student teachers make the links between their coursework and the field experience” (p. 6). This is not always practical in a distance programme but it is clear that confidence in sharing ownership and responsibility between the partners is an influencing factor (Calder & Whyte, 2000; Soliman, 2001).

From a range of literature it can be inferred that student teachers are entitled to be placed with a quality coordinating teacher. A classroom teacher cannot be adjudged to be of suitable quality for the role of coordinating teacher simply because s/he has teaching experience. That is much like claiming that all who have been in a classroom can be teachers. This issue is reflected in international literature (Beck & Kosnik, 2000; Clarke, 2000; Kerry & Farrow, 1996; Turner, 2006; Yarrow, 2004), which showed that there is confusion amongst coordinating teachers between quality and experience. From their UK study, Kerry and Farrow (1996) claimed that many teachers considered they were effective coordinating teachers because of their experiences and expertise. In New Zealand Hoben’s (2006) participants, Timperley’s (2001) student teacher mentors and the earlier research of McGee (1996a) confirmed this view acknowledging, “expertise in teaching itself is not sufficient to be an effective teacher educator” (Timperley, 2001, p. 121). While the quality of the coordinating teacher may indeed be unknown in a distance SBE it is clear that given the separation between school and university, ITE providers are in the ideal position to reduce the distance and isolation for each school and coordinating teacher by providing support and collaboration.

#### *2.3.4 Isolation for students studying at a distance*

My own experiences show that completing study at a distance can be isolating, endorsed in international ITE literature (Moon, 1997; Perraton, 2000). However, other researchers suggest that some people study successfully in this way (Collis & Jung, 2003). Isolation can be physical if the student is



geographically distant from the campus. It can be social if the student teacher does not have opportunities to mix with peers tackling similar topics and issues. It can be intellectual when the student teacher does not have academic immediacy or proximity in his/her contact with other learners. It can also be spiritual if there is no contact with likeminded people. Most students studying at a distance will need to compensate for the potential impact of such isolation. These factors have been identified in contemporary ITE literature (Robinson & Latchem, 2003b).

For the majority of learners, learning must include opportunities for interactions with other learners (Black & Holford, 2002). Some researchers suggest clustering student teachers together in schools in order to facilitate interactions and reduce isolation (for example, Beck & Kosnik, 2001; Potthoff & Alley, 1995; Zeichner, 2002). For distance students, mechanisms to facilitate opportunities for interaction may include using ICT for online discussions, tutorials and workshops, working with a group, or other strategies such as social networking sites (Perraton, 2000). In my field notes at a forum of online and flexible learning experts from throughout New Zealand (New Zealand Teachers Council, 2002) I observed that isolation is often reduced for distance learners when they were engaged in meaningful interactions with significant others. Studies suggest that the large majority of student teachers still prefer face-to-face interactions for learning (Black & Holford, 2002; Campbell-Gibson, 1997; Graham & Thornley, 2000). On the other hand Donaghy et al. (2003) reported from their findings that distance learners also valued electronic interactions and support as a means of reducing isolation, also noted by Simpson (2002) as “useful in providing student support and communication” (p. 14). However, no recent researchers have suggested that interactions through ICT have superseded face-to-face settings or are wholly effective in eliminating isolation, perceived or real.

In distance SBEs it appears that many student teachers and classroom teachers become immersed in practice, separating themselves from other aspects of teaching. A greater separation is perceived for those involved in learning teaching at a distance, between the university ITE programme and the applied teaching in the school-based setting (Black & Holford, 2002; Nelligan, 2006). For example, Wells and Lyons (2006) suggested that scholarly teaching was becoming problematic for coordinating teachers working in more rural or regional

areas in Australia because of the separation from opportunities for reflection on practice and theory. Findings from Potthoff and Alley's (1995) qualitative research project involving a sample of about 140 USA and Canadian coordinating teachers suggested that the linking of theory with practice was dependent on quality interactions in school settings.

Distance ITE students need a range of school-based experiences that enable them to combat the narrow perspective of their isolated settings, to develop their outlook on teaching (Delany & Wenmoth, 2003; Nelligan, 2006; Simpson, 2002). Some researchers found that for many student teachers in ITE programmes the models they encountered could limit developing a broad perspective of teaching (Danaher, 1994; Deng, 2004a; Korthagen, Loughran, & Russell, 2006; Robinson & Latchem, 2003b). This may be accentuated for distance students whose experiences of teaching are related directly to their most recent school experiences as student, teacher's aide or parent helper in their local community. Other writers stressed the need for many opportunities for reflection in order to develop perspective (Beck & Kosnik, 2001; Caires & Almeida, 2005; Russell, McPherson, & Martin, 2001). If perspective is valued then strategies are needed to compensate the isolation of distance study.

A few New Zealand researchers have discussed student teachers learning teaching while remaining in their small local school and community (Campbell & Yates, 1997; Delany & Wenmoth, 2003; Simpson, 2002; Ussher, 2003). They all appeared to agree that this was to the benefit of the student teachers, their schools and communities. Such benefits varied but it was most notably to improve the supply of teachers in hard-to-staff areas. However, Simpson was not convinced that being in a school that was 'known' to the student was appropriate due to the potential for conflict of interests between school and provider. However, opportunities for distance student teachers to remain in the local school provide her/him with access to a learning community of professionals that they may otherwise not experience (Delany & Wenmoth, 2003).

The literature suggested that learning teaching via a distance ITE programme as is the focus of this study is distinctive. Studies suggested that such SBE sites are naturally more dependent on quality communication, collaboration and trust

amongst the partners. This study seeks to investigate whether issues of communication are significant. Professional agency is stressed as a concept of greater importance for distance students in ITE as they need the authority, competence and confidence to seek opportunities and develop partnerships in their own right. Additional to these distinctive features, the problem of numbers and quality of schools and teachers volunteering for ITE placements is exacerbated for distance SBEs. The fact that many of the participants in this study continue to live and study in their small community, like Delaney and Wenmoth's (2003) participants, may reveal interesting findings about quality of settings. The need for effective communication is further highlighted because there is often an impression of greater isolation from peers and separation from the programme, which in a sense implies a narrowing of perspective. A difference in this study may be found in the fact that these student teachers spend one full day each week working in a nearby school – learning teaching in a local context, often one they know intimately.

#### ***2.4 Opportunities for learning teaching in context***

School-based experiences are highlighted by a range of researchers as providing opportunities for student teachers to learn teaching in context (Hastings, 1996; Le Cornu, 2004; Lee & Loughran, 2000; Lind, 2004; Peters, 2002). Considering SBEs as learning opportunities implies that all three partners (student teachers, coordinating teachers and university lecturers) will seek to take advantage of the opportunities to maximise learning. After analysing a range of research studies, Posner (2000) suggested that for a SBE to provide suitable opportunities then all aspects, including teacher, learner, subject matter and context, are important and must be taken into account. He promotes an all-encompassing view of the school and classroom as a SBE. However, Jones (2001) warned that with the demands made on coordinating teachers, these teachers may well be likely to follow a “highly prescriptive route of a technicist approach” (p. 90) focusing on only the technical skills of teaching (Lind, 2004) rather than providing ‘real’ opportunities for their student teacher including socio-cultural dimensions: only meeting requirements rather than meeting needs.

The need for student teachers to exercise agency and take responsibility for their own learning and teaching within the school-based opportunities is highlighted in several studies (Haigh, 2001; Hoben, 2006; Kwan & Lopez-Real, 2005; Le Cornu, 2006; Lind, 2004). As a large part of an ITE programme is the on-campus component managed by academic staff, the SBE should provide opportunities for students to exercise professional agency as they need to be learning in a safe and supportive environment. Research reviewed showed that critical to effective SBEs was the provision of opportunities to exercise agency and learn teaching in context, where the:

- SBE classroom is authentic;
- Student teacher is considered a participant learner;
- School is regarded as a learning community;
- Student teacher is able to practise theory; and
- Student teacher has opportunities to theorise practice.

All these issues are addressed in the following sections of this review.

#### *2.4.1 SBE as an authentic place to learn teaching*

If teacher educators place value on classroom experiences in their programme, then school-based opportunities must provide a student teacher with authentic experiences, that is, “experiences related to routine professional practice” (Sutherland et al., 2005, p. 91), real classrooms where children and programmes have not been especially selected to make practice easier. An authentic setting allows the individual student teacher to fully “act *in* the world” of teaching (Maynard, 2001, p. 41) rather than being preoccupied with classroom practice and administrative tasks only (Greenwood et al., n.d.). Kane (2005) suggested that coordinating teachers with appropriate experience, qualification, time, incentive and motivation are needed to provide such contexts while Bullough (1997) insists that coordinating teacher and student teacher must share the responsibilities of creating and embracing authentic contexts. Contemporary approaches to education view teaching “as a holistic, multidimensional, complex, ever-changing, disciplined and ethical activity” (University of Waikato, 2003, ¶ 1)

therefore contexts need to be authentic to ensure exposure to the full range of teaching practices.

The authenticity of SBEs is dependent on the support provided for the coordinating teachers to develop the knowledge, skills and attitudes appropriate to their role. The research reviewed appeared to affirm Williams' (1994) view that coordinating teachers are not 'trained' as teacher educators so it is not realistic to expect them to take on this different and additional role without support. Clarke (1997) argued that, "every attempt should be made to ensure that [coordinating teachers] are not only the best people available for that task but well prepared to undertake the task" (p. 168). Making available support to ensure the coordinating teacher is capable of providing a quality setting is the responsibility of the school principal. This support includes time, resources and people as reviewed in section 2.5.8 (see p. 70). McGee, Oliver and Carstensen (1994) and Clarke (2000) reported that it was difficult for practical experiences to be fully authentic of the realities of teaching when the classroom teacher continues to have full responsibility for a class of children as well. If a student was assigned to an incompetent, uninvolved or overly busy teacher, then "that student's professional development as a teacher can be severely handicapped" (Clarke, 1997, p. 168). Clarke's Canadian qualitative research is based on investigations of school-based experiences, using interview, document analysis and observations with students and teacher educators across a range of programmes. He concluded that coordinating teachers require support through improved mentoring skills, resources and release time if they are to be of the quality that ITE providers expect. He suggests that only capable coordinating teachers with the necessary knowledge, skills and attitudes provide SBE settings that are authentic and conducive to student teachers exercising professional agency and full participation.

Student teachers are empowered to exercise greater professional agency when they receive support and opportunities in authentic school-based settings (Hoben, 2006). Turnbull (2005) and Laski (2005) stressed the importance of student teachers being empowered to make personal choices and become autonomous learners although they shared the caveat that student teacher agency is often constrained by issues of personal capabilities, power differentials and needing to

conform. While the concept of agency in itself is contestable, researchers identified it as a goal for all student teachers. Haigh and Ward (2004) highlighted the advantages of student teachers having the skills and dispositions to be empowered as self-directed and proactive learners, as students with confidence - possibility-thinkers and risk-takers. If authenticity is an indicator that professional agency will be supported in the SBE, then a reduced demand for conformity might be expected.

Typically, student teachers are required by their coordinating teacher to conform to existing classroom practices in most SBEs (McGee, 1996a). This conforming to classroom practices leads to tension as stressed by researchers (Beck & Kosnik, 2001; 2002; McGee, 1995a; 1996a; McGee et al., 1994). While student teachers “felt they had to conform to a significant degree to the expectations and practices of the associate teacher, they often did so reluctantly” (Beck & Kosnik, 2002, pp. 96-7) and possibly in conflict with their inquiry-focused ITE programme (Beck & Kosnik, 2000). Conformity is considered both advantageous and not. The challenge for student teachers is to know when to conform. However, it seemed in Beck and Kosnik’s (2002) research that for student teachers, conformity focused on their behaviour rather than any value commitment or change to beliefs or identity. On the other hand McGee (1996a) suggested there is also a need to “provide an environment where student teachers were encouraged to move beyond replicating the practices already in place in the classroom” (p. 20). However, for some student teachers the tension to conform, to comply with current practice may prove challenging for them. Compliance was less of an issue when students experienced congruence between their own initial beliefs and motives and pedagogical ideas and practices of the SBE (Lauriala, 1997). This does not change the fact that the mixed experiences of student teachers are due in most part to the need for them to conform to existing classroom practices (Hoben, 2006; McGee, 1995a).

This need to conform at times, which is often interpreted by student teachers as belonging, often “gets in the way of learning how to teach even though it is socially necessary” (Hodkinson & Hodkinson, 1997, p. 128). Where a sense of belonging to the SBE classroom is regarded by student teachers as important (Hastings & Squires, 2002; Hodkinson & Hodkinson, 1997; Lauriala, 1997;

Soliman, 2001; Turnbull, 1995; Ussher, 2003; Yarrow, Ballantyne et al., 1997) then conforming to classroom and school practices might be a priority for them in order to achieve the social, emotional and professional belonging they seek. Problems were reported in SBEs where students described feeling that they did not belong. In such circumstances they indicated a defensive, suspicious and indifferent disposition that showed itself with their choosing not to conform in the school-based experience (Lauriala, 1997). Some studies have found that this feeling of being disconnected from their coordinating teacher made the authenticity of their SBE problematic: real learning could then be at risk (Campbell-Evans & Maloney, 1997; Haigh & Ward, 2004). In most SBEs, the beginning period can be viewed as ‘occupational socialisation’, where a student teacher is preoccupied with the adjusting to the affective rather than cognitive aspects of the classroom, as they strive to belong, to be part of classroom life (Hastings, 2004; Maynard, 2000; McGee 1996a). Predominantly during this time the primary need of the student teacher is belonging to the classroom (Hodkinson & Hodkinson, 1997), feeling an integral part of what occurs in the classroom in order to develop professional agency that will allow them to become an engaged and accepted participant.

#### *2.4.2 Student teacher as a participant learner*

If student teachers in school-based settings are regarded by significant others as learning teachers they are likely to be actively engaged rather than only passively observing (White, 2004). In such SBEs student teachers will be interacting with children, planning and teaching lessons, providing feedback, trialing new ideas, reflecting on their own practice, etc. Cameron and Baker’s (2004) review of New Zealand research found that a large majority of SBEs were not authentic opportunities for active learning for student teachers. Such situations were often due to the student teacher’s involvement being limited to ‘observing client’ rather than ‘active learner’. Dobbins (1996) stated that student teachers must be “learners and [strategies utilised must] facilitate their learning” (p. 15). Additionally, Sutherland et al. (2005), Clarke (1997) and Hastings (1996) all endorsed the need for coordinating teachers to be willing to engage student teachers as inquirers in meaningful professional-related tasks. Issues associated with the student teacher participating in the classroom as a learner included access

to observation and practice opportunities, the freedom to trial new ideas and developing one's own teacher identity.

There was consensus in the literature that student teachers must have opportunities to observe, practice and reflect (Beck & Kosnik, 2002; Cattley, 2004; Lind, 2004; Maynard, 2001). Responsibility for facilitating these activities rests with the coordinating teacher and school. While studies show that observation is an important aspect of each experience (Cattley, 2007), student teachers want to do more than observe on their SBE (Developmental Studies Centre, 2000; Maynard, 2001). Studies found that in their impatience to be teachers, student teachers often did not position themselves on the margins of the classroom or school to observe but they attempted to become full and active participants right from the beginning (Cattley, 2007; Martinez & Coombs, 2001). Rather than work hard at becoming an integral part of the classroom in order to understand the philosophies, expectations, logistics and background of the new classroom, they sought instant action. While some research suggested that effective coordinating teachers develop a process for student teachers to become part of the classroom (Clarke & Jarvis-Selinger, 2005; Le Cornu, Mayer, & White, 2001; Power & Hine, 2003; Timperley, 2001; White, 2006b), generally active teaching is considered the important task as Danaher (1994) found in his study in one Melbourne secondary school. This study provided insight into coordinating teachers encouraging or allowing their student teacher to rush into active learning opportunities of *teaching practice* too early, often triggering difficulties in their relationships with the children. Danaher (1994) highlighted the important value gained when student teachers stand back to observe, reflect and better understand the context of their SBE rather than rushing into active participation.

Learning teaching is a contextual activity (Lave & Wenger, 1991) therefore the details of the context need to be fully understood. Posner (2000) asserts that "all teaching situations require context, as teaching without context is impossible" (pp. 4-6), taking into consideration the resources, facilities, social environment, administration, external influences and backgrounds of the children and teachers. Given a SBE as an authentic socio-cultural context for learning teaching, then a student teacher will need to embrace the whole context to maximise opportunities



if s/he is to fully understand teaching and have the freedom to develop their own teaching identity (Cattley, 2007).

Developing one's own teacher identity is a socio-cultural process that involves a student teacher developing new attitudes, practices and knowledge (Maynard, 2001). Maynard (2001), Bullough (1997) and Beck and Kosnik (2002) reported most student teachers' are determined to develop their own identity, an 'ideal' self-as-teacher. Most express a desire to become someone else rather than any one of the teachers from their SBEs. The researchers reported this as a process involving first "imitating the behaviour of significant other teachers" (Maynard, 2001, p. 49) and then seeking to minimise the discrepancies between their own performance and what they saw as ideal (Maynard, 2001). When student teachers search for opportunities to trial their own teacher identity, there is always potential for conflict. They may come to ITE with their prior conceptions of what it means to be a teacher, however:

No one's mind is empty.... We have ideas and ideals about such things as parenting, marriage, coaching and appropriate bedside manner, even though we may never have been an official parent, spouse, coach or doctor. The same can be said of teaching. We all have some beliefs about what good teaching is, whether or not we have official status as a 'teacher'. (Posner, 2000, p. 33)

The development of teacher identity is dependent on the opportunities for inquiry and reflection provided in both the classroom and school as an authentic community for learning teaching.

Becoming a reflective practitioner is an important goal for student teachers, noted in a number of studies (Beck & Kosnik, 2000; Haigh, 2001; Jones, 2001). Student teachers need agency, opportunities and freedom to inquire, innovate and trial new ideas, to venture into the unknown for inquiry and reflection to develop (Down, 2006; Grushka, Hinde McLeod, & Reynolds, 2005; Jones, 2001; Lee & Loughran, 2000; Maynard, 2001; Russell & Loughran, 2007). Maynard (2001), an advocate of reflective practice, suggests that innovative and risky inquiries are made more difficult by the challenge to reconcile the immediate professional expectations of the student teacher, coordinating teacher and university lecturer. Such expectations typically include establishing close relationships with children (Younger, Brindley et al., 2004), establishing and maintaining control and completing required tasks. The University of Waikato's school-based

documentation states similar expectations. This difficulty is further reported in a range of studies (see for example, Hobson, 2002; McGee, 1996a; Murray-Harvey et al., 2000; Ortlipp, 2003; Smagorinsky, Cook et al., 2004; White, 2006b). Studies highlighted reluctance on the part of the coordinating teacher to allow student teachers sufficient freedom for exploration, investigation and innovation (Cameron, Baker, & Lovett, 2006; Chase, Campbell et al., 2004; Jane, 2003; Rorrison, 2007). On the other hand Hastings' (1996) report of the perceptions of some coordinating teachers in regional Australia found that freedom for the student teacher to inquire and reflect was a necessary part of a successful SBE.

Effective coordinating teachers have a responsibility to minimise disruptions to school and class routines and children's learning in SBEs as student teachers gain authentic classroom experience (Danaher, 1994). The classroom environment and student-teacher relationship need to be genuine, giving the student teacher the autonomy to learn teaching and access to a group of children who do not cause major management problems (Brooks, 2000; Danaher, 1994; Williams, 1994; Younger et al., 2004). Classroom teachers who act as coordinating teachers need to be able to provide strategic opportunities to inquire, reflect and innovate, providing time, easily-managed children, suitable spaces, opportunities to meet requirements, and unfettered expectations for student teachers to participate as inquiring learners in an authentic community of professional learning.

### *2.4.3 School as a learning community*

Many writers claim that teaching is a whole school activity, much more than just the theories and practices of a classroom. To become 'teacher', student teachers need opportunities to "become a full member of a community of practice [with] access to ongoing activity, old-timers, and other members of the community; and to information, resources, and opportunities for participation" (Lave & Wenger, 1991, pp. 100-101). Learning teaching is located in school practices and requires more than just interactions among the three immediate partners – student teacher, coordinating teacher and university lecturer (Hoben, 2006; Le Cornu, 2006; Lind, 2004; Posner, 2000). School communities need to

welcome and support a student teacher much as White (2006b) reported in her study:

Of the group of 10 students, nine said that their school communities were very welcoming of them and that they were encouraged to become involved in the classroom and the wider school. These efforts to foster inclusiveness on the part of those already in the community acknowledge the student teacher as someone engaged in “legitimate peripheral participation” and who has a right to move in from the boundary by interacting with the members of that community. (p. 9)

White investigated a small, local sample of New Zealand primary school student teachers using a methodology similar to that used in this study. She found that typically student teachers had some difficulty “breaking in” to each new school community as they began their SBE. In order to engage with the school as a learning community, White suggested the issues confronting a student teacher were:

- Self as a legitimate participant in the school community;
- The children and their place;
- Other members of the community;
- Engaging with the other significant members; and
- Understanding teaching through the eyes of the other members of the school community.

‘Self’ as a community participant is reported as a critical element when learning teaching (Asher & Malet, 1999; Sivan & Chan, 2003; White, 2006b). Past experiences help to shape perspective, they will not have been a neutral influence for the student teachers (Posner, 2000). Learning teaching is “powerfully influenced by student teachers’ previously acquired beliefs about teaching and images of teaching, and [these] preconceived images and beliefs are resistant to attempts to change” (McIntyre, as cited in Young, 1994, p. 5). The effect of this history may be a strong desire to follow what is already known from their positive experiences. Any negative experiences may give student teachers an urgent need for ‘usable’ input from teacher educators (a ‘recipe’ for teaching) in preference to what they may see as less immediately relevant considerations (Kane, 2007; Korthagen et al., 2006) such as alternate teaching practices, philosophies and theories. The beliefs teachers hold are often derived from their

experiences as students and where the experiences have been positive there may be a tendency to be a 'know-all' in the wider community rather than remaining tentative about their beliefs and "continually [trying] to test them, [in order to] continue to grow" (Posner, 2000, p. 39). While each student teacher's world-view of teaching and learning constitutes an indisputable cornerstone for the scaffolding of his/her learning experiences in teacher education (Graham & Thornley, 2000), Deng (2004b) suggested that any set of new beliefs and assumptions presented by teacher educators may fundamentally "contradict what students bring to teacher education" (p. 148). An important strategy in a new learning community is to be tentative initially – to suspend opinions and participation. Korthagen and colleagues (2006) suggest seven principles for more effective practice experiences, a significant one of these for this study being that, "Learning about teaching requires a shift in focus from the curriculum to the learner" (p. 1029), paying more attention to the overall context of the SBE rather than just content, including self, teachers, school and the children.

SBE studies stress that the primary responsibility of the coordinating teacher and school is to the children's learning (Beck & Kosnik, 2000; Brooks, 2000; Danaher, 1994; Maynard, 2001). Sutherland and colleagues (2005) concluded that "if preservice teacher education programmes are to maintain and develop links with schools and teachers, then any joint educational activities need to have a minimal impact on the teacher's principle [*sic*] responsibilities, teaching their students" (p. 91). Children are the heart of a school community and researchers would do well to further investigate "the influence that pupils can and do wield on the outcomes for individuals and institutions of school-based programmes" (Danaher, 1994, p. 110). In any SBE, when the school has to balance commitment and responsibility to the children against the student teacher's participation and opportunities, it is harder for them to remain objective (Brooks, 2000; Goodfellow, 2000; Ridgway, 2000; Williams, 1994). Brooks (2000) indicated that children typically found working with a student teacher a positive and rewarding experience but she suggested that more research with larger numbers of children was required. While schools might aspire to be involved in ITE classroom teachers continue to treat student teachers "as subsidiary to their responsibility to pupils" (Williams & Soares, 2002, p. 105) therefore other

professionals from within and beyond the immediate school community should be involved.

When learning a new skill, trade or profession both ‘old timers’ and ‘novices’ in the workplace are significant other people (Lave & Wenger, 1991), those other professionals associated with a school community. Although Lave and Wenger researched apprenticeships, there is a plethora of polemic writing in the field of ITE, which affirms their theorising in relation to SBEs (for example, Carpenter & Matters, 2003; Clarke, 1996; Fuller, Hodkinson et al., 2005; Le Cornu, 2005; Sutherland *et al.*, 2005; Tsui & Wong, 2006; White, 2006b; Zeegers, 2005). Feeling part of the teaching profession requires learning the practices and language of teaching and learning and having the opportunities to apply them “with others who are similarly invested” (Bullough, 1997, p. 22). As highlighted earlier, student teachers need opportunities to develop their own self-as-teacher rather than having someone else’s style imposed on them during SBEs. Being accepted and supported by significant others offers them opportunities to discover their own style (Timperley, Wilson et al., 2007). Part of this study will investigate how coordinating teachers and others in their schools provide each student teacher with what Maynard (2001) refers to as opportunities to begin ‘acting’ in the their own world of teaching.

Engaging in dialogue with significant others “about critical learning experiences” enriches student teachers and teacher educators “personally and professionally” (Mueller, 2003, p. 82), expanding their understanding and perspective while learning teaching. Some researchers reported conversations among the triad of student teacher, coordinating teacher and university lecturer (Le Cornu et al., 2001; Lind, 2004) while others reported on the importance of a wider community (Beck & Kosnik, 2001; Carpenter & Matters, 2003; Hoben, 2006; Le Cornu, 2003; 2006; White, 2006b). Grundy, Robison and Tomazos (2001) suggested that student teachers must be challenged by university lecturers and coordinating teachers regarding practice and knowledge, challenged to reflect and self-study. Ideally, these practice and reflection opportunities are provided through a ‘community of inquiry’ approach, involving “purposeful and inclusive [learning opportunities], a place for shared knowledge, communication of new ideas, and critical dialogue about those ideas” (Farr Darling, 2001, p. 19). Farr

Darling's longitudinal study of a Canadian secondary graduate ITE programme concluded that while the community of inquiry trialed in her programme showed potential benefits, the reality was not being fully realised, perhaps as she suggested, because most student teachers view this community as a place to gain a degree rather than for further inquiry and learning. The benefits of a community of inquiring people may be significant for student teachers when all interested parties are involved in developing a genuine learning community, where student, coordinating teacher and university lecturer are engaged participants (Farr Darling, 2001). If student teachers are to better understand their critical learning experiences of teaching and learning then, as Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1999) claim, they must be deliberately exposed to experiences that demand dialogue and reflection with other professionals.

Building knowledge and participating in a trusting ITE partnership requires understanding of others' perspectives (Clarke, 2005; Grundy et al., 2001; Le Cornu, 2004). Perspective functions as a lens through which we observe, interpret and understand the world of teaching (Posner, 2000). While there will be continuing debate about what knowledge is of greatest value to student teachers (McGee, 1995a), Deng (2004b) contends that they need to develop multiple theories and knowledge, both academic and teacher-generated, in order to better understand teaching. Observations and dialogue facilitate student teacher interpretation and understanding of a school-based setting (Posner, 2000). However, the coordinating teacher may determine the extent to which the student teacher is encouraged to explore beyond the SBE classroom. If the coordinating teacher represents all that the student teacher wants to be as a teacher then he/she may choose to be an 'apprentice to this master teacher' or vice versa in becoming 'autonomous and independent' (Deng, 2004a; Russell et al., 2001; Zellermayer & Tabak, 2006). As student teachers are able to articulate their own perspective on teaching more explicitly they "become a more reflective teacher, less likely to be a slave to [their] unexamined assumptions" (Posner, 2000, p. 79) and more receptive to opportunities to engage in dialogue and practice theories they have learned.

#### *2.4.4 Opportunities to practise theory within a learning community*

Emphasising the school as a learning community means that student teachers require multiple opportunities to test theory within a range of practical teaching contexts. Jones, Reid and Bevins (1997) highlighted teaching as far too complex to be reduced to a set of skills-based criteria: “Day-to-day teacher knowledge and educational theory do not stand in opposition, but in a complex relationship” (p. 260) suggesting that student teachers must test the theories they learn in study. They need school-based learning opportunities to explore and practise the theories learned. At university it is appropriate to read, discuss, investigate and test theories of learning and teaching. However, assimilation of such learning does not fully transpire until practiced successfully in an authentic school setting. SBEs provide opportunities to link theory to practice, to reflect on theory with others, to explore areas of conflicting thought, and to develop practices that link to concepts learned through study.

While many writers suggest that student teachers must be helped to link theory learned to practice observed, a number of writers appear not overly confident about the ability of coordinating teachers to facilitate this (Bullough, 1997; Kerry & Farrow, 1996; Loughran & Russell, 1997; McGee, Ferrier-Kerr, & Miller, 2001; Sutherland et al., 2005; Timperley, Black et al., 1998). Many researchers discovered disparities between the goals of ITE programmes and the practices of the coordinating teacher. For example, Sutherland et al. (2005) suggested that coordinating teachers must provide activities which “support the acquisition of the theoretical knowledge underpinning their discipline” (p. 90), providing opportunities to link knowledge to practice. This is also evident in University of Waikato ITE documentation (2003). However, Bullough (1997) found that generally, foundations and methods were separated in practice and technique and survival in the classroom mattered over any theory being transformed into practice. Timperley and her colleagues (1998) found that coordinating teachers were “better at eliciting the student teacher’s theories than they were at articulating theory-practice links, which tended to remain at an implicit level” (p. 4). Similarly, Kerry and Farrow (1996) found coordinating teachers lacked key skills, particularly “the ability to explicate effective practice” (p. 108). In this literature there appeared to be general agreement with

Loughran's (2007) comments that "students need to have school-based experiences, as professional knowledge is embedded in practice, it underpins every teachers' ability to reflect and think critically" (p. 2). However, there is also consensus that reflection opportunities that uncover links between theory and practice must be integral to SBEs.

While there is much written about the importance of critical reflection in ITE (e.g., Carpenter & Blance, 2003; Carpenter & Matters, 2003; Down, 2006; Le Cornu, 2003; Mueller, 2003; White, 2006b) there was no research located which reported a study into the value of the wider school community for such reflection. Green and Reid's (2004) Australian research referred to working in isolated rural communities but not specifically about the impact of the community on the SBE. In their research, McGee and colleagues (1994) noted that "developing skills of critical reflection was perceived as an important part of the professional development of student teachers" (p. 51) but, like other researchers in this area, did not suggest that this should occur with more people than the coordinating teacher or university lecturer. Initiating young professionals into reflective practice is reported as "a complex task" (Mueller, 2003, p. 67), suggesting that the wider the interactions, the more effective the reflections (Hoben, 2006). A danger signaled in ITE literature is that to a novice observer such as a student teacher, it may appear "as though teaching progresses along a preordained path with little divergence from a well-established objective or goal" (Loughran, 2007, p. 182) therefore it is important to create opportunities to reflect and practice in a wider community to influence perceptions (Hastings, 1996; Le Cornu, 2006; Lind, 2004; Peters, 2002; Yarrow, 2004). Observing the practices of various professionals within a SBE provides student teachers with opportunities for comparison and wider reflection.

A good reason for extending experiences for reflection and practise into the wider school community is to highlight that "classroom practice is theory laden – it is embedded" (Deng, 2004b, p. 147). These wider experiences provide dialogue opportunities about theory, something that not all classroom teachers are able to do. Research frequently illustrates an existing dichotomy of student teachers' perceptions of learning, between the school and university settings (e.g., Deng, 2004a; Graham & Thornley, 2000; Grundy et al., 2001; Le Cornu et al., 2001;



Pring, 1999), between practice and theory, procedures and knowledge. While making connections between theory and applied theory is typically seen as the role of the university, a true partnership is “not one where the theory is developed in one place, and applied in another (it is not that kind of knowledge)” (Pring, 1999, p. 309). Overcoming such a dichotomy “requires more than simply linking theory and practice by ... connect[ing] those people in the university and school settings” (Graham & Thornley, 2000, p. 237). Student teacher, school-based educators and university-based educators need to work together as a community in collaboration. By engaging with a community of learning on meaningful professional-related tasks, the view is taken that student teachers are helped to link the theory taught and tested at university “to the practical needs of teachers in schools ... the theory [becomes] more meaningful for them” (Sutherland et al., 2005, p. 90).

#### *2.4.5 Opportunities to theorise practice*

The above researchers suggested a wider learning community could provide appropriate opportunities to practice the theories learned through study. They also consider it important that the SBE provides opportunities for a student teacher to theorise practice – their own and others. A common catchphrase of student teachers involved in research is that “university courses contained too much theory and real learning takes place in real classrooms during practicum experiences” (Russell et al., 2001, p. 43), emphasising the perceived need to *do* rather than any need to *know*. It is not sufficient to *do* in isolation, without observation and reflection. Student teachers need coordinating teachers, university lecturers and other professionals who can articulate practice, talk about theories *for practice* and *in practice* and, importantly, provide valuable feedback *about practice*. As Posner (2000) highlighted, beginning student teachers “should be expected to know no more about teaching than an avid moviegoer knows about directing or a dance buff knows about choreography” (p. 99). There is so much to learn that many others must be involved – for reflection, observation and practice. Evidence shows opportunities for learning teaching, such as self-study, relearning, reflection and problematising practice, should take part in a wider school community.

Self-study has a growing research literature of its own and although it is not the focus of this study, being able to study ‘self’ is an integral part of a SBE. Pring (1999) and Mueller (2003) claim that improvement of perspective and ability to self-study are critical to the development of professionalism. Being able to reflect effectively requires that students have both a ‘self’ worldview as well as views from alternative perspectives (Clarke, 2005; Deng, 2004b; Russell et al., 2001; Walkington, 2004). Learning teaching “is a continuous journey of self study and it is critical for teacher educators [both school-based and university-based] to portray their practical enquiries precisely” (Mueller, 2003, p. 82) as models of inquiry for students to question and explore. Mueller’s self-study work, influenced by Russell and other researchers from Queens University, Canada, emphasises the need to confront and discuss the struggles and triumphs when learning teaching. She stresses the importance of creating spaces for such activity, including student teachers and teacher educators together.

Deng (2004b) emphasised that student teachers of today need to understand “knowledge as something constructed and contestable, subject to revision and change” (p. 148) rather than a fixed transferable entity that can be shared between teachers. As “knowledge is seen to evolve from a co-construction of socially significant experiences and dialogue” (Graham & Thornley, 2000, p. 236) it is imperative that student teachers learn through their participation in experiences, dialogue and reflection. However, many student teachers are reported as understanding knowledge as a commodity transferred to a learner by way of a teacher, using transmissive pedagogy (Bigum & Rowan, 2004; Clarke, 2005; Down, 2006; Morine-Dershimer, 2006; Tang, 2004). Providing opportunities for “challenging and transforming the inherent beliefs and assumptions of preservice teachers” (Deng, 2004b, p. 148) is deemed critical to theorising and explicating practice. The university, school and wider professional community must share this task of co-constructing knowledge.

Theorising practice through reflection is much more than a simple conversation; more than just a discussion about a practical experience (Bullough, 1997; Clarke, 2000; Goodfellow, 2000; Lee & Loughran, 2000; Lind, 2004; Loughran, 2007; Williams & Watson, 2004). Along with other writers Loughran (2007) suggested that reflection requires inquiry, probing and critique that goes

“way beyond the technical” (p. 1), implying that another responsibility for university lecturers and coordinating teachers is to “develop students as practitioner-researchers” (Day, 2004, p. 154). Lauriala (1997) discovered in her Finnish-based ITE case study involving 16 student teachers in interviews, reports and narratives, that development of professional knowledge is “closely linked to the types of problems the participants [are] confronted with” (p. 279), suggesting that coordinating teachers must “purposefully create opportunities for students of teaching to see into teaching” (Loughran, 2007, p. 1), making learning teaching a site for inquiry where dialogue and reflection dominate. Timperley and colleague’s (1998) New Zealand study showed that even though course documentation may espouse the importance of developing student teacher reflection, often “these espousals were not evident in their practice” (p. 71). Yet numerous writers claim that student teachers and coordinating teachers need to go beyond the simple conversations about the technical aspects of practice and ‘problematise’ even their most mundane and straightforward classroom practices (Clarke, 2000; Jones, 2001; Lauriala, 1997; Le Cornu et al., 2001; Lind, 2004; Timperley et al., 1998; Turnbull, 2005; Williams & Watson, 2004; Yarrow, 2004; Zeegers, 2005). Clearly, as Loughran (2007) suggested, “focusing on the problematic in learning teaching – questioning the taken-for-granted” (p. 2), may alarm many student teachers and coordinating teachers because of the associated ‘messiness and uncertainty’. Opportunities to reflect with other teacher educators and observe other classrooms may provide opportunities to get beyond the simple conversations.

Student teachers need to be “able to learn both *from* talk and *to* talk as a legitimate member of the [professional] community” (Maynard, 2000, p. 28). Knowing when to observe and listen and when to practice and reflect is a challenge for them. Based on his extensive research, Clarke (1997) emphasises the importance of the student teacher being “co-investigator into practice that is being learned; know when to watch, speak, listen or act; an inquirer into own practice” (p. 172). Furthermore, following her own self-study, Goodfellow (2000) suggested that reflective practice was a strategy which enabled teachers and student teachers to “‘interrogate’ their teaching practices” (p. 40), an idea also explored by Norsworthy (2003). Loughran (2007) argued the importance of

teachers examining what they did through questioning and review, challenging their own teaching expertise by questioning it: theorising about their everyday practice by engaging with others. Clarke (1997) and Hoben (2006) both suggested that engagement practices between coordinating teacher and student teacher ranged from the classroom teacher who allows their student to be a *placeholder* in his or her classroom, to the *supervisor* who oversees the work of the student teacher, to the teacher who accepts the importance of their role as *educator*. Placeholders and supervisors were not regard as facilitators of learning. Similar conclusions were drawn from Timperley's (2001) study of student teachers. She asserted the importance of coordinating teachers and other ITE partners having the ability to engage, to articulate knowledge and principles of teaching. Loughran (2007) clearly considered that "being able to articulate one's own knowledge of practice is vital to enacting a pedagogy of teacher education in order to be able to answer questions" (p. 4), observing and reflecting on theories *for* practice and theories *of* practice.

Effective coordinating teachers are able to make explicit their own tacit knowledge and also enable student teachers to articulate their knowledge and practice. Tacit knowledge in teaching is that which has been constructed through experience and intuition, and is not readily articulated by your 'average' classroom teacher (Timperley et al., 2007; Tsui, 2005; Zeegers, 2005). Timperley (2001) noted from her New Zealand investigations that coordinating teachers were being asked to undertake a challenging task, to "articulate principles of teaching as they arise in practical contexts for the student teachers ... in ways that facilitate student teacher learning about their own practice and how to improve on it" (p. 112). Another researcher, Young (1994), in describing one Australian programme, suggested that such explications of practice "sharpen teachers' awareness of the complexities of their craft and develop their facility with its exposition" (p. 7). Putting everyday practice into plain words for their student teacher is not an easy task for the classroom teacher.

In summary, SBEs in teacher education are intended as sites to learn teaching, opportunities to explore theories for and of practice and to theorise practice. Deng (2004b) reported the role of theory as multifaceted and wide ranging, "not only to assist in the training of pre-service teachers in skills and procedures, ... to educate

them more widely about the complexities, intellectual and moral dimensions of classroom practice” (p. 155) but also to empower them to rationalise and articulate their own practice. Smith (2000) confirmed from her UK research that student teachers saw “learning about educational theory as important” (p. 143) to their development as a teacher. On the other hand, the reverse should also be true: being able to theorise your own experiences enables ITE partners to engage in dialogue about practice. Deng (2004b) argued that student teachers often could not foresee the application of theories and knowledge nor “adequately grasp the issues, arguments and perspectives in educational foundation courses” (p. 154) but he maintains that practice should become the foundation of their own theorising. Schools need teachers who do more than control behaviours, give information and assess work (Pring, 1999; Smith, 2000): there must be a professionalism that includes theoretical knowledge, practical competence and commitment (Pring, 1999). There are problems in seeing theory and practice as separate entities. Emphasising the importance of balancing theory and practice, treating them as inter-related, providing opportunities to practice theory and theorise practice, might ensure that a theory-practice dichotomy is not continued (Lind, 2004; McGee et al., 1994). Determining the critical factors of a SBE may go some way to ensuring theory can be practised and practice can be theorised within partnerships that support observation, inquiry and reflection.

### ***2.5 Placement partnership as community: Models, roles, relationships and resources***

According to many writers a school-based experience should be contextualised as a community of inquiry (Clarke, 2005; Farr Darling, 2001; Hoben, 2006; Le Cornu, 2004; Lind, 2004). These researchers have promoted the idea that each SBE should be situated in a community of like-minded and knowledgeable people where learning teaching can be the central focus. With the complex and demanding nature of teaching, it is essential that student teachers are able to share and reflect with a range of other professionals, suggesting a need that each SBE involves the establishment and maintenance of a community partnership capable of facilitating learning opportunities. These partnerships may embrace a range of people with the same goal in mind, the student teacher

becoming teacher. To achieve this goal the strategies and practices of the partners may vary as much as the models of partnership.

### *2.5.1 Models of university-school partnership*

Various models of partnerships have been utilised by teacher educators over recent years. The growing range of models has emerged mostly from the desire and drive of ITE providers to make available learning opportunities for their student teachers that are more appropriate (for example Beck & Kosnik, 2001; Ferrier-Kerr, 2005; Forlin & Gibson, 1997; Le Cornu, 2005; Lind, 2004; Loughran, 2007; Maynard, 2001). Winitzky, Stoddart and O’Keefe (1992) suggested, “A school cannot be excellent without teachers graduated from excellent programs. To improve one part of the system, one must improve all of it” (p. 5), including the school-university partnerships. Partnership models vary according to a range of characteristics including authority, proximity, outcomes and relationships. Like other universities, the University of Waikato has programme partnerships with many schools for its teaching practice experiences (McGee, 1995b). Some are partnerships where teachers and lecturers are already familiar with each other while others, like the MMP programme in this study, the teachers and university lecturers mostly do not know each other. Researchers (for example Tsui & Wong, 2006; Wilson & l’Anson, 2006) have explored power relationships between the school and the university in developing effective partnership models for SBEs. Forlong (as cited in Wilson & l’Anson, 2006) identified a continuum of three models of partnership based on the working relationship of the partners, from “‘collaborative partnerships’ to ‘[university]-led partnerships’ to ‘separatist partnerships’” (p. 355). Also, in an earlier study, Furlong and colleagues (as cited in McGee, 1995b) identified a typology of school-university partnerships based around the degree to which each partner had decision-making authority.

In Forlong et al.’s (as cited in McGee, 1995b) *Model A*, full authority of the SBE structures and requirements resides with the university as principal teacher educator. This was the most common model observed in one Australian research project, where “traditional attitudes and expectations, based on the largely unquestioned assumption that power over design and execution of the practicum

rightly resides with the university” (Hastings & Squires, 2002, p. 80). Given the literature reviewed, this finding would hold true for many programmes. In *Model B*, the school and university staff members work together for the benefit of the student teacher and decision-making authority of the SBE is shared jointly. In *Model C*, greater authority in the SBE is given to the school. In these partnerships the student teachers spend about 80% of programme time working in a school with a coordinating teacher. In *Model D* schools have full decision-making authority, a totally school-based teacher education programme (McGee, 1995b). With no recent New Zealand research available indicating otherwise, local researchers indicated that most partnerships were closely aligned to *Model A* (see for example Cameron & Baker, 2004; Ferrier-Kerr, 2005; Haigh, 2001; Hoben, 2006; Julian, 1998; Kane, 2005). The University of Waikato’s MMP programme employs a model that combines both *A* and *B*, sharing decision-making authority with school-based teachers on selected aspects such as the daily classroom actions, expectations and standards of practice (Campbell & Yates, 1997). However, university staff members still make the majority of decisions about the SBE. With ITE programmes being more student-centred and requiring quality classrooms in which to place student teachers (Farr Darling, 2001), the trend in recent years has been “increasingly towards collaborative partnerships” (Wilson & l’Anson, 2006, p. 355), where decision-making authority is shared.

Accommodating each partner’s expectations in a SBE setting can be a challenge where there are tensions over ownership of knowledge and expertise (McGee, McGee, & Oliver, 1998). Student teachers are likely to experience such tensions during a SBE. While it may be preferable to share authority jointly among all partners in a SBE (Calder & Whyte, 2000), Tsui and Wong (2006) and Lind (2004) reported that there were many challenges to achieving an equitable partnership, but there were also benefits. To develop effective, joint partnerships, such as Lind (2004) proposes, takes time, communication and commitment. Greenwood and colleagues (n.d.) found:

... a wide range of perceptions ... on the nature and effectiveness of the relationship schools and centres had with tertiary providers. Only a few said they had an effective partnership and that it was underdeveloped because of lack of communication, time and funding. Some stakeholders felt there was not enough consultation. (pp. 109-110)



The primary aim of a SBE remains for the student teacher to learn teaching and therefore the focus should be on working together, whatever the model of partnership. However the authority is distributed, and whoever makes the decisions, the student teacher, coordinating teacher or university lecturer need an accommodating partnership. Ultimately, balancing the partnership should be to benefit the student teacher's learning (Williams, 1994) so partners need to be clear on their roles and responsibilities within each SBE partnership.

### *2.5.2 Roles and responsibilities of a school-based teacher educator*

Much of the literature reviewed for this study reported on the roles and responsibilities of the partners in school-based experiences in ITE. National and international studies provided a detailed picture of perceived and expected roles. No matter how diverse, without doubt the literature reported that the roles of the school-based and university-based teacher educators were regarded as important (Hoben, 2006; Lind, 2004; Rivers, 2006; Smith & Lev-Ari, 2005; Williams, 1994; Yarrow, 2004). However, irrespective of how well these teacher educators fulfilled their roles, it is the student teachers who are the glue that holds the partnership firm (Beck & Kosnik, 2002; Ferrier-Kerr, 2004; Haigh, 2001). From her Australian studies, Hastings (1996) reported that "when examining the associate teachers' descriptions of how they facilitate a successful practicum and the factors which affect the success, it became evident there is a plethora of differing views of what an associate teacher actually does" (p. 7). Whatever the views, the role of coordinating teacher is reported in the literature as providing both professional and personal help, guidance and support throughout the student teacher's learning experiences (Jones, 2001; Maynard, 2000; Timperley, 2001; Ussher, 2003).

Coordinating teachers were seen to play an important role as mentor for student teachers in SBEs (Cameron, 1995; Cameron-Jones & O'Hara, 1995; Hobson, 2002; McGee et al., 2001; Williams, 1994). Various definitions of the concept of mentor exist in teacher education literature. Some prevailing characteristics of an effective coordinating teacher were: experienced, successful, knowledgeable, professional and responsible (see for example, Sinclair et al., 2004). Kwan and Lopez-Real (2005) surveyed 259 teacher educators in Hong



Kong and they identified three dimensions of a coordinating teacher's mentoring role – the pragmatic tasks (such as feedback, observer, instructor and role model), the interpersonal tasks (including counselor, equal partner and critical friend) and the managerial tasks (including assessor, quality controller and manager). Characteristics reported by participants in other studies included pastoral care, professional expertise, support and guidance (Hudson, 2006; Timperley et al., 1998; Turner & Bash, 1999). Whichever definition is used, the challenge for a classroom teacher is to perform the tasks effectively.

Sinclair et al. (2004) and Young (1994) noted that as mentors, coordinating teachers are expected to be supportive and challenging, have a willingness to share, and have good interpersonal and communication skills. These positive aspects of the practices of mentors have been observed in many studies (for example, Parr, Wilson et al., 2004; Walkington, 2003; Williams & Watson, 2004; Zeegers, 2005). On the other hand, other researchers (for example Hastings, 1996; Maynard, 2000; Murray-Harvey et al., 2000; Timperley, 2001; Yarrow, 2004) suggested that mentors are typically “more concerned with smooth organisation and process than with the central issue of improving student performance in front of a class” (Kerry & Farrow, 1996, p. 108). More notably, Hudson (2006) indicated that his 331 student teacher participants did not perceive their mentors as fulfilling their role adequately especially the tasks of modelling teaching, discussing aims and curriculum and articulating expectations. The shortage of time available was one factor reported as impacting on the mentoring ability of the coordinating teacher (discussed in section 2.5.8; p.70).

Researchers have pinpointed support as an important aspect of the coordinating teacher's obligations as a mentor (Hastings, 1996). Support for the student teacher included conversations, opportunities and taking an interest in both personal and professional matters. For example, Murray-Harvey et al.'s (2000) cross-sector research with Australian students and mentor teachers in primary and secondary school SBEs, reported that nearly two-thirds of their sample indicated that the support of their coordinating teacher was their most important coping strategy. Their responses “highlighted the supportive role of the teacher” (p. 29), showing the importance they placed on establishing an effective working relationship with their coordinating teacher. Student teachers value

“emotional support from their associate teachers” (Beck & Kosnik, 2002, p. 96) and the study of student teacher coping strategies by Murray-Harvey et al. (2000) pointed to the importance of social support networks in developing and maintaining their SBE. This support should be integral in guiding the student teacher’s learning. Students in distance programmes are often located in isolated or remote areas so their involvement and continuation in a programme may be dependent on factors such as pastoral and professional support (Campbell & Yates, 1997; Donaghy et al., 2003; Simpson, 2002; Ussher, 2003). Without the support of quality teachers and lecturers, “students could be denied the opportunity to draw on effective coping strategies” (Murray-Harvey et al., 2000, p. 33) when they are socially isolated in a remote SBE. For ITE students in distance programmes like the one at the centre of this study, it is reported that support occurs primarily within the SBE where they interact face-to-face with teachers and other professionals (Campbell, Yates, & McGee, 1998). With most of the pastoral and professional support occurring during these interactions, there is reliance on the interpersonal skill of the classroom teacher (Donaghy et al., 2003).

In some of the literature reviewed it was suggested that coordinating teachers readily accept the responsibility to “guide students through their practical experiences” (McGee et al., 2001, p. 27). However, the guidance provided may not always align with the university’s goals. Beck and Kosnik (2000) reported that coordinating teachers tend to emphasise the practical role of mentoring “because they believe students learn mainly through experience” (p. 215) whereas usually a university would also be concerned with theory. Clarke (1997) claims that this responsibility of guidance necessitates “a highly interactive endeavour between [coordinating teacher] and student teacher and ... is one of the most taxing, exhausting, challenging activities ... ever undertaken” (p. 173). To successfully guide a student teacher is clearly shown through research to be hard work. As Cameron (1995) stated, coordinating teachers need to have “a willingness and desire to help another colleague [where] there are mutual benefits arising from the mentoring process” (p. 2) before they undertake this role. Often the challenge for coordinating teachers is to determine the boundaries of such a

role, where support and guidance are deemed appropriate given the additional responsibility of evaluation.

Coordinating teachers are often expected to supervise, assess and evaluate the student teachers in their school-based experiences. A range of these practices is reported in the literature (Cameron, 1995; Field, 2002; Gray, 1999; Hastings, 1996; McGee, 1996a; Ministry of Education, 2000; Ortlipp, 2003; Timperley et al., 1998; Zeegers, 2005; Zeichner, 2002). No single source was located reporting a survey of specific practices. For some ITE providers, placing the coordinating teachers in an evaluative role was felt to create stresses for both the student and the classroom teacher (Jones, 2001; Lind, 2004; Murray-Harvey et al., 2000). There was a suggestion that requiring the coordinating teacher to both supervise learning and evaluate achievement impacted negatively on the effectiveness of the partnership.

On the other hand, many coordinating teachers suggested they were in the best position to judge the effectiveness of a student teacher's practice and learning. English teachers in a comparative survey by Jones (2001) reported the task of evaluation as likely to "impair the quality of mentoring" (p. 89) while German teachers took the opposite view. Jones (2001) and Beck and Kosnik (2000) suggested from their findings that having the coordinating teacher evaluate their student teacher gave some ownership and authority, a higher status and a vote of confidence. Beck and Kosnik (2000) contend that, "giving them this role makes them even more crucial to the programme since it increases the time and effort they devote to the role and strengthens their influence over the student" (p. 210). Interestingly, Calder et al.'s earlier research (1993) suggested as a need the "development of competencies which enable associate teachers to take a more significant role in the supervision of teaching practice" (p. 17). These researchers did not detail such competencies but Beck and Kosnik (2000) reported that working closely with other teachers in evaluating students made coordinating teachers more aware of each other's supervisory work and gave them a healthy pride in how they performed. Stated advantages from this evaluative role were not conclusive in any research reviewed.

It can be seen that whether the coordinating teacher should have the responsibility of evaluating the student teacher's practice or learning teaching is an ongoing debate. Being an "evaluator" who gives grades and judges student achievements in terms of expectations or requirements, was not high on the list of desirable responsibilities for coordinating teachers in Cameron-Jones and O'Hara's research (1995). Clive McGee (1996a) concluded that, "if a major purpose of the practicum is to transfer theory into practice, the system of evaluation needs to be reviewed to reduce the 'give them what they want' habit" (p. 20). Power and Hine (2003) suggested that:

Awareness of the need to ensure that the mentor is in fact undertaking the role of mentoring and not the role of supervision or assessment needs to be communicated ... to ensure that there is not a conflict of interest between these roles. (p. 10)

The continuing authority of university staff as evaluators is strong yet the development of practical competence is considered the coordinating teacher's responsibility. In New Zealand the ultimate responsibility for most SBEs continues to reside with the university staff.

A goal of SBEs is for student teachers to learn teaching skills. Modelling 'quality' teaching practice is yet another responsibility of the classroom teacher as coordinating teacher (Beck & Kosnik, 2002; Cameron-Jones & O'Hara, 1995; Clarke & Jarvis-Selinger, 2005; Korthagen et al., 2006; McGee et al., 2001; Sivan & Chan, 2003). Practical modelling provides demonstrations of teaching skills and realistic examples of the stresses and complexities of teaching for students (Beck & Kosnik, 2000). Along with the teaching skills the student teacher is helped to become "a member of the teaching profession rather than simply becoming a proficient performer in an individual classroom" (Fish, as cited in Turner & Bash, 1999, p. 78). To make the role even more demanding, quality modelling in a SBE occurs beyond the classroom, into the wider school community, emphasising the importance of careful selection of each SBE setting.

School-based placements in distance ITE place pressure on the opportunity to be selective because of saturation in local classrooms or the limited number and small size of schools available (Nelligan, 2006; White, 2006a; Yarrow et al., 1997). Ishler and Howey found in their research that "in general, institutions delivering teacher education have little ability to select and supervise sites of best

practice as they are limited to the use of local schools” (as cited in Simpson, 2002, p. 5). This is especially true in New Zealand distance ITE. Potthoff and Alley (1995, ¶1 Discussion and recommendations) suggested “there are cases where availability of a site is the sole site selection criterion”, a ‘numbers game’, endorsed by Yarrow (2004) as a major problem where context is so critical to the outcomes for student teachers. Judy McGee et al. (1998) suggested that if too many teachers were utilised for SBEs without quality control, “the overall professional guidance of the student teachers would be logistically difficult, more complex, and perhaps lack a consistency of quality” (p. 11). For distance ITE programmes the involvement of widespread teachers is inevitable (Donaghy et al., 2003). Yarrow (2004) suggested it is time to reframe the approach taken by schools and providers. Based on his Queensland experiences, he suggested that teachers needed to be motivated to be part of ITE placements, where participation was seen as a “gain of status and the affiliation as a measure of pride in supporting the growth and development of school-based teacher education” (p. 83). Such motivation would be an advantage for student teachers in distance programmes.

Le Cornu (2005) also argued that coordinating teachers and university lecturers need to value school-based experiences and suggested that basing research and scholarship in the school-based experiences allows for deeper inquiry into the work of the classroom teacher and student teacher, providing space to think, engage and share with a wider community. Research involving secondary school SBEs found a lack of “status or recognition, incentive or reward” (Hobson, 2002, p. 17) impacted on the enthusiasm of the classroom teachers. Hobson (2002) concluded that the lecturers and teachers involved in SBEs needed their work to be valued. This requires intervention and if schools and universities are to effectively work as valued and respected partners in ITE then resources need to be devoted to ensure that the work of those involved in the SBE is recognised and rewarded (Beck & Kosnik, 2000). While there continues to be a perceived discrepancy in the “different valuing of practical and theoretical knowledge by teachers and academics” (Dawson, as cited in Peters, 2002, p. 230) there will continue to be potential difficulty and conflict among the participants. Institutional support, such as valuing and rewarding collaborative work, is needed for both the school and the university educators (Soliman, 2001). School-based

experiences run the risk of being “another unrecognized and unrewarded responsibility imposed on overworked [school-based and university-based] teacher educators” (Beck & Kosnik, 2000, p. 222) rather than a shared collaboration supported by resources.

In summary, essential to the role of mentor is providing both support and guidance for the personal and professional development and needs of the student teacher while learning teaching (Cameron-Jones & O'Hara, 1995; Hobson, 2002; Power & Hine, 2003). Fulfilling these responsibilities can create tension when the coordinating teacher is also required to evaluate the practice and achievement of the student. As part of their role the coordinating teacher should be a model of quality. However, sites of quality are not always readily accessible for student teachers, especially those studying at a distance.

### *2.5.3 University-based teacher educator as partner*

The role of universities in ITE is significant in New Zealand. In the past ITE was available through a range of providers but in recent years nearly all primary school beginning teachers graduate from a university programme (Kane, 2005). Teaching is an intellectual endeavour and therefore bringing about the intellectual development of children presupposes that teachers themselves must be “initiated into a form of intellectual life at a relatively demanding level ... in those disciplines which relate to the aims and methods of teaching” (Pring, 1999, p. 290). A role of the university lecturer is to achieve the goals set out in the provider’s documentation through academic study and practice opportunities.

One responsibility of university lecturers is to ensure that each student teacher has appropriate learning opportunities to enable her/him to achieve the goals and standards of their ITE programme and the New Zealand Teachers Council. The academic rationale and goals of the University of Waikato’s (2003) teacher education programmes assert that it “...will prepare competent, knowledgeable and critically reflective beginning teachers who are able to provide meaningful learning experiences which optimise achievement for all students across a range of school ... contexts and who themselves will engage in life-long learning” (¶ 1). Investigating the roles and responsibilities of university lecturers in one English ITE programme, Williams and Soares (2002) reported the

university lecturer as primarily responsible for curriculum design and theoretical knowledge development. This complemented the findings of several other researchers (Cameron-Jones & O'Hara, 1995; Timperley et al., 1998; Turner & Bash, 1999) who suggested that, as classroom teachers were not considered lecturers, assisting with academic study during SBEs was a low priority. The teachers involved in Kerry and Farrow's (1996) UK study of post-graduate and distance ITE were also concerned about these "underlying academic (e.g. reading) roles, which [their involvement] imposes on them" (p. 108). However, it is argued in the literature that each coordinating teacher must have the capacity to link theory and practice and so it is suggested that a further essential responsibility of university lecturers might be to be available to mentor coordinating teachers.

#### *2.5.4 Understanding responsibilities and working together as partners*

School-university partnerships have come under greater scrutiny from researchers as a result of renewed interest in ITE (Cameron & Baker, 2004; Cochran-Smith, 2004; Ferrier-Kerr, 2005; Kane, 2005; Yarrow, 2004; Zeichner, 2002). While in New Zealand ITE there has been a longstanding formal arrangement between the government-funded *normal* schools and some local university-based programmes, some ITE providers have not adopted a formal contractual approach for their programmes and SBEs. Instead, many partnerships rely on informal arrangements developed in the main by ITE staff, as reported for some University of Waikato programmes (Calder & Whyte, 2000; Campbell & Yates, 1997; Simpson, 2002; Whyte, 2000). For example, two University of Waikato ITE programmes rely on verbal acceptances and the exchange of written documentation as the basis of their partnership.

Teachers take on the role of coordinating teacher for an ITE programme for a variety of reasons: as a professional responsibility, to assist particular students, and as public recognition of their involvement in teacher education and expertise as a teacher (Yarrow et al., 1997). Calder and Whyte (2000) and Ferrier-Kerr (2005) reported schools in their studies having a strong desire to share in the professional responsibility for emerging-teacher development. Similarly, Simpson (2002) also suggested that teachers "generally take on the role of mentoring and supporting student teachers from a sense of commitment to their

profession rather than of commitment to any institution” (p. 7). Teachers are typically not trained as teacher educators so it is not reasonable to expect them to take on this additional role without professional support and guidance (Williams, 1994) and clearly articulated responsibilities.

Sharing of responsibilities by school, teacher and university lecturer in an ITE partnership is perhaps implied but is not always explicitly obvious in reality (Lind, 2004). Not only must they work together, but literature highlights also that the partners need to know each other. Calder et al.’s (1993) research, which explored the supervision experiences of a sample of university lecturers, concluded that the coordinating teacher’s knowledge of the ITE provider’s expectations and student requirements was important. They reported the need for opportunities to share and better understand each other’s values, experiences and the aims and objectives of the programme in order to be better positioned to assist their student teacher. These partners needed a framework to begin talking about the SBE.

Williams and Soares (2002) claimed that responsibilities should be shared by university lecturers and coordinating teachers. With potential for tension between each of the partners in SBEs, it is important to develop the important features: appropriate models of responsibility; establishment and development of relationships; and cohesion and outcomes of each partnership. As a framework to focus discussion about shared responsibilities in an ITE partnership, Alexander (1990) suggested the following:

- Structural dimensions: including, for example, conflicts of interests between school systems and routines and student teachers;
- Attitudinal dimensions: including, for example, the ‘ivory tower’ and remote positioning of the university lecturer versus a parochial and anti-intellectual attitude of the coordinating teacher;
- Personal dimensions: including, for example, respecting each others’ role and enjoying each other’s company; and
- Conceptual dimensions: including, for example, the sharing of information to understand the *why* and *how* for each partner (pp. 67-71).



Both groups of teacher educators must be open, communicative and responsive to all these dimensions: able to share the responsibilities if mentoring is to be effective for their student teachers. Working together includes “commitment to the process and willingness to accept collegial support” (Power & Hine, 2003, p. 10). In summary, a number of writers claimed that if effective partnerships are to be established between those involved in ITE, then robust relationships must be developed through the efforts and endeavours of all (Calder & Whyte, 2000; Dunne & Locke, 1996; Ferrier-Kerr, 2005; Haigh, 2001; Peters, 2002; Russell et al., 2001).

#### *2.5.5 Building an authentic partnership through robust relationships*

The evidence from a number of studies shows that successful SBEs need a partnership where student, teacher, school and university work together making complementary contributions to a robust relationship, where challenges and tensions are managed (Williams & Soares, 2002; Zeller Mayer & Tabak, 2006). Working together is essential, where time, sensitivity, mutual respect and professionalism are foremost matters of concern and discussion (Carpenter & Matters, 2003; Graham & Thornley, 2000). Each partnership must be treated as a unique opportunity for schools and university to collaborate, developing a partnership for learning where all partners advocate, as well as practice, democracy (Timperley, 2001; Winitzky et al., 1992), where “harmony would not necessarily be expected all the time” (Whyte, 2000, p. 6). Relationships among the partners of ITE are dependent on the establishment of rapport (Ferrier-Kerr, 2005; McGee et al., 2001; Williams, 1994): a sense of connectedness across the partnership that engenders “feelings of cohesion, spirit, trust and interdependence” (Rovai, as cited in Anderson, 2004, p. 184). Effective SBEs require the creation of a partnership where conflict of intent is rationalised, opportunities are real rather than contrived (Soliman, 2001), and each partner’s contribution complements that of others (Zeller Mayer & Tabak, 2006).

Development of rapport between university lecturer and student teacher was one factor identified in Calder et al.’s (1993) research that “enhances a successful teaching practice experience” (p. 6). Chase et al. (2004) and Jane (2003) argued that rapport is an essential part of good mentoring, involving actions, activities,

“connectedness, ... affinity, things in common and genuine concern” (Mallison, as cited in Jane, 2003, p. 5). However, establishing good rapport with partners requires energy, time and skill because “... rapport is fluid and constantly evolving” (Laski, 2005, p. 907), so it is about “knowing when to speak and when to listen .... Sometimes tact and diplomacy were helpful...” (Participant in Grundy et al., 2001, p. 215). Developing rapport is also about balancing authority in a relationship rather than adopting “a ‘strategic compliance’ approach” (Hodkinson & Hodkinson, 1997, p. 127). Hodkinson and Hodkinson’s (1997) small case study based on interviewing one UK ITE secondary student before and after practicum experience, concluded that conflict and tension are often encountered when partners are developing rapport in a SBE. University-school partnerships are commonly shaped by “traditional attitudes and expectations, based on the largely unquestioned assumption that power over the design and execution of the [SBE] rightly resides with the university” (Hastings & Squires, 2002, p. 3). In these partnerships there may be a distancing between student teacher and university lecturer as the student teacher builds rapport with the coordinating teacher, developing a greater sense of connectedness, belonging to the SBE.

Coordinating teachers in Beck and Kosnik’s (2000) study who reported “relatively high satisfaction” (p. 213) from their work suggested that it was due to the rapport and connectedness with university staff, where partners helped each other through the conflicts (Hastings, 2004), and the experiences were not contrived or framed by the university, but partners’ roles were complementary (Lind, 2004). This approach “requires some humility on the part of both university-based and school-based educators as they recognize that each has something to contribute to teacher education and to learn from each other” (Timperley, 2001, p. 121). A prerequisite is to establish and foster authenticity, cultivating a ‘complementary’ approach to teaching and learning, helping student teachers to develop a connection.

Connectedness in SBE settings is created through tasks and formative discussions focusing on content and practice (Anderson, 2004). It is the sense of belonging, “the degree to which a [student teacher] ‘senses the availability of, and

connectedness with teachers, peers, and the institution” (Shin, as cited in Russo & Campbell, 2004, p. 220). Connectedness refers to:

... the belief or feeling that a reciprocal relationship exists between two or more parties, involving an individual’s subjective judgment on the extent of the engagement with which he/she is concerned. Although different terminologies are observed, the idea of connectedness has been the basis of a stream of academic discourse on human relations, learning, and education. (Shin, 2002, p. 123)

While it may be true that university lecturers have the ability and time to offer strategies for connectedness in partnerships in the on-campus environment (Hastings & Squires, 2002), in a distance SBE opportunities to apply these strategies are not always available. Perry, Komesaroff and Kavanagh’s (2002) research project in Victoria, provided space for teachers to foster “a sense of connectedness (i.e. support) in individuals ... [allowing them to] engage, receive support and take risks” (p. 254), aspects deemed essential for effective partnerships. Where the students in their project viewed connectedness positively, it seemed dependent on support from their university lecturers. Student teachers in Williams’ (1994) UK study reported connectedness when their “school-based support was undertaken by the same person who taught or tutored the student in the university and where the tutor knew both the student and the school well” (p. 171). While this might be considered desirable by the student teacher, other partners may view this as potential conflict or not practical.

There exists the potential for conflict between the intentions of partners in SBEs. Calder et al.’s (1993) work identified conflict of intent for the partners between their various roles, “as a factor likely to inhibit the success of a teaching practice experience” (p. 10). Other research investigated this same tension, comparing responsibilities such as providing opportunities, feedback and evaluation.

There must be a connection between the three participant groups. With a diverse range of individuals within any ‘world’ and ... all wanting diverse ends, it is inevitable that there will be conflict between people wanting to pursue their own goals (Cohen et al., 2000). This is apparent from my own experiences, particularly as a liaison lecturer. There are potential sites for conflict between [coordinating teacher] and student within the classroom and school, between the student and liaison lecturer, and between the liaison lecturer and [coordinating teacher]. (Ussher, 2005b, p. 435)

Supervisory situations potentially create tensions for university lecturers and coordinating teachers due to conflict of intent (Komesaroff & White, 2001; Kyriacou, 1993; Sivan & Chan, 2003). However, Carpenter and Blance (2003) suggest such “conflict that arises from the tensions, challenges and dilemmas of being part of a learning community are a natural and vital part of growth and renewal of the community” (p. 90). Beck and Kosnik (2001) suggested that the potential for conflict is ever-present in a SBE and the partners must learn how to cope and manage this. Adopting local practices by conforming usually minimised the potential for conflict for the student teachers (Jones, 2001; McGee, 1996a). Researchers observed that student teachers who hastened their “acceptance into a school community by immediately assuming the philosophy, style, methods and practices” (Carpenter & Blance, 2003, p. 90) of the locals in order to be successful, often experienced a decline in growth and development because they focused on survival rather than “learning”. Intrusion into the school and classroom by student teachers and university lecturers may create tensions, “affecting privacy, independence and professional autonomy” (Carpenter & Matters, 2003, p. 2), making boundaries more obvious and requiring explanation by the school community. In working out new partnerships, conflicts and contradictions must be made explicit and discussed openly by all those involved (Dunne & Locke, 1996), especially the tensions created through the obligation of classroom teachers to their children, parents and school community (McGee, 1996c).

#### *2.5.6 Relationship between student teacher and coordinating teacher*

Research reports indicated that within a SBE partnership the most important relationship is that formed between the student teacher and the coordinating teacher. Participants in Clive McGee’s (1996a) research reported that for them, this relationship was “of paramount concern” (p. 20), echoed by the lecturers in Calder et al.’s (1993) study: “positive associate teacher and student relationships enhance successful teaching practice” (p. 7). As this relationship impacts all components of the SBE, it is important for student teachers and coordinating teachers to negotiate their personal and professional differences over the full range of qualities and attributes (McGee et al., 2001), to negotiate the perception of each partner. These perceptions impact a student teacher in terms of feelings of

self-worth as a teacher and person (Maynard, 2000). Beck and Kosnik (2002) and Murray-Harvey et al. (2000) concluded that interpersonal relationships are a decisive factor in determining success, while Posner (2000) suggested that:

Most people approach [new] social situations with caution. They reserve judgment and commitment until they know something about the individuals, and their expectations, the social rules and procedures, and the relation between the specific situation and the larger social context ... some sort of situation analysis is a necessary part of any social interaction. (p. 91)

Building a partnership from an existing relationship can certainly help avoid tensions (Hastings & Squires, 2002; Le Cornu, 2004).

Tensions within a SBE relationship are common where a student teacher perceives his/her status as one of 'client' in the classroom (Developmental Studies Centre, 2000). In these settings, student teachers usually adopt the position of consumer of skills rather than inquirer. They exhibit this standing through language used and assumptions made about classroom practice, deferring to the expert teacher and her/his uncontested practices. Jones (2001) suggested this usually resulted in an uneven distribution of authority with the coordinating teacher fully in control. While the Developmental Studies Centre of California (2000) may suggest that students must "accept [the coordinating teacher's] authority to make decisions regarding the classroom, the children, and ground rules for both" (p. 14), this should not exclude opportunities for the student teacher to make decisions as a learner. Conforming behaviour as a client in someone else's classroom often creates the apparent contradiction of lacking in initiative (Lauriala, 1997; McGee, 1996a; Posner, 2000). However, while a student teacher may be learning teaching as a professional they still have obligations to the expert classroom partner. Student teachers regarded as 'client' in the SBE are likely to be seen more as an aide, not equal or autonomous but available to assist the coordinating teacher as expert 'provider'.

Coordinating teachers are often viewed as the provider of practice opportunities (Ballantyne & Mylonas, 2001; Maynard, 2001; White, 2006b). Some researchers suggested student teachers must understand their obligations to the classroom teacher (Developmental Studies Centre, 2000; McGee, 1996a; Posner, 2000), to value them and make them feel important (Maynard, 2000), like a provider of practice and opportunities. However, Jones (2001) concluded that

this may be true in a school “structured in terms of teachers’ years of experience” (p. 86) but not in a school focused on learning.

As touched upon briefly in section 2.5.2 (see p. 53), the complex and demanding supervisory relationship between student teacher and coordinating teacher is generally not clearly defined in these contested, problematic and challenging settings (McGee et al., 2001). Le Cornu, Mayer and White (2001) highlighted problems associated with the use of the term supervision:

In our opinion, continued use of the language of ‘supervision’, whether traditional approaches to supervision or more recent facilitatory approaches, has formed a barrier to the successful implementation of successive reconceptualisations of the practicum suggested throughout the past decade. We therefore argue for the adoption of the language of ‘pedagogy’ rather than that of ‘supervision’. This highlights the focus on the professional learning of each individual preservice teacher, rather than on a process deemed to be effective in helping prospective teachers learn to teach, particularly the inherent assumptions about the roles, the relationships between the people carrying out these roles, and where it can occur. (pp. 2-3)

Rejecting the term ‘supervision’ challenges the separateness of university-based and school-based components of ITE and changes the focus of the SBE (Le Cornu et al., 2001; Lind, 2004). Lind (2004) suggested that continued use of such terms creates barriers to relationships and to professional learning. The role of ‘supervisor’ in current ITE programmes is reported as one of providing feedback for encouragement, ideas and confirmation (Sivan & Chan, 2003) rather than one of engaging in reflection for learning, although allocating a pass/fail mark is still necessary. Kane (2005) reported in her review that for all New Zealand ITE providers, “student teachers are supervised by an associate teacher and are visited at least once by an institution lecturer ... during each practicum” (p. 162) for evaluative purposes. However, if student teachers are expected to accept and act on feedback and advice as suggested by Maynard (2000), this is likely to create tensions and cause problems in maintaining a professional relationship (Maynard, 2000) where the coordinating teacher is supervisor rather than professional colleague and co-learner.

Student teachers and coordinating teachers may often develop a collegial relationship (Campbell-Evans & Maloney, 1997; Ferrier-Kerr, 2005). Beck and Kosnik (2002) reported student teachers valuing collegial relationships with their coordinating teacher. However, actualisation of such relationships often proved

more problematic. In New Zealand, McGee et al. (2001) reported that coordinating teachers like to foster collegial relationships with their student teachers, also observed by Jones (2001) in her work with 25 English and German coordinating teachers. She found that “teachers attach particular importance to the principles of collegiality and equality” (p. 6). In contrast, the coordinating teachers in Timperley et al.’s study (1998) consistently rated friendship as only moderately important, suggesting that the focus of collegiality is more about collaboration or engagement (Clarke, 1997), about learning together as novice and expert, not about friendship (Beck & Kosnik, 2002).

#### *2.5.7 Building a learning community: Existing relationships*

Classroom teachers operate in a wide range of communities with many responsibilities at any one time. These communities might include the classroom, teaching-team, school, curriculum-experts and sports-team. While it may be that a coordinating teacher has the main responsibility for the development of a SBE partnership, it must be remembered, “teachers do not just operate in the community of other teachers” (Jones et al., 1997, p. 259). In the literature it was clear that building a learning community where opportunities to learn were accessible, was a complex and multifaceted task. Such community partnerships for SBEs often exist between schools and universities (Ferrier-Kerr, 2005; Haigh, 2001; Perry et al., 2002) although to a lesser extent for distance programmes like the one in this study. However, pre-existing relationships between the student teacher on SBE and the school or teacher are not common.

The majority of the literature accessed for this study focused on the school-university aspect of the SBE as a partnership rather than as a learning community. Some researchers reported good outcomes from well-developed, collaborative learning communities established between ITE providers and schools (for example, Ferrier-Kerr, 2005; McGee et al., 1998; Peters, 2002; Sivan & Chan, 2003; Whyte, 2000; Zellermayer & Tabak, 2006). Other studies, like River’s New Zealand study (2006), found little evidence of high-quality learning communities based on good reciprocal relationships between providers of ITE and schools. Some researchers reported school-university partnerships that were mainly positive and successful, built on the effectiveness of the coordinating



teachers who knew their role and responsibilities (Hobson, 2002; Jones et al., 1997; Kerry & Farrow, 1996). However, as Walkington (2004) suggested, SBE settings are not always well developed as learning communities for a variety of reasons. First, she identified the “lack of opportunities to develop closer and respected relationships” (p. 36) where inquiry is fundamental, which was discussed earlier. Second, she suggested that effective mentoring practice in a SBE is understood as support, collaboration and partnership rather than co-construction of theory and practice. Third, she suggested that SBEs were about the “utilisation of the expertise of the school partners” (p. 36), much as discussed earlier relating to client-provider relationships. Finally, she identified the need for greater resourcing of the SBE for the partnerships to grow into learning communities.

Typically most student teachers enter each SBE as a newcomer to the school. Many challenges confront student teachers as ‘newcomers’ to the school learning community (Fuller et al., 2005; White, 2006b; Zeegers, 2005) such as relationship building, resources, policies and systems. Dunne and Locke (1996) reported that new relationships are usually established based on assumptions formed from previous partnerships with schools. While Dunne and Locke’s work is based on small-scale research with secondary UK student teachers and schools, it provides insights based on conversations between university tutors and school-based mentors. White (2006b) suggested that student teachers as newcomers in a school community have to “project their personality/identity as one that deserves to be welcomed and nurtured” (p. 9). Her study showed that existing school members judged each student teacher in deciding whether they should be allowed to “enter their specific community or not” (p. 9). This requires that for each new SBE the student teacher must attempt to establish a “fit” between their own identity and the new community. This fit may not always be available to the student teacher because of conflict between their own personality and the school or because the school community does not wish to include them, perhaps because of workload or over-commitment.

Being placed in a school where there is an existing relationship is not a common experience for a student teacher. Such existing relationships may be based on employment or familial responsibilities. This situation was reported



only by Green and Reid (2004) in an Australian context and Delany and Wenmoth (2003) in a New Zealand context. Green and Reid suggested that where ‘locals’ are in schools as student teachers, they are more likely to stay in those schools while Delany and Wenmoth emphasised the ownership, involvement and motivation of the local community to find solutions to local staffing problems. This is different to the MMP programme where in most cases the student teachers have an existing relationship with their school. On the contrary, Kane’s (2005) review on policy and practice reported,

...most [ITE] institutions state that students will not be placed in a school where they have a relationship of some kind. This would include situations such as being employed at the school, being related to an employee of the school, having family members attending the school [such as offspring], being on the board of trustees or being the partner of a board of trustees member. (p. 163)

This suggests dilemmas for both newcomers and ‘old-timers’ in SBEs. Those who are newcomers must gain acceptance while those who have an existing relationship must have already been accepted by school personnel in order to continue their learning. However, such acceptance will have been in a different role, for example, as teacher aide or parent rather than as student teacher. Attending to the “history and experience of each student at [the time of placement]” (Sivan & Chan, 2003, p. 191) is an important element of SBE establishment. While Sivan and Chan’s study of part-time Hong Kong secondary in-service teachers focused on novices in terms of experience, they found the more experienced student teachers were focused on learning. This suggests that the ‘old-timers’ were already established in a community so they could get on with learning. Ideally, a SBE relationship must develop into a well-resourced community where inquiry and learning are the focus.

#### *2.5.8 Resources for the ITE partnership*

The resourcing of SBEs is reported by researchers as inadequate or underdeveloped in terms of funding, time and/or people (Beck & Kosnik, 2001; Rivers, 2006; Walkington, 2004), although Cunningham (2007) concluded that in UK programmes resources just have not caught up with recent change. Korthagen et al. (2006) argued that SBEs needed to be well resourced as there will always be extra work involved. If SBEs are a critical part of ITE programmes then the resourcing must reflect and support this (Kane, 2005). Yet Kane’s (2005) New

Zealand review reported a “general sense from providers that funding for ITE is inadequate ... primarily in relation to practicum” (p. 209). While there were no studies that investigated funding specifically, comments relating to time available to each SBE partner and the number of people actively involved echoed a lack of funding. Resourcing issues that often confront partners in teaching practice are:

- time for the classroom teacher to work with their student teacher, including time in the school day to reflect on observations and practice, and share ideas together, and
- other resourcing to overcome the many barriers that exist for partners in a SBE.

Each is now discussed briefly, showing clearly the importance of this issue.

Time and workload are reported by a range of studies as critical issues in a SBE to allow fulfillment of the administrative and academic responsibilities required (for example, Beck & Kosnik, 2002; Calder et al., 1993; Green & Reid, 2004; Jones, 2001; McGee, 1996b; White, 2006b; Williams & Soares, 2002). In recent years lack of available time was reported as a major issue for coordinating teachers wanting to work effectively with their student teacher (Edelfelt, 1999; Soliman, 2001). The teachers in Kerry and Fallow’s (1996) study of mentors were, “clear that schools need to provide time in which they can operate in that role” (p. 108). They suggested that time is of the essence when they are asked to fulfill the ‘pragmatic’ tasks in their role.

Calder et al.’s (1993) New Zealand study highlighted the need for coordinating teachers “to give students the time and opportunities to meet their [university] requirements” (p. 18). Other researchers suggested that busy teachers and student teachers need to be able to commit and manage their time for working together, talking and reflecting as professionals about teaching and learning (Ferrier-Kerr, 2005; Kerry & Farrow, 1996; Lind, 2004; Rivers, 2006; Turner & Bash, 1999). If, as discussed earlier, reflection is considered important then time must be available to enable learning teaching to “evolve from a co-construction of socially significant experiences and dialogue” (Graham & Thornley, 2000, p. 236). Hobson (2002) also suggested that this was a mutual responsibility, based on his interviews and self-report surveys of UK students in a secondary graduate

programme. He, along with White (2006b), concluded that student teachers appreciate coordinating teachers who are prepared and able to make time for them, to accommodate their learning needs.

A SBE must include time for participants to share knowledge, skills, values, practices and behaviours (Clarke, 2000; Le Cornu, 2005; McGee et al., 2001; White, 2006b). Sharing in a SBE community includes a range of participants such as university lecturer, coordinating teacher, peers and other teachers. Researchers claimed that sharing of knowledge about teaching and learning in ITE should not be restricted to the university-based components of the programme but should be an integral aspect of the total programme (Clarke & Jarvis-Selinger, 2005; Ferrier-Kerr, 2005; Le Cornu, 2005; Pring, 1999; Ussher, 2003). Synthesising the knowledge of the coordinating teacher with the knowledge and ideas already experienced within their ITE programme brings a valuable additional perspective for each student teacher (McGee et al., 2001). This can only be done when time and opportunities are provided for the classroom teacher (Hobson, 2002). Lack of sharing of knowledge between the partners can result in a lack of coherence in the SBE (Bullough, 1997). Research shows the value of allocating time to work together as the coordinating teachers claimed *they* learned from such SBEs in many ways also (Beck & Kosnik, 2000; Ussher, 2003).

Barriers that restrict the opportunities for student teachers to learn and practise teaching often arise. Barriers might be systemic, ethical or personal. One barrier may be the teacher's confidence or commitment to creating opportunities for their student teacher. Another may be the distance between colleagues – student teachers or coordinating teachers (Cattley, 2004; Peters, 2002; Spencer, 1995). Some ITE researchers viewed separation between partners as a barrier (Grundy et al., 2001). Grundy and her colleagues also explored the notion of exploitation by the coordinating teacher and how this acted as a barrier to learning opportunities. Exploitation by a coordinating teacher creates an interruption to the ITE programme and may be an impediment based on communication, achieving standards or expectations (Fuller et al., 2005; Hastings, 1996; Le Cornu, 2005). Typically, the structures of the institutions (school and university) reported in the literature provided no mechanism and little incentive for professionals to work collaboratively as teachers or researchers, developing

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appropriate learning experiences (Ferrier-Kerr, 2005; Gray, 1999; Lind, 2004; McGee, 1995c; Pring, 1999; Winitzky et al., 1992) hence the interruptions between university-based and school-based learning were often perceived as barriers that restricted opportunities. These studies highlighted that the SBE was regulated by the expectations of the classroom teacher rather than finding a balance that also satisfied some of the student teacher's expectations. In order to overcome these barriers and time issues, a SBE must be well resourced.

### *2.5.9 Professional development for ITE partners*

Given the importance of their roles, it makes good sense to ensure coordinating teachers and university lecturers are provided with professional development opportunities to develop their SBE abilities and knowledge (Caires & Almeida, 2005; Field, 2002; Haigh, 2001; Hastings & Squires, 2002; Lind, 2004; Smagorinsky et al., 2004). No literature reviewed suggested that the coordinating teachers were all well equipped for the role though some recent studies reported on projects attempting to address this issue (for example, Clarke, 2000; Korthagen et al., 2006; Timperley, 2001; Wilson, 2005; Yarrow, 2004). Student teachers in a small South African study by Robinson (1999) reported that their coordinating teachers "did not know what was expected of them and this created difficulties when the teachers were asked to give the student teachers guidance and advice" (p. 200). Two of three New Zealand coordinating teachers in a case study by Haigh (2001) suggested "there is much work still to be done in preparing all of the practicum partners if they are to be able to work together for quality preservice teacher education" (p. 19). Haigh concluded that ongoing, open triadic development regarding the SBE led to better understanding and reform for her small sample of New Zealand secondary student teachers and mentors. McGee (1996a) took a similar position from his study of University of Waikato SBEs: "to offer training by the School of Education to all associate teachers ... is a requirement" (p. 21).

It might be assumed that being a coordinating teacher requires very little preparation (Clarke, 1996; Potthoff & Alley, 1995) but Hastings (1996) highlighted this as a flaw in many partnerships. Currently, there appears a minimum of deliberate preparation for coordinating teachers, critical SBE

partners. Drawing on her research, Hastings (1996) suggests there are four broad categories associated with the ‘preparation’ of coordinating teachers: “intuition about good teaching; feeling my way/learning to be an associate; modelling it on personal experience as a preservice teacher; and induction of casuals/beginning teachers” (p. 7). She implied that most work intuitively, feeling their way and very few actually model their actions on ‘good’ coordinating teachers whether from within their own workplace or other observations. Kane’s (2005) review found that most New Zealand ITE providers offered some professional support for their coordinating teachers. However, Haigh’s (2001) and Lind’s (2004) studies found an absence or shortage of professional development. Clarke (1997) reported that research up to the mid 1990s revealed coordinating teacher preparation was “beginning to be taken more seriously” (p. 168) by some providers although he claimed that this typically focused on student teacher behaviour and achievement rather than the responsibilities and professional development of the teachers.

Coordinating teachers require “ongoing support” (Clarke, 1997, p. 168) to ensure they are professionally ready and well supported. Kane (2005) suggested support is provided in various forms including university papers, meetings, workshops, courses and handbooks. University lecturers could become facilitators of professional development for coordinating teachers in their areas, coordinating groups, venues and activities. For example, Timperley’s (2001) research noted teachers responded positively to her mentor training intervention. Calder et al. (1993) suggested that professional development enabled coordinating teachers to “take a more significant role” (p. 17) in their work with the student teacher and university lecturers. Beck and Kosnik (2000) argue that coordinating teachers need to have comparable knowledge and understanding of the SBE to completely fulfill obligations.

For SBE partners to share compatible views on learning and pedagogy, university-based staff must also be given opportunities to better understand what is happening in classrooms and schools (Winitzky et al., 1992). Calder et al. (1993) found in their investigation with university lecturers, that their own professional development was discussed as a priority by almost all: “Most lecturers considered it extremely important that there be professional development

for those responsible for the supervision of students on teaching practice” (p. 16). Lind (2004), Clarke (2000) and Ferrier-Kerr (2005) concur on this same topic, highlighting professional development opportunities for university lecturers as a significant issue. The details of such opportunities vary. Kane (2005) suggested that the conceptual framework, which guides each ITE programme, is a key indicator of quality and should therefore be shared by the SBE partners.

In summary, teaching is a research-based, professional activity and both teachers and lecturers need to continue their professional growth, both for its own sake and to model learning for their students (Ballantyne & Mylonas, 2001; Cochran-Smith, 2004; Lind, 2004; Potthoff & Alley, 1995; Winitzky et al., 1992). Functioning within supportive institutional climates should provide such opportunities, for where university staff are rewarded for putting theory into practice, teachers must also be rewarded for putting practice into theory (Winitzky et al., 1992), something best achieved when the placement partnership is an authentic learning community.

## **2.6 Conclusion**

The literature reviewed indicates important characteristics of effective SBEs in relation to this study. Research shows that students studying at a distance from a university campus have some distinctive challenges to cope with. First, they should be placed in a carefully selected, good quality local school where learning is important. Second, because of the potential isolation for distance student teachers, effective communication between the partners is seen as critical in order to facilitate professional agency, collaboration and a trusting relationship.

To provide a student teacher with opportunities to learn teaching in a SBE context, guidance and support from an experienced classroom teacher as mentor are seen as essential pre-requisites. Such opportunities should occur in authentic settings that provide the student with a full range of experiences, where s/he can move easily between being observer and full participant. The literature consulted claimed that opportunities for reflection, observation and practice are more prevalent in settings where the student is treated as learner, co-constructing knowledge and skills, and where access to significant other professionals in an extended community provides further learning opportunities. Provided with

extended opportunities and contact with quality teachers and schools “helps to confirm the students’ choices to become teachers ... they have multiple opportunities to observe the complex nature of teachers’ work and to develop an appreciation of the rewards associated with a career in teaching” (Sutherland et al., 2005, p. 79). These opportunities for practising the theory learned in their university programme and for theorising practice observed, planned and attempted are important components of the SBE.

Various models of placement are reported, suggesting that SBE partnerships can be based on power, authority, decision-making or other aspects of a relationship. Within these partnership models, researchers have shown that the roles and responsibilities of each of the partners vary across the schools, ITE providers and programmes. Irrespective of the model of partnership, it is clear from the literature that all partners need to be engaged during the building of a partnership, involved in establishing and maintaining relationships and the community, even beyond the immediate classroom of the SBE. An important characteristic of community building is access to resources such as time and professional development so that each partner is not pressured or expected to fulfill an obligation for which they are not prepared. The importance of providing time and quality people is important if a student teacher is to have the freedom to innovate and trial ideas in a supported classroom and school environment. Well-resourced SBEs place partners in a position to better understand their own role and the associated responsibilities and to collaborate with other partners for the benefit of the student teacher.

At the time that this review was compiled there were some noticeable silences in the literature landscape that may have contributed to better understanding this particular setting:

1. Implications for SBEs where ITE programmes are delivered at a distance from the campus base including issues of site selection for each student teacher.
2. Implications for the partners of extending the SBE into the wider school community, including opportunities for wider reflection, development of

communities rather than partnerships, and the influence of significant others such as the children.

3. Capacity of providers of distance ITE programmes to select quality coordinating teachers who are readily available and well prepared to fulfill their role and responsibilities.
4. Advantages and disadvantages where a student teacher is placed on SBE in a local school where s/he is previously known through employment or familial connections.
5. Possible tensions within the roles of coordinating teacher and university lecturer where they act as supervisor and evaluator while also acting as co-learner with their student teacher.
6. Realities of funding of SBEs for distance ITE programmes.
7. Professional development opportunities for the important roles of coordinating teacher and university lecturer.

It is not possible for this study to attempt to address all of these silences but it does address some aspects. The participants in this research project were all involved in a distance ITE programme so the findings will go some way in exploring implications for SBEs in ITE programmes delivered through distance approaches. The nature of the programme will also allow for exploration into the issues where the ITE partners extend the SBE into the wider school community, providing opportunities for wider reflection, development of extended communities rather than partnerships, and the significance of being placed in a school where the student teacher is known.

The next chapter of this report presents a model developed for this investigation. The model was created in response to the research question “What are the perceived key factors of a primary teacher education school-based placements?” It was intended first as a conceptual framework to guide further thinking and reading about student teachers and their teaching practice experiences in schools. A later use of this model is as a theoretical framework to interrogate and better understand the school-based experiences of the student teachers in the distance ITE programme investigated in this research project.



## **Chapter Three: Developing a conceptual framework**

### **3.1 Introduction**

One intended outcome of this study was to develop a theoretical model of the key factors of a school-based placement in a distance, initial teacher-education programme. This chapter reports the creation of the model, building on my experiences and perceptions having worked as an educator for 38 years, 14 of which have been in a New Zealand ITE programme. As a research-informed teacher educator, ITE literature has had an influence on my thinking and practice and consequently the creation of the model. The creation of the model was intended as a conceptual framework for analysing and interpreting the data collected through a sample of student teachers, school-based teacher educators and university-based teacher educators associated with the University of Waikato's three-year undergraduate Mixed Mode Presentation (MMP) Bachelor of Teaching programme.

From the outset, my intention was to explore the school-based setting of placement for student teachers in a primary teacher-education programme. This school-based experience (SBE) is only one of four components in this particular programme, involving each student teacher being placed under the care and guidance of a classroom teacher for one full day equivalent each week throughout the first 36 weeks of their undergraduate programme. During this time these students have required tasks to complete and the independence to follow their own interests and the class curriculum. As the literature highlighted, the placing of students with classroom teachers is problematic for a number of reasons and it is these potential problems that I initially wanted to explore to understand the factors that student teachers believed influenced their success. Zeichner (2002) stated that, "Unless we take a broader perspective on the question of determining good student teaching placements than we have to date, the enduring problems of student teaching will be with us for a long time to come" (p. 63). Specific problems have been highlighted as part of reviewing the literature in Chapter Two. This chapter explains why I chose a model and then highlights the

processes used to create this particular model. Issues of evaluation and application are then presented.

### ***3.2 Designing a model for understanding***

The context of a school-based teaching placement is complex so representing the essential characteristics of placements was challenging. From the very beginning of this project I had considered creating and evaluating a model but questioned whether a model could be used as a tool to analyse or evaluate placements. The idea of a model arose, I believed, from my inclination and keenness to map concepts and ideas in order to process and better understand them. I have a personal preference for working with Gardner's (1999) picture-spatial intelligence, using maps, diagrams, models, metaphors and imagery to explain, analyse and evaluate information. I also have a predisposition to Gardner's (1999) logical-mathematical cognitive functioning, prompting me to design tables and models that show relationships and factors, seeking order, patterns and linkages. With this in mind I decided that a model would be a useful conceptual framework for my project: useful in representing a reality and analysing placement settings.

While I acknowledge that a model is not suited to every reader, I felt that I could better explore and explain the placement setting in this way. It would also provide an immediate visual representation for readers. Models can be presented in various forms such as diagrams, tables and descriptive text. In my investigation of model design I decided on a graphic in the form of a flowchart, which visually highlighted key factors and their connectedness. The starting point and process used for the model came from the work of Northcott and McCoy (2004) who used analysis modelling to investigate a range of settings with their tertiary students (see for example 'the differences between a traditional and technology-integrated instructionally designed [university] course' (p. 104)).

### ***3.3 Creating the model***

The first step in addressing the research question, "What are the perceived key factors of a primary teacher-education school-based placement?" was to

record ideas that I associated with school-based settings. At this stage and with an open mind, I noted everything from my own remembered experiences, knowledge and reading of documents and ITE literature that I could associate with SBEs. Northcott and McCoy's work began with a free flowing discussion among their participants to identify the main issues. However, I moved ahead of this as I was the sole person involved in this phase of the process and the research 'problem' was my own perceptions and understanding of such SBEs, specifically (but not exclusively), the distance placement for student teachers in the MMP programme. I spent time generating data on the issue, recording all thoughts and ideas on small cards (see Northcott & McCoy, 2004, p. 109). This was an exercise of free association, using spontaneous and uncensored expression of thoughts or ideas, allowing each to lead to or suggest the next and recording all ideas without judgment.

The next task was to sort that data in order to identify categories of meaning. Initially, data for the three partners (student teachers, university lecturers and coordinating teachers) was considered independently. I firstly wanted to see whether there were aspects that were distinctively associated with one partner alone: whether there were any outliers. This was achieved through reading and ordering, shuffling, rereading and reordering the cards several times, addressing the data over a period of time. After some time I concluded that it was appropriate to blend together the data from the independent partners as there were no major outliers. During each sort, cards were grouped together, firstly as narrow categories and then with each re-sort, broader categories were discovered. Each time the data were considered there were re-sorts or re-allocations of cards in refining the categories, what Northcott and McCoy termed "theoretical coding" (2004, p. 173). Each theoretical code was then described in detail, seeking clarification in the meaning of what Northcott and McCoy referred to as an 'affinity'. These *affinities* I have termed *factors* corresponding to the research questions. After many hours of this sorting I decided that I had reduced the data down to suitable categories. The associated numbers have no relationship to the model but are used to direct attention during this discussion only. The following

factors were decided upon and a brief description of each factor is provided in Table 3.1.

**Table 3.1: Factors and brief descriptors**

	<b>Student teacher</b>	<b>University based teacher educators (UBTE)</b>	<b>School-based teacher educators (SBTE)</b>
<b>1. Perspective</b>	The attitudes, values and beliefs that each person brings to the placement including their value orientation in terms of teaching, their preconceptions, perceptions, assumptions and expectations. Perspective might translate to acceptance of the placement.		
<b>2. Knowledge</b>	Understanding of the overall teacher education programme, its courses and structures, and knowledge of the theories and practice of both learning and teaching; including knowledge of the placement and children in the class.		
<b>3. Relationships</b>	Knowledge and skills of intra-personal and inter-personal relationships. Including the ability to provide as well as seek support.		
<b>4. Managing demands: external &amp; internal</b>	Ability to manage, rationalise and prioritise the demands placed on partners through time, class commitments and assignments, teaching, assessing, family, work (personal, school, university), and accountability demands to self, students and employer.		
<b>5. Coherence</b>	The ability to keep the placement together as part of the overall ITE programme, whether within courses, throughout the school, for the children's curriculum, with collaborations, assessment tasks, ...		
<b>6. Social participation</b>	Being a part of aspects of the placement such as continuing to maintain social networks with students and family while also developing other important links with children, teachers, school and communities.		
<b>7. Networks &amp; connections</b>	Continuing to maintain and develop important learning connections such as communities of practice (or learning). This factor is focused on learning through such links as the university, peers, teachers, the school and colleagues.		
<b>8. Interactions</b>	Each person may operate differently. Student: interdependent (working with teacher and tutor). Lecturer: interdependent (working with teacher and student and providing access to the school). Teacher: interdependent (working with student and lecturer and providing access to children).		
<b>9. Reflection</b>	Ability to stand back from their own practice and knowledge in order to make sound judgments – to reflect on and review currency such as practices, approaches, strategies and theories; give due consideration; to think and talk about; contemplate; deliberate.		
<b>10. Professional commitment</b>	Commitment to the placement – its expectations, demands and requirements. Including the roles associated with socialisation into teaching. Commitment to learning, teaching and the children.		
<b>11. Resources</b>	The provision of key resources for the placement to be completed successfully, including time, funding and people.		
<b>12. Context &amp; History</b>	Each person brings something different. Student must have ability to study. Lecturer must have the necessary pedagogic ability. Teacher must have mentoring ability. Also including their associations with schools and ITE programmes.		

It was important to develop a model that applied as comprehensively as possible for any single placement in the University of Waikato MMP programme and all three partners. Hence, there is an attempt to identify factors that are consistent for the school-based teacher educators, student teachers and university-

based teacher educators alike. However, the degree of relevance may vary for any partner within each factor and may well be different in other ITE programmes.

Once these factors were finalised with their brief descriptions, I then investigated what I perceived as the connectedness of each factor to every other factor (1 to 12). Table 3.2 shows what I believed the relationships to be:  $\hat{=}$  (*in*) indicates the flow of the relationship, for example, 2 (Knowledge) impacts **on** 1 (Perspective), while  $\Leftarrow$  (*out*) indicates that 3 (Relationships) is impacted **by** 1 (Perspective). • indicates no clear impact in either direction, for example, 2 (Knowledge) has no clear impact on 3 (Relationships) and vice versa and  $\Leftrightarrow$  indicates a reciprocal or balanced impact.

Where there exist multiple “*ins*” with zero “*outs*” in the assigned factor influence (for example see line 12 – 8 to 0), Northcott and McCoy (2004) described these factors as primary drivers because those particular factors are considered to impact significantly on most other factors without being strongly influenced themselves. Conversely, where there are no “*ins*” with multiple “*outs*” (for example see line 5 – 0 to 6) the factor is described as a primary outcome as it is fully impacted by other factors without having impact on others. Where the “*ins*” dominate the “*outs*” (for example see line 9) the factor is described as a secondary driver as it is impacted only by the primary drivers and likewise, where the “*outs*” dominate the “*ins*” (for example see line 8) it is described as a secondary outcome as it impacts only the primary outcomes. Where the number of “*ins*” and “*outs*” are closely aligned, the factor is said to be circulatory or pivotal (for example see lines 3 & 4) (Northcott & McCoy, 2004, p. 175). While causal relationships have not been tested in this research, Northcott and McCoy (2004) define a *driver* as a *cause* in that it is perceived to influence other factors. An outcome is taken to be the *result* of such causal influences. In this study the analysis modelling applied to develop the model has been used with personal anecdotal evidence without the rigorous testing required to “prove” the model and therefore was not considered as quantitative evidence.

The summary of each factor is given at the right-hand end of Table 3.2. Explanation of the System Influence Descriptor (SID) follows.

**Table 3.2: Assigning Factors' Influence Diagram**

Factors as per Table 3.1													↕ to ↔ in v out	System Influence Descriptor
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12		
1		↔	↕	↕	↕	↕	↕	↕	↔	↔	↔	↔	6 to 5	Secondary driver
2	↕		↕	↕	↕	↕	↕	↕	↔	↔	•	↔	7 to 3	Secondary driver
3	↔	↔		•	↕	↕	↕	↕	↔	↔	•	↔	4 to 5	Pivotal
4	↔	↔	•		•	↕	↕	↕	•	↔	↔	↔	3 to 5	Pivotal
5	↔	↔	↔	•		•	•	•	↔	↔	•	↔	0 to 6	Primary outcome
6	↔	↔	↔	↔	•		↔	↔	↔	•	↔	↔	0 to 9	Primary outcome
7	↔	↔	↔	↔	•	↕		↕	•	↔	↔	•	2 to 6	Secondary outcome
8	↔	↔	↔	↔	•	↕	↔		•	↔	•	↔	1 to 7	Secondary outcome
9	↕	↕	↕	•	↕	↕	•	•		↔	•	↔	5 to 2	Secondary driver
10	↕	↕	↕	↕	↕	•	↕	↕	↕		•	↔	8 to 0	Primary driver
11	↕	•	•	↕	•	↕	↕	•	•	•		•	4 to 0	Primary driver
12	↕	↕	↕	↕	↕	↕	•	↕	↕	↔	•		8 to 0	Primary driver

Having assigned each factor a category, the factors were then grouped into the following zones or areas for the model (Northcott & McCoy, 2004, see p. 32). Again, it is to be remembered at this point that this model identified the factors of school-based placements and attempted to structure the model to better understand placements from my own experiences. This model does not differentiate between what each partner might bring to a placement as opposed to what may be present within other placements, whether perceived as successful or not. An example of this is the *Context & history* factor (12), which highlighted all significant abilities and dispositions that the partners brought to a placement without distinguishing between those that are found to have a positive influence on the placement.

The following descriptions were based on my own knowledge, reading of documents and literature, and experiences at the beginning of this study.

### *3.3.1 Primary drivers: Resources, Context & history and Professional commitment*

Primary drivers are those elements that are identified as fundamental sources of influence. In the model these factors are considered elementary to the whole placement. I believed them to impact on the environment in which the student teacher, coordinating teacher and university lecturer work together. Each partner brings *Context & history* and *Professional commitment* to the placement but I reason that they also require that it be effectively resourced. My experiences suggest that each partnership must be valued and respected in such a manner that it be resourced sufficiently for all partners to operate effectively and enable them to fulfill their obligations. Such resourcing might include application of time, funding and people to the placement. I accepted as a given that each partner would resource the placement differently but that each must be genuine. Also, the background experiences of each partner is likely to vary so personal dispositions such as expectations, resilience, commitment, self-management, reliance, initiative, cooperation, composure and flexibility I regarded as important. Without having rigorously researched the factors at the time, these primary drivers I judged as fundamental influences in a school-based placement for the students, university lecturers and coordinating teachers.

### *3.3.2 Secondary drivers: Reflection, Knowledge and Perspective*

Secondary drivers are those factors that are influenced in part by the primary drivers but nevertheless they are relatively strong influences on a placement. These factors build on the three foundational drivers. Given each partner's *Context & history* and *Professional commitment*, I believed it is essential for the partners to have the ability to be reflective, to have certain knowledge and to have a positive and open perspective. For example, I reasoned that it is not only important for each partner to be able to stand back and consider learning and teaching constructively and openly but it is desirable that they are knowledgeable about the teacher education programme goals and objectives. I regard that the *Context & history* and *Professional commitment* factors impact directly on each

partner's reflective ability, which in turn impacts on overall knowledge about the placement, which in turn influences the attitudes, values and beliefs (perspective) about the placement. These secondary drivers, I suggest are influenced by the primary factors but also have a significant influence on further factors of the placement.

### *3.3.3 Pivotal: Managing demands and Relationships*

The pivotal or circulatory zone factors are those that are influenced by both the primary and secondary drivers but nevertheless, they should be regarded as significant influences on the outcomes of one of these placements. This zone was at the centre of the model. I assessed that each partner's ability to manage challenges and demands, and establish and maintain relationships is considered pivotal to every placement. I believe that students, teachers and lecturers must be able to manage the demands of time and people by rationalising and prioritising these. This may involve each partner giving due consideration to programme commitments, teaching requirements, assessments, family and work. I suggest that they must be knowledgeable and skilful in inter- and intra-personal relationships in order to work with others, seek and provide support, and participate in appropriate communities of learning. The impact of these pivotal factors, I deemed dependent upon the influence of the primary and secondary drivers as they appear in this model. I suggest that a partner's ability to manage the demands of a placement may be influenced by the resourcing of that placement, for example, the time allocated for certain activities. Also, I considered that a partner's ability to establish and maintain a relationship is influenced by those factors placed as primary and secondary drivers such as their context (for example, upbringing), their knowledge and their perspective. Again, without fully researching each of these, the factors identified as pivotal were initially deemed by me as essential in a school-based placement in this MMP programme.

### *3.3.4 Secondary outcomes: Interactions and Networks & Connections*

Secondary outcomes are those factors that are influenced by other factors classified in the primary and secondary drivers and pivotal zones, but



nevertheless, they also influence other aspects of a placement. I regarded these factors as being strongly influenced by the preceding factors but still having some impact on the placement outcomes. I reasoned that the results of effective relationships and management of demands are the secondary outcomes. Firstly, I expected that each of the partners would interact in the placement to the benefit of the other partners, for example, the students would respond to the lecturers and teachers (and children) for the good of their own programme requirements and the responsibilities of the other partners. Likewise, I believed that the teachers would coordinate the programme work for the student and lecturer so that each could achieve, and the lecturer would collaborate with the teacher and student, especially in times of stress or conflict. As a result of these interactions, I considered that each partner would maintain and develop connections such as communities of practice for learning and teaching.

#### *3.3.5 Primary outcomes: Coherence; and Social participation*

With each partner managing the demands and relating well to the others, I suggest that the placement could be viewed as a complete entity, integral to the school and teacher education programme, rather than as an add-on. I believe that each of the partners endeavours to keep the placement together, to give it coherence. Each partner will not only see their own roles and responsibilities within the placement but they also understand and appreciate the roles and responsibilities of the other partners.

Finally, as a consequence of the interactions and connections within the placement, I believe that each of the partners was in a position to participate in a growing social network. Such membership might include some of the following groups: classroom, school, wider school community, teachers, the profession, friends, family, work and study. While each of these may not directly influence a placement, there may be an indirect impact for each partner when participation in a widening social network results in greater confidence and perspective.

### **3.4 Further development of the model**

Given these descriptions and relationships, the next process was to create a visual model of the factors by rationalising the data. This was started by mapping

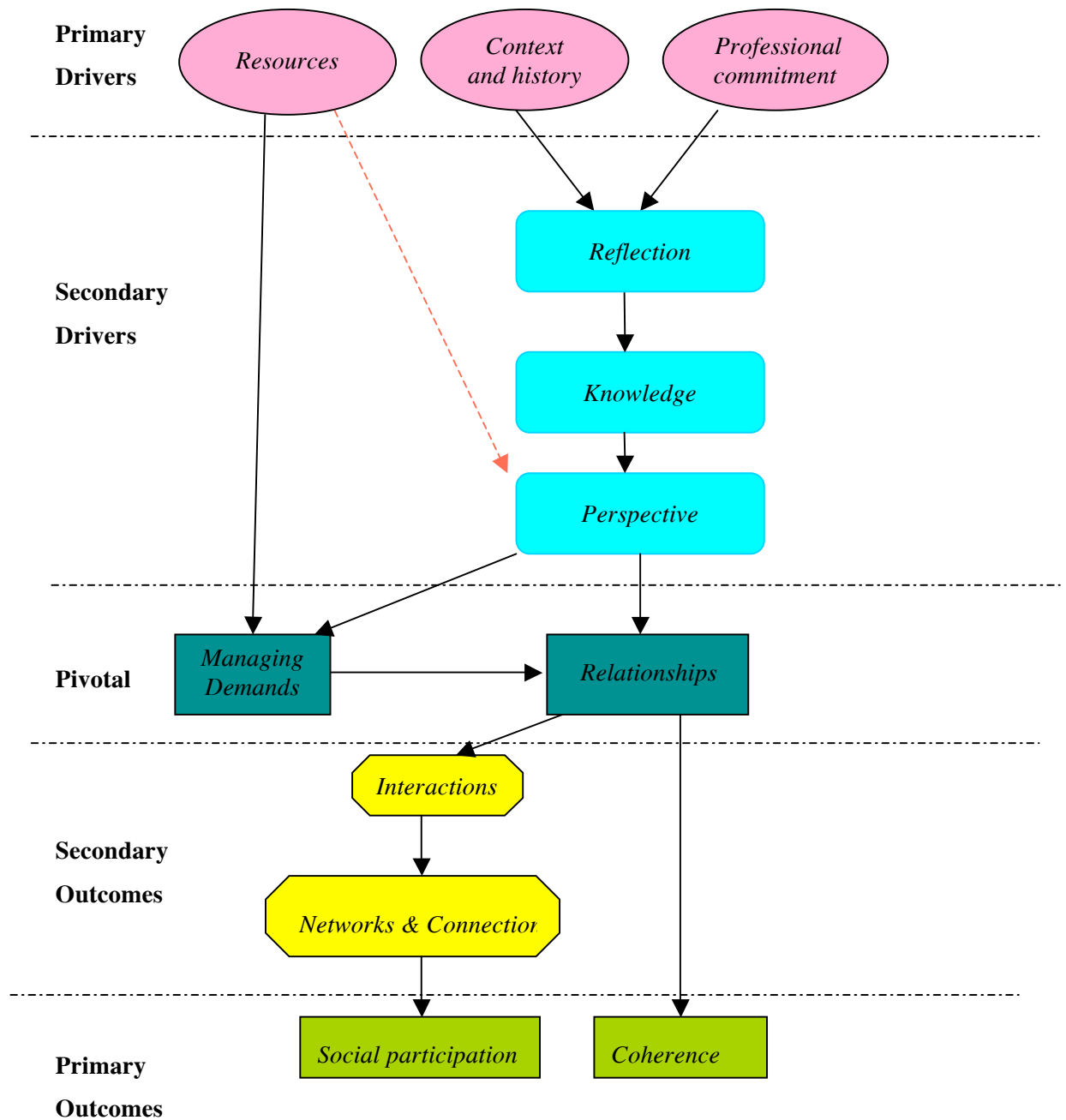
Table 3.2 into a flowchart, described by Northcott and McCoy (2004) as a cluttered system influence diagram (SID) (see their example, p. 39). The resulting diagram was difficult to read but served as a useful phase in the development of the final model.

First observations indicated that factors 10, 11 and 12 had no arrowheads (all *outs*) thus indicating their 'primary driver' status. While it was not clear in the diagram, it was also noted that factors 5 and 6 had only arrowheads (all *ins*) indicating their placement in the 'primary outcome' zone. As this diagram was highly complex it is not presented here. Further rationalisation followed which involved many intermediate stages. After further exploration and manipulation, the following model design was settled on as an uncluttered version in Figure 3.1.

### **3.5 Issues of evaluation and application**

Having created a suitable model based on my own knowledge, reading and experiences of typical SBEs, further evaluation and application decisions were made. Deciding how to apply the model as a conceptual framework for the research required the following considerations. In using the model to guide the data gathering process, there would be the risk that the factors would constrain the study and it could become exceedingly deductive. As I was utilising a more grounded theory approach to this study, developing the theories from the evidence was critical. Using the model could have presented a threat to this. Allowing the model to frame the research might have narrowed the literature considered for review. With the range of literature focused on initial teacher education school-based experiences being limited, this was a significant threat. Another issue was whether to expose the participants to the model as a conceptual framework during any phase of the data gathering. In taking a narrative inquiry approach to the study much hinged on the validity of the stories, conversations and interviews. To ensure the model did not contaminate these aspects it was necessary to word each question for the interviews and conversations in a way that did not expose the model in part or as a whole. However, it seemed appropriate that at some time the model should be included in the research process.

**Figure 3.1: A conceptual framework**



Alternatives were considered and it was decided to: present the completed model to ITE colleagues not involved in the data collection or validation processes; and present some factors from the model to the coordinating teachers and university lecturers during the last interviews only. The model was shared

with research colleagues personally, at a University of Waikato colloquium, and also at a national conference. The main factors taken into account were:

1. Contamination of the field data by directing the thinking of the participants;
2. Needing to triangulate the evidence gathered by sharing with participants; and
3. Consideration by colleagues of the importance of the factors in the model.

The second and third factors above were influential because this research was to be focused on placements for these distance students specifically, although it was anticipated that the model might also apply to students studying oncampus or in other ITE programmes. It was important to have research colleagues give an opinion on the model to ensure that the process of development was robust and that factors matched with their past experiences to some degree. An example was that in my own thinking, the factors of flexibility and collaboration were identified but they have not appeared as a single factor in the final model, rather they have been accepted as an inclusive quality in other factors (such as relationships).

### **3.6 Conclusion**

As highlighted in Chapter Four, the creation and development of this model occurred in an early phase of the research process. The final task was the evaluation of the model in order to answer the final research question: “Does the developed model provide a way of explaining a distance school-based placement? However, in concluding this chapter, there are some issues to address.

Given the context of this study, there was one factor that was not explicitly included in this model. With the participants in this study being associated with an ITE programme delivered by distance, it was anticipated that factors associated with ‘distance’ might appear in the model. However, I considered distance to be an obvious feature and therefore embedded in the factors, such as the medium for interaction and relationships or method of communication. Distance may have influenced the structure of the model, especially in the assigning of the factors’

influence (see Table 3.2) but this would not be apparent until the evaluation was completed.

Initially, pressures from my past experiences and involvement with school-based experiences compelled me to highlight relationships, resourcing, knowledge, cohesion and social connections as the critical factors of the model as these had been critical in my most recent placement experiences. Utilising the strategy of model development presented by Northcott and McCoy (2004) ensured that I took a more balanced view of placements, investigating both detail and overall organisation. The result of this I believe is a model that might allow for better understanding and explanation of school-based placements. The proof of this is in the final evaluation, recorded in Chapter Seven.

The next chapter describes and justifies the methodology and design employed in this investigation. It begins by briefly describing the qualitative paradigm and why this was considered the best fit for this study. It goes on to highlight the seven phases of the research process and then details the methods used to gather, analyse and interpret the data, including associated issues.

## **Chapter Four: Research methodology and design**

### **4.1 Introduction**

In this study I investigated school-based placements<sup>4</sup> in a distance initial teacher education (ITE) programme. The challenge was to reveal and explore factors related to such placements for student teachers in local primary schools. I developed a model that was used as a conceptual framework to focus data collection, interpretation and analysis and then presented as a theoretical model. Elements of several research approaches were used in the design. As researcher, my role was as observer and ‘miner’ of narrative data gathered with participants using four different methods. The research methodology was chosen judiciously to both minimise my influence on the data and fully utilise my past experiences in ITE, while ensuring that the data collected was trustworthy and reflected the participants’ perspectives.

This chapter outlines and discusses principles, processes, methods and issues that underpin this study. First, aspects of my own epistemology and ontology are highlighted to explain and justify the research position taken. Second, methodological paradigms are discussed to justify the adoption of approaches. The elements of the various approaches that support this research are examined, including the need for research integrity. The third section, research design, provides an overview of the methods used to match the methodology. This begins with an overview of the process, followed by details of the methods used to gather the data, select a sample, analyse and interpret the research data, report the findings and demonstrate trustworthiness of the overall study. Finally in this chapter, the limitations and difficulties associated with the research are highlighted.

### **4.2 Researcher epistemology and ontology**

To fully acknowledge my position as researcher in this study, I needed to examine my own position: how I understood the nature of knowledge

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<sup>4</sup> Placement in this report is the one-day per week teaching practice experiences that student teachers are required to attend in the first three semesters of this three-year ITE programme. This is not the same as an intensive practicum.

(epistemology) and what constituted social reality for me (ontology). Being immersed in learning, education and schooling for most of my life has shaped my perspective on knowledge and reality. The lecturers during my own time as a student teacher challenged me as a learner and encouraged me to focus on learners as individuals and to be more aware of the complexities of learning. My undergraduate and graduate study exposed me to contemporary theories in education and sociology, exposing my personal beliefs, attitudes and values to alternative viewpoints. These experiences created in me an expectation about the development of knowledge and practice that can occur as a result of educational research. Anderson (1990) highlighted that research exposes the values, beliefs and perspectives of the investigator, arguing that involvement in research could not be “truly unbiased or value-neutral, obviously carrying a baggage of beliefs, assumptions, inclinations and approaches” (p. 11).

In terms of contemporary learning theory, I consider that knowledge is constructed through social interactions. Such social interactions occur through a range of media including experiences, literature, documents and other learners. I consider that while individuals may construct a concept on their own, it is through the mediations of interacting such as reading, debating, comparing and reflecting that they confirm, modify or replace their initial knowing and learning. Therefore, it was important that a methodology for this study reflected my own epistemology by choosing methods that enabled the participants to be co-researchers, co-constructors of findings.

Similarly, I believe that the reality of any setting under investigation will be different for individuals within and beyond that setting. Individuals in a setting view the processes, practices and protocols of that setting through their own lenses. The reality of any setting then is validated or contested by the past experiences of a participant. For example, two people can enjoy being participants in the same setting and yet their validation might be for quite different reasons. I believe that individuals construct their own social realities and so it was important in this study for me to explore the ‘reality’ of a school-based placement through a range of perspectives. Consistent with Denzin and Lincoln’s (2003) description of *researcher as bricoleur*, I needed to understand and deploy

a variety of approaches, methods, strategies and materials in order to fully explore the range of perspectives and draw them together.

Given my own epistemology and ontology it was clear from the beginning of this study that I would need to explore and challenge my own knowledge and constructed realities, be responsive to the ideas and understandings of others including the participants, and monitor my own involvement thoughtfully. However, while my position as researcher was significant within the study, more important was the selection of methodological approaches to suit the investigation and research questions.

### **4.3 Research methodology**

The choice of methodology for a particular study demonstrates how a researcher understands knowledge and reality, illustrating a researcher's ability to understand the world and social action being studied (Abercrombie, Hill, & Turner, 2000). Research is concerned with knowing and there are many ways of knowing, some more concerned with the concepts of authority and truth as absolute, others focusing more on observing, gathering and thinking (Anderson, 1990). As existing paradigms, qualitative and quantitative research are not compared and contrasted here, leaving that as already well documented in educational research literature (see for example Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2000; Denzin & Lincoln, 2003). Qualitative research is described and rationalised as the most suitable approach for this study.

Qualitative research methodologies have become increasingly popular modes of inquiry for social science disciplines including education (Bouma & Atkinson, 1995; Burns, 1997; Cohen et al., 2000; Marshall & Rossman, 1995; Merriam, 2002), allowing researchers to follow inquiries to greater depths. Settling on one definition of qualitative research is difficult because of the range of paradigms. However, a primary goal of such research is to obtain participants' in-depth understanding of the meanings ascribed to a specific setting or problem (Wainwright, 1997). Using a constructivist qualitative paradigm of educational research focuses a project on the experiences and voices of the participants. Constructivist researchers suggest that reality is assumed to exist but can only be



studied imperfectly, partially captured, understood and replicated (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994a; 2003).

According to Lankshear and Knobel (2004) research design is “a broad strategic approach or ‘logic’ for conducting the research, a ‘way of going at the question or problem’ that is *coherent* or *appropriate* given the kind of question or problem being addressed” (p. 21). In this study, a methodology and design needed to be developed to answer the following research questions:

1. *What are the perceived key factors of a distance primary teacher-education school-based placement?*
2. *How do these perceived key factors link and which factors are critical to a school-based placement?*
3. *Does the developed model provide a way of explaining a distance school-based placement?*

The key to each of these questions was to explore the settings as a range of participants understood them. “Educational research is the systematic process of discovering how and why people in educational settings behave as they do” (Anderson, 1990, p. 6) rather than trying to establish unquestionably any direct causal relationships. Qualitative research belongs to no one discipline or paradigm nor does it privilege a single methodology (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003) although the literature highlights several common characteristics: acknowledging the existence of multiple knowledge and realities; exploring the meanings and interpretations of the participants; working closely with participants in a natural context; generating hypotheses through inductive analysis in an authentic environment; and ensuring the information used is both trustworthy and relevant. These characteristics are described below.

#### *4.3.1 Acknowledging the existence of multiple knowledge and realities*

Qualitative inquirers acknowledge the existence of multiple knowledge and realities. The beliefs and views of the participants are often more important than the theoretical knowledge of the researchers (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003; Stake, 1995; Wainwright, 1997). Qualitative inquirers seek truth in their investigations but they do not set out to determine whether the information provided by each participant is the absolute truth. They accept each participant’s view as being part

of the truth, knowing that each has constructed a unique view of a similar setting. The task is to search below the surface of the research data “in order to arrive at a deeper level of understanding” (Wainwright, 1997, p. 3), interpreting understanding from the meaningful human experiences shared with the researcher (Abercrombie et al., 2000).

In considering the design of a study where multiple interpretations of settings are expected then there will be multiple responses to the research questions. Explaining and understanding why and how groups of people interpret and understand their own actions and language and those of others are the focus of such research (Babbie, 1995). In qualitative research, the research data gathered is contextual to the world of the individual participants and cannot be “separated from the objects, persons or circumstances that they describe or the language [used] to describe them” (Miller, 1997, p. 25). Settings consist of groups of individuals acting independently and collectively and the data are integral to the collective reality of the individual settings of the participants, requiring interpretation against the stories of other participants and the researcher.

It is not an acceptable strategy in qualitative research for the researcher to use only his or her experiences and knowledge as this imposes serious limitations on a study (Cohen et al., 2000). However, as highlighted in section 4.2 (p. 91), it is anticipated that the researcher’s background knowledge and experiences will inform methodology. In summary, it is appropriate to use a qualitative research methodology when accepting the socially constructed nature of knowledge and reality and the possibility of there being a close relationship between the settings being studied and the researcher (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003).

#### *4.3.2 Exploration of participants’ experiences: Interpretive inquiry*

Qualitative inquiry aims to explore participants’ meanings and interpretations of their settings; reconstructing and understanding while at the same time being open to new interpretations (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994a; Lankshear & Knobel, 2004). It “focuses on understanding what is happening in a given observable setting” (Anderson, 1990, p. 8), rather than attempting to quantify the data gathered, not necessarily wanting to understand implications for the world at large. Such research is characterised by attempts to interpret the subjective beliefs

of those involved in the setting or problem being studied (Wainwright, 1997) rather than any ponderous generalisation. Any methodology adopted needs to probe the experiences, interpretations and meaningful relationships of the participants, helping to better explain and understand their particular settings (Creswell, 1994; Merriam, 1998).

Qualitative researchers endeavour to construct a “holistic picture” from the complex parts (Creswell, 1994, p. 164) by investigating and interpreting carefully all aspects of a phenomenon. Access to the ‘parts’ is important. Where the researcher cannot observe the parts and the whole directly then alternative approaches must be utilised in order to probe the depth of the settings, investigating individual stories to build the complete picture. Using an interpretive inquiry approach focuses a study initially on the individual voices and builds towards collectively constructing the realities and worlds of the participants and researcher.

How participants make sense of events and behaviours is fundamental to interpretive inquiry (Maxwell, 2005), as is understanding how the events and behaviours influence their actions. Interpretive inquiry is concerned with understanding what it would be like to have a certain experience, seeking to explain how people attribute meaning to their circumstances (Garrick, 1999). Interpretive inquirers are interested in more than physical events and behaviours, also investigating how people make meaning and develop and make use of rules that govern their actions (Garrick, 1999; Maxwell, 2005). A setting cannot be understood only in terms of general statements but must be understood through the associated people, actions, relationships, perspectives and social intercourses (Bassey, 1999).

Understanding each setting fully requires both researcher and participants to consider settings from others’ perspectives. Having the chance to shift position, whether vicariously or in reality, shifts the knowing. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) contend that such shifts take place over three dimensions: temporal (thinking back to the past, present, and imagining the future); personal and social; and place. They also suggest that any interpretive inquiry into experiences must explore simultaneously in four directions: inward (feelings, hopes, aspirations,

aesthetic reactions, moral dispositions); outward (the environment, context); backwards (temporal past and present); and forwards (temporal present and future) (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 50). Where a researcher is not in a position to observe a setting directly then greater importance must be placed on exploring the settings through the participants, their eyes, words, feelings and thoughts. Understanding the research data requires interpretation, which in turn demands acknowledgement of perspective, better “understanding of the phenomenon ... from the participants’ perspectives” (Merriam, 1998, p. 16). Gathering data from a range of settings ensures perspective, which is critical in challenging one’s own position. Using interpretive inquiry allows the researcher to interpret the perspectives, seeking similarities and contrasts.

With a range of individuals in any research ‘world’, all wanting to achieve their own diverse ends, it is inevitable that there will be differences among and tensions between the voices, each wanting to voice their own reality (Cohen et al., 2000). Tensions are often present between the individual and their setting, influencing their interpretation of the experiences (Garrick, 1999), requiring extended evidence to account for such tensions. Also tensions may exist within the power differential between the participants and researcher, which may have a negative impact on the research data with the participants not providing evidence about important issues and actions because of anticipated consequences. These tensions may create the potential to represent the voice of one or more participants as insignificant, retelling their story with a twist:

... interpretive accounts can inadvertently marginalize the voices they are supposedly highlighting. They do this by telling someone’s story back with additional perspectives, additional “authority”. In other words the researcher becomes a colonizer of the subjects through re-telling *their* stories”. (Garrick, 1999, p. 152)

Settings studied in educational research are typically dependent on people and their goals and as such may be used as “instruments of power to attain ends” (Cohen et al., 2000, p. 9). Such power relationships embedded within research data must be acknowledged, respected and embraced, in combination with the surface features and content of the data and any documents used.

Conducting inquiry as interpretive demands that researcher and participants collaborate (Marshall & Rossman, 1995). Working together in the telling and

retelling of participants' stories (Marshall & Rossman, 1995) means often having to reconstruct one's 'own' stories and knowing to find a common reality. Interpretive inquirers are often complicit in the experiences they study therefore a great deal of consideration and empathy is required for effective collaboration. They collaborate with groups, communities and contexts in order to understand settings through "individuals' insights about their lived experiences" (Marshall & Rossman, 1995, p. 87). The interpretations must be robust enough to retain the individual voices.

Qualitative research sometimes brings into question the authenticity of what occurred for an individual (Garrick, 1999). A researcher's knowledge is authenticated by his/her background and experiences and, likewise, research participants will understand their world because of where they "are positioned in life" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 17). In interpretive inquiry it is impossible for a researcher to "stay silent or to present a kind of perfect, idealized, inquiring, moralizing self" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 62). Such research is demanding of inquirers, having to "work within the space not only with the participants but also with [them]selves" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 61), all endeavouring to authenticate their own story. In order to successfully carry out interpretive inquiry, researchers must validate the past and present experiences of their participants (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) in relation to their own and others' experiences. Interpretive inquiry demands that there be a refocus from the framework and voice of the researcher to a stronger elicitation of participants' voices (Marshall & Rossman, 1995). Management and validation of this change requires "a great deal of sensitivity and understanding between researcher and researched" (Marshall & Rossman, 1995, p. 87). Theory should emerge from the particular settings grounded in the research data gathered (Cohen et al., 2000) while affirming and/or modifying the stories of researcher and the participants.

Personal life stories are the primary focus of interpretive inquiry and they become valuable sources of data in seeking to understand a setting (Bell, 1999; Garrick, 1999). For adults, "experience is at the centre of knowledge production and knowledge acquisition" (Usher, as cited in Garrick, 1999, p. 151). The aim of interpretive inquiry is to "develop an understanding of individual cases" (Candy, as cited in Garrick, 1999, p. 149), therefore it is important to treat each

participating adult as an individual, to gather their “true” stories as research data in their own rich, descriptive language that encapsulated their personal experiences and reality. In interpretive inquiry retaining the integrity of the setting is just as important as the participants’ individual stories. In the asking of questions, a setting can often be changed – the researcher can become a variable in the enquiry (Bassegy, 1999). Using interpretive inquiry is an appropriate research methodology that promotes the importance of using methods for verifying information while protecting the integrity of the settings.

In summary, interpretive inquiry allows a researcher to meet a need to share research data and advance knowledge. The interpretive inquirer advances knowledge by interpreting the setting as a whole (Bassegy, 1999), to offer possibilities rather than partial realities. However, for the interpretive inquirer reality is an individual construct (Bassegy, 1999) based on the participant’s perspective. Bassegy suggests when observers of the same phenomenon share research data they may not have the same understanding or rational ideas about the setting. Using this approach demands that the tasks of gathering, analysing, interpreting and sharing be undertaken collaboratively while maintaining the integrity and authenticity of the settings and stories.

#### *4.3.3 Working closely with participants: Naturalistic inquiry*

Naturalistic research is premised on the search for meaning and understanding of human action, hence the need to develop a close working relationship with participants (Maxwell, 2005), engaging in prolonged and close interactions where new knowledge is constructed “in interactions among investigator and respondents” (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994a, p. 111). Qualitative research allows the researcher to “get closer to the actor’s perspective through detailed interviewing and observations” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003, p. 5), helpful in developing an understanding of each specific setting. Every individual involved in such an inquiry brings their own social reality (Cohen et al., 2000) therefore it is important that interactions are extended and intimate.

Cohen and colleagues (2000, pp. 137-140) highlight a wide range of characteristics associated with naturalistic inquiry. Five of these qualities are highlighted here. First is the importance of seeking and establishing relationships

throughout the inquiry. Naturalistic inquiry requires the researcher to work closely with the participants so that their thoughts can be mined, questions asked, and ideas probed and challenged. In order to utilise the stories and information offered, their trust is needed so that they will be prepared to freely share their stories (Merriam, 1998). Uncovering the “beliefs, values and attitudes that structure the behaviour patterns of a specific group of people” (Merriam, 1998, p. 13) literally requires the qualitative researcher to write about people, to study people in their natural environments (Burns, 1997). In order to achieve this successfully there must be direct association between the researcher and participants. Face-to-face relationships and involvement in the setting helps the naturalistic inquirer to fully understand how people lead their lives in their context, holistically.

A second feature of naturalistic inquiry is the acceptance that the inquirer and his/her values will influence the research, as noted earlier. A qualitative approach like naturalistic inquiry “calls for the persons most responsible for interpretations to be in the field, making observations, exercising subjective judgment, analyzing and synthesizing, all the while realizing their own consciousness” (Stake, 1995, p. 41). Such research investigates the meaning of the experiences and behaviours in context and in their full complexity, while at the same time building on the personal knowledge of the researcher (Cohen et al., 2000). This closeness allows for speculation and explanation (Burns, 1997) from both within and beyond the settings. It allows the researcher to pose broad questions that explore a range of possible ideas (Burns, 1997) and to observe and maneuver the interplay between observations and theory, between the data and the literature.

A third characteristic of naturalistic inquiry is the production and inclusion of thick descriptive data. Qualitative researchers must endeavour to create an empathetic understanding of the setting through thick description generated through and from narratives. Providing opportunities to tell stories and then to further explore those stories, invites thick description both within and across settings. Thick description is an attempt to convey what experience itself in such a setting would display (Stake, 1995).

A fourth important characteristic of naturalistic inquiry is that of constructing meaning from the evidence. Ongoing engagement with literature and data allows the researcher to fully explore the participants' experiences. This exploration is the primary instrument for evidence collection and analysis and knowledge construction (Creswell, 1994; Merriam, 1998). Burns (1997) noted that naturalistic inquiry requires a search for important relationships and links within and across the evidence gathered from the settings, exploring the narratives and realities of the participants to uncover links. Naturalistic inquirers seek to uncover social, cultural and normative patterns through the inductive analysis of a setting by means of rich, descriptive data (Burns, 1997). Such inquiry is fundamentally associated with examining the actions of people by finding out their point of view, interpreting and explaining the socio-cultural patterns and activities occurring in their everyday lives (Burns, 1997; Merriam, 1998). Inductive inquiry relies on opportunities for written description and explanation of particular settings (Cohen et al., 2000), interpreting associated actions, perceptions, beliefs and behaviours (Burns, 1997) based on the information collected.

The final characteristic of naturalistic inquiry from Cohen et al.'s work (2000) highlighted here is the advancement of meaning from the data. Explaining the observed patterns of behaviour engaged in by the participants in a study (Burns, 1997) is key to understanding the setting and therefore answering the research questions. From the very inception of an inquiry, being in a position to better understand the setting and developing new knowledge is critical. While there are other characteristics of naturalistic inquiry, those highlighted here are considered significant. Naturalistic inquirers press for understanding the complex realities and interrelationships among all those who are involved in the setting, inquiring to promote understanding (Stake, 1995).

#### *4.3.4 Researching authentic settings: Case study across similar experiences*

A further characteristic of constructivist qualitative research is that the investigation is conducted in an authentic or genuine setting (Lankshear & Knobel, 2004) rather than in any experimental or contrived environment that is created for the explicit purpose of research. Case study allows for this exploration



and reconstruction of previously held knowledge relating directly to a genuine setting (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994a), investigating the gathered research texts for trends and theories.

Deciding what needs to be written about in a report (Burns, 1997) is also an influencing factor when making the decision about approach and design. Case study enables readers to “understand how ideas and abstract principles can fit together” (Cohen et al., 2000, p. 181). It can contribute to the knowledge of individual, group, organisational, social, political and related phenomena (Yin, 2003), providing a three-dimensional picture of the “relationships, micro-political issues and patterns of influence” (Bell, 1999, p. 12). As a measure of research as case study, the following six points are taken from Bassey’s work (1999).

### **Theory seeking more than theory testing**

Qualitative researchers construct hypotheses through inductive analysis and interpretation of the research data, discovering new knowledge and theory relevant to the research questions, in an attempt to identify new discourses within existing realities (Henwood & Pidgeon, 1993). This requires extended interrogation. Research that is primarily inductive in its methodology (Cohen et al., 2000), follows hunches, is flexible in its planning, is sensitive to new clues, and is comfortable with change and the emergence of new meaning (Burns, 1997). While it is desirable to begin with a clean slate, case study clearly benefits from the prior development of theoretical propositions to guide data collection and analysis (Bassey, 1999; Merriam, 1998; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2003). Seeking theory across a range of settings involving separate cases, may “lead to a hypothesis and eventually to a generalization” (Cohen et al., 2000, p. 4), most likely to be a “fuzzy generalization” (Bassey, 1999, p. 51). A fuzzy generalisation indicates less certainty about causal relationships because of the many factors influencing the inquiry. Case study is not conducted entirely free from theory but the presence of guiding theories and/or propositions, which act as a frame of reference, do “not preclude other avenues of inquiry” (Sturman, 1999, p. 104). An inductive approach to theorising emphasises the emergence of concepts rather than imposing theory (Cohen et al., 2000), using the data gathered to seek theory and evaluate research questions.

### **Picture drawing more than story-telling**

Case study allows a researcher to analyse, interpret and represent the “uniqueness of real individuals and situations through accessible accounts” (Cohen et al., 2000, p. 79) and then to communicate those interpretations to others through his/her own words. To have a deeper understanding of the settings, description of the uniqueness of individual cases and contexts within the case are important, “coming to know the particularity of the case” (Stake, 1995, p. 39). Anderson (1990) suggests that a case study researcher cannot generalise with certainty but must be able to explain and that explanation is not possible without being able to describe. To better understand the settings the researcher must be able to illustrate the ‘problem’ based on the gathered data rather than only using participants’ narratives directly to tell stories.

### **Sufficient data are collected**

Case study demands the collection of sufficient data in order to fully explore significant features, make plausible interpretations, test for trustworthiness, construct a worthwhile story, relate the story to the literature, convince the readers, and provide an audit trail for others to follow (Bassey, 1999). Sufficient and robust evidence must be collected through multiple sources of narratives and conversations (Yin, 2003) rather than replication of the same data. While each setting might stand alone as a single case, giving similar and contrasting data, many case studies are composed of multiple settings of similar experiences. Fundamentally the purpose of this is to investigate whether each individual participant replicates the factors highlighted by others. Data from each setting are normally not treated independently of others in order to reach conclusions. Case study approach offers variety in terms of methods but these need to be selected carefully and designed to probe deeply so that the full range of data will be collected, presented and analysed fairly (Yin, 2003). The methods chosen must enable the collection of extensive data (Burns, 1997).

### **Conducted within localised boundaries of space and time**

Yin defines case study as “inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real life context” (2003, p. 13) where the setting could not be easily investigated without influence from other forces or factors. Best and

Kahn (1998) suggest that case study can be made up “of all types of communities ... and all types of individuals” (p. 249), but linked together by localised boundaries. However, the real meaning of case study is embedded in the parts, the experiences of the individuals involved and influencing each context (Cohen et al., 2000) rather than shaped by larger external social forces. While the parts of a study are important, case study allows the “investigation to retain the holistic and meaningful characteristics of real life events” (Burns, 1997, p. 365). Systems within a ‘case’ have a wholeness to them “rather than being a loose connection of traits, necessitating in-depth investigation” (Cohen et al., 2000, p. 181). Typically, elements of these cases are interdependent and inseparable, where a change in one element changes everything else (Sturman, 1999). Case study allows a researcher the opportunity to understand complex phenomena (Yin, 2003) spread across space and time, such as might be expected for individuals within multiple settings.

**Examines an interesting aspect of an educational activity**

In focusing on a particular contemporary event (Bell, 1999; Burns, 1997; Yin, 2003), a case study is designed to explore a distinctive social setting and to better understand how and why interactions and people influence that setting. For each project, the intention is to allow the researcher “to concentrate on a specific instance or situation and to identify ... the various interactive processes” (Bell, 1999, p. 11) that occur. Case study is not about exploring social worlds in order to develop absolute generalisations but the element of ‘typicalness’ is the interest and focus of attention in such research (Best & Kahn, 1998). It tolerates outliers within the data, considering outliers as valuable and interesting information. Each of the individual contexts within a multiple case phenomenon is unique and dynamic, providing an example of real people in real situations (Cohen et al., 2000). Multiple case study endeavours to explain the interesting and unique features of each of the settings (Bell, 1999) for better understanding of the phenomenon overall.

**Set mainly in its natural context with an ethic of respect**

The data provided by participants in case study inquiry should be collected as closely as possible to their natural context and community. It can include

evidence from both individuals and communities for the purpose of better understanding the beliefs, behaviours, roles and actions. Individuals within the community or social setting possess particular meanings for the actions that happened in their particular context (Cohen et al., 2000), thus the individuals who inhabit it subjectively structure each setting. While there is a range of types of case study, giving prominence to the rich stories told by the various participants is important. In order to give respect to the richness and depth of the stories, it is important that ‘voices’ of the individuals and their context be “allowed to speak ... rather than to be largely interpreted, evaluated or judged by the researcher” (Cohen et al., 2000, p. 182). Where there is a range of people interpreting the data, it is the retention of the individual and collective voices that ensures respect for the actual settings.

#### *4.3.5 Trustworthiness of the research: Worthy of inclusion*

An essential task for a qualitative researcher is to ensure that the data, findings and conclusions are both trustworthy and relevant, where the reader can have confidence in what they read (Bassey, 1999; Merriam, 1998). To achieve this a qualitative researcher must demonstrate respect, authenticity, integrity and commitment: for participants, through methodologies and reporting, right from conceptualisation of the project (Merriam, 1998). An important task in every study is to highlight any way the investigation “might be wrong” (Maxwell, 2005, p. 106) in comparison with other sources such as other participants and previous studies found in literature. Bassey (1999, p. 75) draws attention to characteristics that help to ensure trustworthiness of qualitative research. Seven of these are highlighted here.

- “Prolonged engagement” with the data source, in particular a primary source.
- “Persistent observation” of the trends emerging from the data through ongoing analysis and interpretations.
- “Adequate checking of the data throughout” through reading and checking.
- “Sufficient triangulation” of primary source data.

- “Systematic testing of the new knowledge” against the literature and any conceptual framework.
- “At least one critical friend to challenge” the methodology, the findings and conclusions.
- “Sufficient detail” in the data, findings and discussion to give the reader confidence.

Being able to respond to these questions with confidence advances trust in a study. Two strategies highlighted most frequently in qualitative research literature, triangulation and validity, must be employed deliberately throughout a research project to achieve trustworthiness.

Triangulation is about getting it right (Stake, 1995) and requires the combination of several procedures (Jick, 1983). Using a constructivist epistemology means that from the start of the research there will be multiple realities associated with the study. This being the case, it will not be possible to “establish, beyond contention, the best view” (Stake, 1995, p. 108), an absolute truth about the problem. Triangulating the research data reduces the risk that conclusions will be limited or overly influenced by bias (Maxwell, 2005) without eliminating them fully. Issues associated with trustworthiness are addressed by various writers (Bell, 1999; Burgess, 1991; Burns, 1997; Cohen et al., 2000; Denzin & Lincoln, 1994b; 2003; Merriam, 1998; Stake, 1995) and involve a range of approaches in a qualitative inquiry.

Trustworthiness is obtained by ensuring quality control continues throughout the research process: across all “stages of knowledge production” (Kvale, 1996, p. 236) including research design, literature review, data gathering and analysis. While research data must be triangulated it is also important to ensure that the overall study is valid. Validity is fundamentally concerned with the credibility of the research (Maxwell, 2005), the knowledge generation, interpretation and communication. Kvale (1996) suggests that validity of qualitative research in this contemporary world of inquiry could be considered to have three dimensions – craftsmanship, communication and action.

Kvale (1996) explains craftsmanship in research as the checking, questioning, interpreting and theorising that occurs throughout. These ongoing acts assist

internal consistency of the data gathered. Ensuring validity also requires communication (Kvale, 1996) among participants. Communications must involve design issues, findings and interpretations. Often these aspects are both uncertain and probable so they need to be debated openly. Such open debate allows for mediation to ascertain feasibility and defensibility (Kvale, 1996). Communications should also provide external validity (Jick, 1983) where the conversants bring a different perspective.

Kvale (1996) also claims that validity is based on commitment to act on interpretations. He suggests two actions associated with collection and analysis: those interpretations *accompanied by* action and those that *lead to* action. Methods used to gather and analyse data should be accompanied by further action. The test of action leading from research is both internal and external. Internally, the findings of research must be used to confirm, adapt and modify. Externally, action leading from research should occur. Kvale's model of validity is one highlighting past, present and future aspects, so it should be an ongoing, integral part of the research.

While Kvale (1996) highlights craftsmanship, communication and action as critical elements of research to ensure credibility, attention to the details of other kinds of validity such as internal, external, consequential, interpretive and evaluative (Cohen et al., 2000) must be taken no less lightly.

#### 4.3.6 Conclusion

The methodology identified for this study is built around three qualitative research approaches. The first of these is interpretive inquiry. The emphasis in this approach is on understanding the experiences and perspectives of the individual adult participants by interpreting the data in order to construct a holistic picture of the phenomenon. To achieve this the researcher must collaborate with the participants to authenticate all stories in order to discover how sense is made of their individual worlds. In this process the researcher must manage any differences and tensions and retain the integrity of the settings. The second approach is naturalistic inquiry. Here importance is given to working closely with the participants through relationships, the construction of meaning through the shared evidence, openly acknowledging researcher influence on the inquiry, the

rich thick descriptions provided by all participants, and the explanation of the settings based on the narratives. Naturalistic study requires inductive inquiry through the ongoing emphasis on process, interactions and analysis while endeavouring to deal directly with a natural setting in order to retain the wholeness of a phenomenon or problem.

Case study inquiry is a third approach to qualitative research, featuring Bassey's (1999) six characteristics. Using case study allows a researcher to intentionally set out to discover theory within an authentic setting rather than test a hypothesis. It allows for description of the participants' perceptions in an attempt to highlight significant factors and better understand this interesting educational phenomenon. Case study can include multiple settings and requires that sufficient data are gathered from within the natural context of those localised settings.

A final important element of qualitative research methodology is the trustworthiness of the research and the ethical considerations due each of the participants. It is important for the participants to be fully informed about every possible ethical issue before they agree to participate. A significant underlying ethical issue in qualitative educational research is that of the researcher being known by potential participants. This has implications for access, consent, confidentiality, anonymity, conflicts and authority. Given the appropriate methodology and approaches outlined for this qualitative inquiry, the next section outlines the methods employed in the specific research design of this study.

#### ***4.4 Research design***

Combining the qualitative methodology approaches of interpretive, naturalistic and case study demanded that the methods used for this study were focused on the gathering and analysing of data created by the participants directly. This next section details the research process, each of the methods used for gathering data, and the strategies used to analyse the data and report the findings.

##### ***4.4.1 Introduction***

The success of this study in finding answers to the research questions hinged on the gathering, interpreting and analysing of data (Abercrombie et al., 2000),

my being in a position to understand and explain the realities as locally constructed by each participant (Cohen et al., 2000; Miller, 1997). Using this approach took for granted “multiple, apprehendable and sometimes conflicting social realities”, the natural outcomes of human thinking and interactions. However, realities also “change as their constructors become more informed and sophisticated” (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994a, p. 111) as a result of experiences, inquiry and reflection. Explication of the school-based settings of this study focused the data gathering and analysis on why and how things happened (Babbie, 1995), so I decided that participants who had had experiences and time for reflection in these settings might provide the best evidence. Using qualitative inquiry permitted me to accept the data as the nominally constructed ‘worldviews’ of the participants, contributing evidence toward the research questions (Cohen et al., 2000; Creswell, 1994; Merriam, 1998). Examining an interesting educational activity like these school-based placements for student teachers in an ITE programme is a fascinating phenomenon because of its complexity and challenges for all involved. This demanded a rigorous process in order to better understand the school-based placements as a single entity.

#### *4.4.2 Research process*

Research design is an ongoing, changeable process. The research design initially devised for this study has undergone change, stressed by Maxwell (2005) as typical. To design this study successfully, I was not able to just “develop (or borrow) a logical strategy in advance and then implement it faithfully” (Maxwell, 2005, p. 3). At the manifestation stage of this study, eight design phases were identified as appropriate. After many adaptations and modifications, this final report highlights seven phases. The changes have included both the partitioning and synthesising of aspects of the research following writing, investigations and conversations regarding the designing and implementing of the study. Many of the phases overlapped due mainly to the fact that one phase was not completed before another phase of the process needed to begin.

#### **Seven process phases**

In the following section each phase is described, emphasising the essence of what was undertaken. This section highlights the methods and strategies used,



starting at the development of the initial proposal and preparation through to the final evaluation of the research questions and model created through this investigation.

The initial phase of the research process, *proposal and preparation*, involved exploration of my personal knowledge and current biography, the motivation for undertaking this research (Lofland & Lofland, 1984; Maxwell, 2005). During this phase, I explored and applied my own experiences, knowledge and research relating to teaching practice within initial teacher education and distance learning. I reflected especially on the roles and responsibilities of being an associate teacher during practicum and visiting of student teachers from distance and on-campus programmes. All these factors contributed to my initial proposal. This phase of the study was completed with ethical approval (20 Dec, 2004) and acceptance of the research proposal and confirmed enrolment (1 Feb, 2005).

The next phase of the process, *becoming more knowledgeable*, involved reviewing relevant literature and reports from previous research to place this study “in context and to learn from earlier endeavours” (Cohen et al., 2000, p. 161). Findings from earlier research gave me a sound knowledge foundation from which to gather and analyse evidence for this study. During this phase, which began early (July, 2004) and continued over an extended period, I read and reviewed literature and documents focusing on aspects of initial teacher education and distance learning, specifically regarding practicum and other school-based experiences. Initially, explorations of texts were guided by the research questions, current knowledge, educated hunches and emerging findings (Merriam, 1998). My meta-analysis of research reports and documents included the distance and on-campus guidelines and handbooks associated with placements at the University of Waikato, and documentation and research used and written by Clive McGee, Nola Campbell and Russell Yates to guide their decision-making relating to the integration of base-schools when establishing this programme.

**Table 4.1 Timeline of the research process phases**

Process phases ➡	Proposal & Preparation	Becoming more knowledgeable	Model development	Data gathering	Data validation	Data analysis	Evaluation
Apr-Jun 2004							
Jul-Sep 2004		Literature review					
Oct-Dec 2004							
Jan-Mar 2005				Student narratives; focus groups; collective stories			
Apr-Jun 2005							
Jul-Sep 2005					Semi-structured interviews		
Oct-Dec 2005							
Jan-Mar 2006							
Apr-Jun 2006							
Jul-Sep 2006							
Oct-Dec 2006							
Jan-Mar 2007							
Apr-Jun 2007							
Jul-Sep 2007							
Oct-Dec 2007							
Jan-Mar 2008							
Apr-Jun 2008							
Jul-Sep 2008							
Oct-Dec 2008							
Jan-Mar 2009							
Apr-Jun 2009							
Jul-Sep 2009							
Oct-Dec 2009							

The intended outcome of the next phase was *development of a model* to highlight the characteristics of a school-based placement in a distance initial teacher-education programme. The model served as a conceptual framework to focus my thinking for further exploration. This phase primarily involved ‘mining’ data from documents, research (Merriam, 1998) and my past experiences, and utilising such existing information that would be “worthy of further investigation rather than [taken as] definitive findings” (Yin, 2003, p. 87). I acknowledged that the data used to create the model were highly subjective but this was considered a reliable source of data for this task based on my own “attitudes, beliefs and views of the world” (Merriam, 1998, p. 116). Using research and documents allowed me to interrogate the concepts and ideas repeatedly without impacting on any external source (Merriam, 1998). This phase involved the interpretation of all the descriptive data gleaned from the range of documents, personal and public, written and oral. It was completed before the data gathering began to avoid any possible contamination.

During the *data-gathering* phase, evidence was gathered from the field by asking open questions of nine student teacher participants. Opportunities were created for a purposive sample of distance students to write, share and discuss their stories about their experiences in a base-school through narratives and focus group discussions. Initially an online discussion was planned to prompt their thinking, however this did not occur, as the participants were not able to commit the necessary time to engage. Provided with a ‘trigger’ topic (Appendix A) that focused the participants’ thinking, from March to June 2005 the student teachers wrote about four separate topics. Participants shared their thoughts about each topic face-to-face with a group of 3 or 4 fellow student teachers in a focus group conversation facilitated by me. Based on the narratives and focus-group conversations, the data were further theorised by me. The intentions of this theorising were first to ‘hear’ their stories in detail and then to produce a ‘collective story’ for each of the four triggers (Appendix B). The concluding task in this phase was the sharing of these collective stories with the student teachers for participant checking. Only one collective story was created for each trigger across the two focus groups, four stories in total.

In the *data validation* phase, the collective stories were presented to a sample of coordinating teachers and university lecturers. In two semi-structured interviews (Appendix C) for each of these nine teachers and four lecturers, I asked them independently about *their* experiences with the base-school placements of this University of Waikato programme and how they interpreted the students’ experiences as highlighted in the four collective stories. These participants were asked to attend only two interviews in July and October 2005, in consideration of their time constraints.

The *data analysis* phase started with the analysis and interpretation of field data and extended over a long period. First was the reading of each of the student-teacher narratives in preparation for the focus-group conversations. This reading (from February, 2005) was used to extract and highlight trends from the narratives to include as questions in the following focus group conversations. Second, interrogating the research data required thorough reading of the transcripts as interpreted and transcribed from the field data. Field data from conversations including four or five participants was complex and even with the

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best intentions there were words and phrases that became lost in the ‘noise’ of the audio text. This was an ongoing task and took much time, valuable in ensuring all voices were correctly interpreted. Third, intense and extensive reading and interrogation of all research data was required in preparation for the collective stories. Fourth, texts from the semi-structured interviews acted as a further opportunity to analyse and interpret the collective stories. The conceptual framework was used constantly as a reference for this ongoing analysis. This phase demanded flexibility and open-mindedness to ensure that no data that may have been of significance later were omitted, while at the same time keeping the research data-set manageable. Data analysis was informed by ongoing reading and conversations, essential to ensure every opportunity was explored in order to mine the data effectively.

The final phase involved *evaluation* of the research questions and model. Based on the literature reviewed and the data gathered, firstly the research questions for the study were evaluated and this information was then used to judge whether the model of placement developed earlier was a ‘best-fit’ model of the reality of distance placements such as those in this study and whether it would be a tool useful for theorising school-based placement experiences.

Provided with the overall picture of this research process, the next sections look firstly at the sample and then the specific data gathering methods used in seeking answers to the research questions. Being a qualitative inquiry using a small participant sample, it was important to use methods that would reflect the interpretive, naturalistic case study approaches identified as appropriate qualitative methodology.

#### *4.4.3 The sample*

The sample for this study was small and non-random. It was small to ensure manageability for me both in terms of time available for data gathering and also in terms of the quantity of field data. This study was completed part time in association with my work and life so to have been gathering large quantities of data over an extended time period was not possible. In using a small sample, obtaining trustworthy information was important because of the existence of multiple realities (Creswell, 1994) therefore care was taken in selecting

participants. The sample was non-random because of the nature of the ITE programme, problem studied and methodology. The focus of this study was a distance ITE programme with student teachers spread throughout the North Island of New Zealand. Given the time, methodology and resources available to gather data it was important to have student teachers close to each other for the focus groups and interviews with teachers. The sample selection of student teachers was based on my accessibility to their location and funding available. The coordinating teachers were associated directly with the chosen student teachers. Each of these participants brought a unique history from their school-based placement experiences impacted by life, family, study and knowledge. Some qualities are highlighted here.

### **Student teachers**

The foundation participants in this study were a sample of ten second-year student teachers (all female) chosen from the population of those enrolled in the University of Waikato's Mixed Mode Presentation programme (see Appendix E). In 2005 the total enrolled student population was 43. Of these student teachers 29 indicated an initial interest in being involved in the research. In making the purposive selection I considered each student's stability within the ITE programme as determined by their results and progress, the stability of her relationship with her base-school and coordinating teacher, geographic spread from Hamilton (and therefore my travel), proximity to other interested students, and her university lecturer not being me to ensure the inclusion of alternative perspectives. As there were a limited number of university lecturers it was important to include as many of them as possible rather than getting only my perspective.

The student sample was initially targeted at 10, however due to personal circumstances, changes occurred. Throughout this report the nine student teachers are referred to by the pseudonym chosen by them from their first written narrative – Catherine, Claire, Helen, Jamie, Margaret, Mary-Lou, Sandra, Sarah and Teresa.

This student group differed in many ways including their personal dispositions, familial circumstances, financial and work requirements, education and schooling experiences. Such issues were not considered in the selection

process but are included in Appendix E to show the diversity and similarities of these participants. In summary these participants were all female and mainly mature aged with only one younger student. Most had dreamed of becoming teachers at some point in their life and declared their commitment to the programme. All were working parents holding down a part-time job while caring for at least one child living at home. All had a direct association with schools and teaching – five as parent helpers, one as a parent and three as teacher aides. This gave most of them confidence, the ability to relate well to others and effective communication skills. Three lived in rural areas and the other six in urban areas. Only one lived within 100 kilometres of campus, the others were distant. Some had relatively recent involvement with further education before entering the programme – four vocationally, one at university, one recently graduating from high school and three with no further education since leaving school.

#### **School-based teacher educators (coordinating teachers)**

Following the selection of the 10 student teachers, 10 coordinating teachers associated with each of these students were invited through their school principals to participate in this research. Of the initial 10 invitations, nine accepted, all female. By chance it was Melissa's coordinating teacher who declined the invitation. A 10<sup>th</sup> participant (CT1) sought entry because of her background experiences with the programme. These 10 coordinating teachers had a range of experiences with ITE programmes including two who became qualified teachers through this MMP programme. Five had more than 10 years teaching experience and the other four ranged from four to eight years experience. Eight had ITE experience previous to their current MMP student; five of these specifically with other students from this programme.

After the second interviews, it was decided not to use the data of CT9 due mainly to clarity of the audio recordings. The remaining nine came from a range of schools and life experiences (Appendix E). Five teachers held positions of responsibility in their school and they were all mostly associated with teaching younger children – aged five to eight years. All these teachers were New Zealand qualified and teaching in schools ranging in size from 140 to 370 children. All

but one of these teachers was directly involved as a coordinating teacher with a student teacher in the programme.

#### **University-based teacher educators (university lecturers)**

Based on the initial 10 student teachers in the sample, four university lecturers were invited to be participants. These university lecturers had a direct association with at least one student teacher in the sample and therefore had contact with the coordinating teacher as well. These four brought many years of teaching, schooling and ITE experience with them (see Appendix E). Three of the four university lecturers had nine years experience in the role and only one was not currently associated with teaching at least one paper in the MMP programme. Three of them came with more than 10 years of school-based experience including time as an associate teacher for student teachers on practicum. Two of them had very established relationships with some of the base schools associated with this study. With the withdrawal of one of the student teachers, this meant one university lecturer not being directly associated with a student teacher participant however the data was included because of association with other student teachers from the second-year population.

#### *4.4.4 Data gathering methods*

This study used a constructivist qualitative research methodology. As an inquiry it was interpretive because it relied on the personal stories of a sample of adults to fully understand their experiences and this phenomenon. Providing them with opportunities to tell and record stories from their past and present led to the sharing and retelling of these by the participants and me as inquirer (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). The participants shared their experiences so that they could become a “world traveler”, helping to create a holistic picture of the settings. In this way every participant was able to ‘experience the experiences’ of others in similar placements (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) in an endeavour to authenticate their own stories as well as recall others. Individuals constructed their knowing and identities through their own and others’ stories. As interpretive inquiry it was important to capture the varied stories of their experiences in these school-based placements through the perspectives of these adult participants, through their written and spoken words. As researcher I collaborated with the participants in

helping them to make sense of their own stories (Marshall & Rossman, 1995) especially in the constructing and reconstructing of the collective stories which required that participants' and researcher's voices were heard together.

Gathering data from a range of school-based placements ensured perspective, which was critical in challenging my knowledge, attitudes and beliefs. In these particular settings, access to power (Cohen et al., 2000) resided primarily with the individual coordinating teachers and university lecturers, so it demanded careful management and consideration to facilitate the student teachers' perspectives. As I had significant responsibility in my position of authority within the settings, it was likely that this could have created tensions and differences that would influence the participation and contribution of the other participants.

Using interpretive inquiry required retention of the integrity of the school-based placements and naturalistic inquiry implied that research should occur directly within a setting, it was clear from the start of this study that there would be situational constraints that shaped this inquiry (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003). The distance aspect of this programme was viewed as a potential challenge. With the settings being sited some distance from the campus, having access to those directly involved in a setting was a potential problem. I was not in a position to observe the placements first-hand so this placed greater importance on my ability to view the participants' worlds through their 'eyes'. A school-based placement is one setting that needs to remain intact and detached from any research interventions. Because of this, I collated research data from a distance rather than as a participant observer. Interacting with the student teacher and coordinating teacher participants in close proximity to their own unique school-based setting was an attempt to minimise the distance between the participants and me (Creswell, 1994). With no direct observation possible, constructing meaning and understanding the research data required my interpretation, demanding acknowledgement of perspective, better "understanding of the phenomenon ... from the participants' perspectives" (Merriam, 1998, p. 16).

Naturalistic inquiry was achieved through the chosen methods of evidence gathering, where relationship development was an essential focus. As lecturer and coordinator of this distance ITE programme I was in a position to work



closely with the student teachers and other lecturers in particular. This could have created ethical issues in this research, however it deliberately brought my knowledge, realities and perspectives into contact with those of the participants. All participants were aware of and openly acknowledged my influence on the research. As I was not involved directly in each school-based placement, development of the relationship with the coordinating teachers was a greater challenge.

In this study I wanted to gather evidence relating to the authentic school-based contexts and individuals who shaped those placements rather than on evidence that had been hypothesised or recreated by me. Therefore, from the narratives and focus groups further questions were asked through stories and interviews for further and deeper understanding (Burns, 1997). The placements at the centre of this study were localised within the school-based settings and University of Waikato ITE programme and the rich thick descriptions were gathered in a relatively short time period. In this research as case study, the setting was an interesting and natural educational context.

To adhere to the principles underlying this qualitative research it was important to gather sufficient data from a range of sources using a variety of methods. This was achieved by using narratives, focus group conversations, collective stories and interviews. Using these data gathering methods helped me to understand the groups, communities and contexts through the “individuals’ insights about their lived experiences” (Marshall & Rossman, 1995, p. 87). Gathering written narratives from the student teachers focused on their stories as the primary source. This then led to the focus group conversations where the student teacher participants often had to reconstruct their own stories and knowing as a result of what other participants contributed. The data from these first two sources were then combined by me into collective stories, “to optimize the opportunities of the reader to gain an experiential understanding of the case” (Stake, 1995, p. 40) while at the same time maintaining the anonymity of the student teachers in the later interviews. These stories were shared with the student teachers individually for comment and then finally with the coordinating teachers and university lecturers at interviews.

### **Narrative writing**

Accepting that all individuals in this study ‘know only what they know’ was a fundamental premise to this interpretive qualitative inquiry. The individual student participants shared their own knowing and identities through their stories, initially as four short narratives based on the trigger topics - *assumptions and beliefs; expectations and requirements; roles and responsibilities; and collaboration and connection*. The first data gathered from the field for this study were short narratives written in the third person by the individual participants using a pseudonym (see Appendix D for examples).

In using narrative to gather data I was giving the students the opportunity to recount their experiences as they remembered them, retelling them as someone else’s story (Davies, Browne et al., 2004; Small & Onyx, 2001a). These personal accounts of the student teachers’ experiences allowed for deeper insights into a setting like these school-based placements (Connelly & Clandinin, 1999). Providing the student teachers with opportunities to write their own stories from memories led to the retelling of stories by the participants and myself and therefore, the readers (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000).

In order to successfully carry out this inquiry, I also needed the student teachers to become embedded in each others’ placement experiences in terms of temporality, seeking to understand the past and present experiences of others (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000), because it was not possible for them to embed themselves spatially in another placement. This narrative opportunity was the catalyst for this group of people of dissimilar yet similar backgrounds to share their stories and to better understand “motives and sequence of actions described within a story format” (Bell, 1999, p. 17).

Starting with narratives created opportunities for the student teachers to move from their own individual voice to a stronger elicitation of a collective voice (Marshall & Rossman, 1995). Data gathering using a narrative method was the foundation for both individuals and the collective to be heard (Bell, 1999).

### **Focus group discussions**

Focus group discussions provided opportunities for dialogue to take place between participants (Burgess, 1991), a form of group interview (Cohen et al.,

2000; Lankshear & Knobel, 2004) though not in the sense of backwards and forwards between myself as interviewer and the interviewees but rather this method was used to provide the student teacher participants with opportunities to share their narratives and perceptions with fellow student teacher participants. Bouma (1996) suggested that a “well-run focus group provides a window on a community in interaction” (p. 179) thus giving the chance to challenge and further explore both conflicting and apparently similar perceptions. Focus groups in this study provided a “further opportunity to examine the relationships between the participants and the perspectives that they shared” (Burgess, 1991, p. 119) particularly valuable in gathering data from different sources as in this study. These focus groups allowed me not only to explore issues and attitudes but also to see how various people within the groups responded to the discursive positions taken by others, useful for “evaluating data from different sub-groups” and “gathering feedback from previous studies” or conversations (Cohen et al., 2000, p. 288).

These focus group discussions were a contrived setting (Cohen et al., 2000), bringing together student teachers in two separate locations. These groups were not composed of relative strangers as may be typical (Cohen et al., 2000) but rather as ‘study friends’ as they were all studying for the same degree in the same way. These focus groups operated successfully because the participants did not always agree with each other. These ‘friends’ tended to challenge where appropriate. Instances of interchange between contrasting perspectives were apparent on several occasions (Lofland & Lofland, 1984).

The two focus groups were located geographically apart and both of these groups met four times each (total eight). One group maintained five members throughout while the other finished with four. Typically, in establishing close working relationships, each meeting began with food and then a conversation proceeded, initiated by me but mostly maintained by the participants (Cohen et al., 2000). All conversations were audio recorded for later transcription into research data. I introduced new ideas based on the content of the narratives received but also from previous conversations and the literature.

These group discussions allowed individuals moments of not having to talk, moments to listen to others, which in turn allowed “each person to rethink and amend any initial account that, upon reflection, seemed in need of amplification, qualification, amendment, or contradiction” (Lofland & Lofland, 1984, p. 15). This often spurred memories and opinions in others. This method utilised the memories of the individuals and yet uncovered ways in which these students were collectively profiled in their own placements. During this time the memories of all members of these two small ‘collectives’ were further explored for trends and patterns, often with new meanings and memories emerging. Such settings were seen as bringing together strengths of in-depth interviewing and observation (Bouma, 1996) and were useful in triangulating data.

Each of the four focus-group conversations for both ‘collectives’ was slightly different in design. The first was based on questions elicited by me from the narratives and presented to the group for comment and discussion. The second and third started with each student teacher reading her story aloud surrounded by conversations about each others’ thoughts and ideas. This change occurred because of my further reading about research design and the participants asking to “hear” each other’s stories. The final conversation was focused on the critical idea of *community*, which evolved from the narratives and started with their individual narratives.

### **Collective storying**

Collective storying in this study was adapted from the work of others such as Haug’s ‘memory-work’ (Haug & others, 1987; Small & Onyx, 2001a) and further adaptations such as Crawford et al.’s (1992) and Davies et al.’s (2004) ‘collective biography’. Memory-work and collective biography grew out of a feminist social constructivist paradigm (Small & Onyx, 2001b) where being faithful and respectful of the experiences of those taking part is paramount. Collective storying is ‘biographical’ in that it draws on the memories of the individual students. It is also ‘collective’ in that the process through which the stories are developed is one where the students remember the ways in which they were collectively shaped as “coherent subjects” of their school-based placements (Gannon, 2001, p. 788).

The student teachers' narratives and focus group conversations were interpreted to develop the four independent collective stories. Following the drafting of each story, it was participant-checked by the individual student teachers. My bias as the storyteller was an expected part of this interpretive inquiry (Kvale, 1996; Maxwell, 2005; Merriam, 1998). As each collective story was produced it was sent electronically to all participating student teachers for their corroboration and further suggestions. This was followed by an informal collective consideration of collective stories 1, 2 and 3 at focus group conversations 2, 3 and 4 respectively.

Collective storying highlighted the tensions between the individual and the collective (Gannon, 2001) while providing much needed anonymity for individual participants. A challenge for this research was providing the right environment where the student teacher participants trusted that the evidence that they provided would not be directly identifiable to their coordinating teacher or university lecturer. I believed that if the student teachers felt their narrative could be identified they would not have been so forthcoming with their ideas. Educational networks in New Zealand are small and being able to identify a critical comment may have jeopardised future employment possibilities for that participant. Also, although it may have been an unintended outcome, this research project was not an opportunity for social change as in the feminist tradition of memory-work (Small & Onyx, 2001b). This study was an opportunity for students and other participants to reflect on their experiences and for me to construct collective meaning and better understand their experiences.

Collective storying was critical in retaining the rich, thick data. As the collective stories were shared the individuals considered and questioned, "probing for details and images" (Davies et al., 2004, p. 370) of their own recently shared stories and at the same time remembering new stories that "took off from points in the discussion or from moments in others' stories" (p. 370). For them this brought to life "the discursive processes in which [they had] been collectively caught up" (Davies et al., 2004, p. 370). This process was not about "why we think the things we remembered happened or what judgments we want to make about them" (Davies et al., 2004, p. 372) but rather to better explain the perceptions of the school-based placements for these distance students. These

collective stories became the foundation for the semi-structured interviews in the following phase of the research.

### **Semi-structured interviews**

Interviewing was a data generating technique in this study that focused on the interrelations, social constructions of reality, knowledge, language, conversations, context and emphasised narrative (Kvale, 1996). Interviews are interpersonal, an interaction between two people acting in relation to each other, reciprocally influencing each other. They usually occur face-to-face (Lankshear & Knobel, 2004), although other electronic media could have been used for these ‘distant’ participants. In selecting methods, I wanted to get as close to the lived world of the participants as I could, having them describe and explore experiences that I was not able to observe (Lankshear & Knobel, 2004) and this required careful planning and preparation. Kvale (1996) used two metaphors to describe interviewers - the *miner* and the *traveler*. The semi-structured interviews in this study utilised the traveler metaphor, with the interviewee and me ‘wandering’ through the collective stories, entering into conversation about concepts encountered, often wandering along with questions about the student teachers and “their stories of the lived world” (Kvale, 1996, pp. 3-4).

Semi-structured interviews were employed with the coordinating teachers and university lecturers largely to authenticate the collective stories. I used two semi-structured interviews per participant in this phase. This interviewing style encouraged the use of natural language and provided each participant with opportunities to explore and develop personal perspectives over extended time periods (Burns, 1997). Such interviews also allowed for rapport and balance of status during the gathering of field data as they were held at the interviewee’s location. While there may be pitfalls to avoid in semi-structured interviewing, such as divergence and loss of control, challenges, ambiguity and change were valuable in better understanding the stories and concepts offered as evidence by the student teachers and interviewees and could only be addressed through dialogue where the interviewee felt at ease (Burns, 1997; Kvale, 1996). For the semi-structured interviews,

... rather than having a specific [detailed] interview schedule or none at all, an interview guide is developed for some parts of the study in which, without fixed

wording or fixed ordering of questions, a direction is given to the interview so that the content focuses on the crucial issues of the study. (Burns, 1997, p. 330)

The schedules for the interviews in this study were based on the research questions and the collective stories (Appendix B). My interests were in the people and their lived experiences as part of a school-based placement so I preferred the data to be descriptive and qualitative, intending that the interviews would produce rich information focusing on specific events, actions and experiences from the stories. In-depth semi-structured interviewing provided the best opportunity to find out what someone was thinking or feeling, and how they reacted to various issues and situations as conveyed in the collective stories.

By employing these data gathering methods, my intention was clearly to explore the perceptions of others, to 'hear' and validate what others had to say in order to build a holistic picture of school-based placements. Gathering the data using this range of methods presented a challenge in terms of analysis and interpreting, detailed in the next section.

#### *4.4.5 Data analysis*

There are several approaches to effective data analysis offered by writers in the field of qualitative educational research. According to Kvale (1996), the central task of analysis lies in the questions the researcher "has asked from the start of the investigation and followed up through designing, interviewing and transcribing" (p. 187). For this research project an eclectic approach to analysis was appropriate, generating meaning through various methods (Kvale, 1996). The gathered data were needed to help me hypothesise about the factors that influenced the placements rather than having participants evaluate the model and their own perceptions, positioning and influences. Taking an eclectic approach allowed me to use a range of strategies in analysing the field data, including the following, highlighted by Miles and Huberman: noting patterns and themes; seeking plausibility; clustering; drawing contrasts and comparisons; partitioning variables; subsuming particulars under general categories; factoring; noting relations between factors; finding intervening variables; building a logical chain of evidence; and making conceptual or theoretical coherence (as cited in Cohen et al., 2000; Kvale, 1996).

With this project being both exploratory and explanatory, one data analysis task was to discover relevant factors (Bouma & Atkinson, 1995) for the participants in these school-based placements. In order to determine these factors, the study required “in-depth investigation of the interdependencies of parts and of the patterns that emerged” (Sturman, 1999, p. 103) from the research data. Case study was an appropriate approach to discover such influence (Cohen et al., 2000). Case study demands the analysis of sufficient and robust data to fully explore significant features, make plausible interpretations, test for trustworthiness, construct a worthwhile story, relate the story to the literature, convince the readers, and provide an audit trail for others to follow (Bassey, 1999).

I used a computer throughout this study to store, organise, manipulate and analyse documents and research texts. Rather than use a sophisticated data-analysis software programme I used Microsoft Word to complete the analysis electronically with the search, track-changes and comment facilities. In reporting the data analysis strategies used in this inquiry, I have used Delamont’s (2002) important characteristics of good analysis, namely that it must: occur throughout the project; be a thorough interrogation of all data; be a process of discovery; involve keeping essential memos; record all decisions for later reference; and involves coding that is repeated and reduced but not so hastily as to lose detail too quickly.

#### **Ongoing and thorough process of interrogation and discovery**

Analysis was not an isolated stage of this study; it commenced early on in the process and permeated the entire inquiry (Cohen et al., 2000; Delamont, 2002; Kvale, 1996; Maxwell, 2005). Because I gathered data from a range of sources for this study, I needed to be interpreting and analysing data consistently and constantly. As the analysis was to be directly related to the research questions (Lankshear & Knobel, 2004) it began with the development of the questions and continued through the early literature and document searches (Maxwell, 2005) during which I began to create and shape the conceptual framework. Analysis continued during the processes of transcribing, checking, transferring, communicating and interpreting data so that it made sense and the evidence was



organised in a way that enabled me to readily retrieve specific pieces from the overall data-set. I was continually and systematically interrogating the data (Delamont, 2002), identifying key features or relationships and interpreting meaning (Lankshear & Knobel, 2004) against the literature and conceptual framework.

Close and repeated interrogation of the data led to insights (Riessman, 1993) and such explorations resulted in the data being “sifted, sorted, reviewed and reflected on” (Cohen et al., 2000, p. 282) with relevant features of the settings emerging. In Kvale’s words (1996), as the *miner* I was “uncovering and purifying meaning more or less buried” (p. 207) particularly in the student narratives, focus group conversations and interviews. As an interpretive inquirer I spent much time interrogating the research texts in order to construct an account of what was contained within the different sets of data. Analysis involved the revealing of knowledge. For this study, it was important to avoid reading the narratives as theoretical assumptions or as an exact record of what happened in the placements.

This interrogation and interpreting of the data was a process of discovery (Delamont, 2002). Clandinin and Connelly (2000) and Riessman (1993) suggested that initial analysis begins with surface features such as characters, place and plot, but the ‘story’ becomes increasingly more complex as analysis proceeds and further discoveries are made. I discovered such complexity in the initial research text as the student teachers had little time to mine the data deeply themselves. However, the coordinating teachers and university lecturers offered further insights into the collective stories following their reading and the in-depth discussions during interviews. It was here that the main themes began to appear. The early generation of themes and categories meant there were many to begin with however, as Delamont suggested (2002), it was “better to have too many and then combine them later” (p. 151).

Transcribing was a significant part of the overall analysis, as the written text became a record of the dialogue with as much detail as possible. It was therefore critical that I maximised my input into the interpreting and transcribing. As the transcribing was completed for me, considerable time was spent in scrutinising and interrogating audio recordings and text drafts and it was here that features of

discourse were discovered, “stimulated by prior theoretical interests and fore-structures of interpretation” (Riessman, 1993, p. 57). The audio data from this study included repetitions, feedback sounds and statements, hesitations, talk that overlapped, drawn-out words, upward inflections, emphases, interruptions and speech that broke off in mid-sentence or that remained incomplete (Lankshear & Knobel, 2004). Retaining these characteristics was not necessary for this study. However, insights from aspects such as the language, expressions, intonations and asides helped shape the difficult decisions I had to make about how to construct the research text (Riessman, 1993) but were not critical. There was no easy answer to transcribing the tapes from group discussions and interviews because transforming talk into written text involves selection and reduction (Riessman, 1993). However, my constant checking and interrogation led to important discoveries. Manipulating the data was situated in my own discursive positioning (Riessman, 1993), including my cultural, social and institutional discourses. All these discourses came to bear. Lankshear and Knobel (2004) would suggest the transcripts were representative of my views, mindsets and theoretical views - interpreted data.

As described in Chapter Three, this research included the development of a conceptual model. My own school-based placement experiences and knowledge, and the reviewed literature were foundational to the project. The model was considered hypothetical for the purposes of the study, with other participants not being privy to it as it served only as a conceptual framework for data gathering and analysis purposes, to help me “to move from data towards theory” (Henwood & Pidgeon, 1993, p. 16). This research was theory seeking in nature, focused on interpreting the perceptions of the participants in order to improve understanding of the school-based placements of this University of Waikato programme.

### **Keeping memos and recording decisions**

This research and report have been a descriptive account of the perceptions of the participants rather than a narrative of their understanding. A fundamental aim of this study was to explore, describe and explain how students, teachers and lecturers made sense of their placements in the MMP programme in order to better understand the settings overall (Creswell, 1994) rather than testing theory

through each setting. To achieve this I maintained several locations to record my thinking and decisions relating to methods, theory, purpose and data (Maxwell, 2005). In starting this study I noted the emphasis that Delamont (2002) and Cohen et al. (2000) placed on writing memos to record what I was doing, why I was doing it and what paths I might follow. Delamont suggested that every decision should be recorded. As part of my audit trail I kept a thesis book for notes, comments, memos and ideas. I used poster paper to create diagrams and charts as I explored ideas. I used post-its to remind me of further thinking and ideas – in books, on walls, on posters, etc. Meetings and presentations were audio recorded and then transcribed as I further explored ideas and issues discussed with my supervisors and colleagues. As I endeavoured to make sense of the data “in terms of the participants’ perceptions of the situation, noting patterns, themes, categories and regularities” (Cohen et al., 2000, p. 147) I re-read, interrogated further and re-considered ideas and issues previously noted. Many times the ideas gleaned from the student teachers were taken to the interviews for further investigation. Researchers must dismantle their data: matching, contrasting, aggregating, comparing and ordering notes with the intention of moving from description to explanation to theory (Cohen et al., 2000). In this study, these actions, decisions and ideas were recorded as memos for future reference.

#### **Repeated organising, indexing, categorising and coding**

Data analysis must be appropriate to the data gathered (Cohen et al., 2000). From the start of data gathering I was faced with the task of “making sense of a vast amount of unstructured data” (Henwood & Pidgeon, 1993, p. 21). A range of qualitative research writers suggested various techniques for making sense of the research text. None offered a definitive method. In this study analysis included coding of field notes, cognitive mapping of narratives, seeking patterns in the focus group conversations, searching for pathways and connections through the interviews, examining personal constructs, sharing narrative accounts and constant comparisons. As suggested by Lankshear and Knobel (2004) I used organisational methods, indexes and codes for analysing the data that made sense to me, which I “remembered easily” (p. 268).

Using Microsoft Word I searched texts for words, phrases and strings, organising the emerging patterns together into files, “grouping ideas together” (Delamont, 2002, p. 151). I searched individual participant files repeatedly as well as ‘case’ files such as participants from the same focus group or associated with the same placement. Significant patterns emerged from the data across these different sources (Lankshear & Knobel, 2004). Patterns emerged in my reading, the literature reviewed, my ITE experiences, my research experience and common sense. As a *traveler* I constructed meaning by interpreting these patterns, attempting to construct elaborate stories (Kvale, 1996), particularly in the collective stories.

In the early stages of analysis I worked with many categories, allowing a broad array of concepts and categories to emerge from my inspection of the data (Henwood & Pidgeon, 1993). These largely organisational categories were used for the initial sorting of data. At that stage the model was used as an organisational framework to sort data that directly matched preset categories (Lankshear & Knobel, 2004), but ongoing analysis demanded that alternate frameworks be considered to enable valid comparisons, a largely inductive process (Merriam, 1998). This organisational approach became inadequate as the study progressed. The categories needed to be theoretical or more substantive (Maxwell, 2005). This process of analysis was akin to channeling from the wide to the narrow (Cohen et al., 2000), applying categories developed from theory identified as important during the early preparation, ongoing literature review and in response to research questions and evidence gathered (Lankshear & Knobel, 2004).

It was important in the beginning of the study to retain the detail of the data so my indexing and coding was dense, under many headings, not trying to summarise under too few headings (Delamont, 2002). This minimised the potential for loss, distortion and the reduction of complexity that was crucial for later interpretation (Cohen et al., 2000). Coding refers to the process of applying names or categories to collected information. Open coding was widely used in this qualitative research, described as breaking data into discrete parts, examining the parts and comparing for similarities and differences and clustering ideas, then asking questions of the phenomena that are suggested through such comparing

and contrasting (Lankshear & Knobel, 2004). In this study this included examining what the student teachers said to identify essential factors and then investigating to discover how this was represented and authenticated by others. These codes were refined as more and more data were analysed but needed to be substantive and typically descriptive (Maxwell, 2005) to retain the heart of the matter. As data were coded it became apparent that some presumptions, ideas or predictions underlying the study were unwarranted or questionable (Lankshear & Knobel, 2004) and also that other categories had been overlooked. I worked with the data to condense and interpret meaning, rephrasing long statements into main ideas as well as looking for deeper and more (or less) ‘speculative interpretation’ (Kvale, 1996).

#### *4.4.6 Reporting the data sources*

With there being four methods used in gathering evidence, it was important to differentiate between each of the data sources in this report – student narratives, student focus group conversations, collective stories and semi-structured interview information from coordinating teacher or university lecturer. These differentiations are clarified in Table 4.2.

#### *4.4.7 Trustworthiness and ethical considerations*

After considering issues of trustworthiness raised by various writers (Bell, 1999; Burgess, 1991; Burns, 1997; Cohen et al., 2000; Denzin & Lincoln, 1994b; 2003; Merriam, 1998; Stake, 1995), I decided that the three triangulation types appropriate for this study were data source, levels and methodological.

Data source triangulation was used to make sure that the data gathered carried a similar meaning “when found under different circumstances” (Stake, 1995, p. 113), such as over several students, time and location for school-based placements. This was achieved by gathering evidence from a variety of sources (Yin, 2003); firstly from the student teachers, then the coordinating teachers and finally the university lecturers. It was not possible that the information had the same meaning for all participants but gathering data from more than the student teacher participants ensured alternative perspectives.

**Table 4.2 Understanding the codes used in reporting the findings**

	<b>Narratives</b>	<b>Focus group conversations</b>	<b>Collective stories</b>
<b>Student teachers</b>	<p>Code used: (Narrative #1; #2; #3; or #4)</p> <p>For this data source, the students were asked to write a short narrative for each of four trigger topics. These narratives were written over the period March through June 2005. Each student used a pseudonym such as Helen (which is used in this report) to express her thoughts and perceptions so wrote in the 3<sup>rd</sup> person. These 'alter ego' voices of the students convey their perspective as they remember before the placement began (#1 and #2) and also their first year (#3 and #4).</p> <p><u>Example</u></p> <p><i>Claire knew that she would have visits from a representative of the university to make sure that the relationships were working. (Claire: Narrative #2)</i></p>	<p>Code used: (FG#1; #2; #3; or #4)</p> <p>For this data source, the students worked in two separate groups (one of 5 and one of 4) to share and discuss their own short narratives. While there was some variation, the focus group conversations included participants reading their story aloud. This was an opportunity to interpret and re-interpret the stories of all group members. Each group participated in four separate focus group conversations; each based on one of four specific trigger topics and was recorded and transcribed.</p> <p><u>Example</u></p> <p><i>She actually did it a few times, not that she did it every time or anything like that, but she did sit down and write some feedback. (Sarah: FG#2)</i></p>	<p>Code used: (Collective story #1; #2; #3; or #4)</p> <p>The purpose of this data source was to communicate trends in student perceptions to the coordinating teachers and university lecturers. All four collective stories were written by the researcher based directly on the student voices as recorded in the narratives and focus group conversations. While some of the text is by the researcher, predominantly the text is directly the voices of the student participants.</p> <p><u>Example</u></p> <p><i>These teachers agreed with the suggestion in Collective story #4 of having "an obligation to grow and rejuvenate the profession".</i></p>
	<b>Coordinating teachers</b>	<b>University lecturers</b>	
<b>Semi-structured Interviews</b>	<p>Code used: (Int#1 or #2)</p> <p>The data generated by the nine coordinating teachers (identified as CT1 to CT9) were collected at two semi-structured interviews at which the collective stories were explored. Comments relate to the students' perspective and the coordinating teachers' own experiences. It is presented in the 1<sup>st</sup> person based directly on the transcribed evidence.</p> <p><u>Example</u></p> <p><i>They turn up to do a lesson and they haven't done the background work, they haven't even planned for the lesson properly. They have just quickly scribbled down what you've said to them in your meeting and think they can teach from that. (CT7: Int#2)</i></p>	<p>Code used: (Int#1 or 2)</p> <p>The data generated by the four university lecturers (identified as UL1 to UL4) were collected at two semi-structured interviews at which the collective stories were explored. Comments relate to the students' perspective and the university lecturers' own experiences. It is presented in the 1<sup>st</sup> person based directly on the transcribed evidence.</p> <p><u>Example</u></p> <p><i>My place is to ask them if they're happy with what's going on with, you know, I found out that they understand what their role is, that they are happy with it, that they're basically in many respects in a mentoring role. And if they're not clear, then I talk them. (UL2: Int#1)</i></p>	

Having individual students generate and share their initial narratives and then check both the transcripts and collective stories gave greater authenticity to the first stories. Having the coordinating teachers and university lecturers consider the concepts and initial ideas through the collective stories, was an endeavour to ensure the interpretation of the data offered meaning similar to that of others.

Employing different levels of data gathering also provided for triangulation (Cohen et al., 2000) and thus greater trustworthiness, e.g., individuals, pairs, small groups, public forum, etc. Initially individual students provided their own narratives. These personal narratives were then shared with a focus group of fellow student teachers involving dialogue about aspects of their own placements. From these focus group conversations the students checked the transcriptions and then individually checked the collective stories. These collective stories were then shared with the coordinating teachers and university lecturers at interview. This strategy of using two levels, individual and groups, was also supplemented by sharing the methodology, design and model with a wider group – ITE colleagues attending a colloquium and/or conference.

The methods of evidence gathering, analysing and interpreting were further aspects of triangulation (Maxwell, 2005). Authenticating evidence and interpretations was “an intrinsic part of the generation of theory” (Kvale, 1996, p. 244). In using a range of methods to generate evidence, I took steps to authenticate and validate the data and interpretations. The predominant method for gathering data in this study was through writing and talking. However, there were three methods used to gather and interpret the data – the student teacher participants’ writing then sharing their narratives in focus groups, followed by the generation of collective stories by me. The other participants investigated these collective stories, sharing their own views in interviews. This effectively provided three methods of evidence collection along with three efforts at interpretation, which provided greater trustworthiness within the study.

As highlighted by Bassey (1999), for evidence and findings to be considered worthy of inclusion in this study there were six aspects included in addition to the triangulation detailed above:

- *prolonged engagement* with the data source and in particular the primary source. The student teachers provided narratives, engaged in focus group conversations, and member-checked the transcripts and collective stories;
- *persistent interrogation* of the trends that emerged from the data with my ongoing analysis and interpretations, the student teachers’ reading of the collective stories then the coordinating teachers and university lecturers

reading of the collective stories followed by discussion of content during interviews;

- *adequate checking of the data throughout* with my own reading and checking of field data against the audio tapes followed by the member checking of the research data by the participants;
- *systematic testing of all new knowledge* against the conceptual model, the literature and experts right from the start without exposing the model to any other participants, and by the coordinating teachers and university lecturers as they read the collective stories and compared with their existing knowledge;
- *at least one critical friend who challenged* the methodology, the findings and the conclusions. These critical friends were my supervisors and colleagues who engaged because of their interest in the study or their work in school-based placements; and
- *sufficient detail* in the narratives, findings and discussion to give the reader confidence.

Confidence in this study was also developed through attention to the validity of the methods and processes. Kvale (1996) identified three features of research as critical to validity. Craftsmanship in this study included taking the time to check and recheck throughout the process including the methodology employed, the research questions, the sample chosen, the information gathering questions, the narratives, the interpretations, and the findings. The interpreting and theorising of the evidence gathered was validated by reading and talking across a range of sources to ensure that interpretive research was the most appropriate methodology to explore school-based placements.

Ensuring the validity of this research also required communication (Kvale, 1996) among participants: myself with the student teachers, coordinating teachers, university lecturers and a range of others including colleagues and supervisors. External communications occurred when other ITE providers, alternative policies and NZTC regulations were applied to the data through conference presentations (Ussher, 2003; 2005a; 2005b). Such communications were endeavours to avoid what Cohen et al. (2000) referred to as the halo effect: “where existing or given information about the situation or participants might be used to be selective in



subsequent data collection” (p. 157). This open communication with a range of people was an important contribution to the validity of the findings, providing ongoing scrutiny and guarding against ‘researcher reactivity’ (Maxwell, 2005) to collected data.

My commitment to the research data and decisions to act on the data collected were indicative of my confidence in the evidence contributed by the participants and my choice of methodology. In this study the methods used to gather and analyse data were accompanied by further action. Gathering the first student teacher narratives was followed by my interpretations of these in readiness for the focus group conversations, which then led to further interpretations of this data in the preparation of the collective stories. As this occurred over four separate occasions, each new narrative, focus group conversation and collective story lead to a re-consideration of the previous data. These data gathering and analysing actions were accompanied by preparation for the coordinating teachers’ and university lecturers’ interviews.

Internally, action leading from the findings of the research impacted the MMP programme. While this was not action research and there was no intention to intervene in the placements studied, changes did occur for future placements. Equally as important, the overall interpretations of the research data led to the evaluation of the model, highlighted in the final chapter. Externally, with the publication of the theoretical model and articles, readers may compare the school-based placements of the University of Waikato MMP programme to their own.

In summary, validity and triangulation were critically important due to the data collection being based on the narratives of a range of participants, each having been immersed in their own school-based setting. Given the uniqueness of these school-based placements and the understanding that data gathered would largely be participants’ perceptions, ethical considerations were critical also.

### **Ethical considerations**

An important element of the methodology of this research was the ethical considerations due each of the participants. With my direct involvement in this ITE programme and the importance of the school-based placements to the overall success for the student teachers, being fully informed was critical. Probably the

most significant ethical issue in this study was that participants knew me. As coordinator of the programme and a lecturer within two core papers I was known to the student teachers, some of the coordinating teachers and all of the university lecturers. This had implications for access, consent, confidentiality, anonymity, conflicts and authority in this study.

As researcher I had an active role in the setting that was the focus of this study and therefore direct access to the participants through my work. I was mindful of this and therefore careful throughout the entire study that work and research were separated appropriately. Firstly, permission was sought from the student teachers to utilise information stored on a database that gave me direct access to contact details. Permission was sought from the whole target group initially – no individuals were compromised in any way. This information then gave me access to the student group, their coordinating teachers and the university lecturers. Additionally for the coordinating teachers, access was sought through their school principal to avoid any potential conflict regarding workload.

As all of the participants in this research project were volunteers, it was important that each had the necessary information to make a fully informed decision regarding their self-determined involvement. Many writers emphasised that in order to achieve this, each participant needed to know the purpose, objectives and process of the study (for example Best & Kahn, 1998; Bouma & Atkinson, 1995; Burns, 1997) as well as a general knowledge of other individuals and significant others (such as base-school and School of Education) who may be involved (Cohen et al., 2000). In my preparation for this study I identified the potential ‘risks and discomforts’ for the participants (Cohen et al., 2000). All participants, especially those known personally or work colleagues, were fully informed of issues, benefits and consequences. This was achieved firstly through my letters of introduction but also by making myself available and approachable (face-to-face and electronically). Involvement for participants was entirely optional and it was clearly stated that complete withdrawal from the project could occur at any point. All participants were informed early of their right and ability to withdraw from the investigation (Best & Kahn, 1998; Bouma & Atkinson, 1995; Burns, 1997; Cohen et al., 2000).

Every participant had the right to privacy. In order for this to happen, all data and communications were treated as confidential: to the study, to each individual, and to any group (Bouma & Atkinson, 1995; Burns, 1997). With the variety of data gathering strategies used, it was important to consider the confidentiality and anonymity issues for each group of participants. With the narrative approach used with the student participants, their stories were shared only with the other student participants. It was not possible for the students to remain totally anonymous as they worked alongside fellow students sharing at the focus group forums however the content remained confidential to the group. The narratives used only pseudonyms where a name was needed to protect the anonymity of individuals. With the interview approach used for the coordinating teachers and university lecturers, the data collected was confidential to each individual participant and the researcher. With the interview schedules based on the collective stories from the students' narratives and discussions, there were no identifying marks that would allow the coordinating teachers or university lecturers to link comments or ideas directly back to individual students.

As this research was undertaken at a time when the student teachers were still studying within the programme there was potential conflict between the researcher, the coordinating teachers and university lecturers. Without transgressing confidentiality or anonymity it was my responsibility to declare to all potential participants all other potential participating groups involved (Bouma & Atkinson, 1995). For example there were several areas that created potential conflict of interest, for:

- students regarding the grading of their work through their relationship with me or other lecturers;
- student teachers and their coordinating teacher through pressures in the base-school relationships;
- students in the focus group conversations with tensions between individual personalities, philosophies or ideas;
- others, based on differing cultural understandings, such as whether it was the accepted way that things were done in a school or its community (Bouma & Atkinson, 1995).

As I was a university lecturer within this ITE programme, the students may have considered my authority could cause potential harm to their study and achievements. Having worked with these students in their first year of study there was potential for them to feel that their grades could have been influenced by their decision to participate or not (Burns, 1997). Reassurances were given that this would not occur, that data produced by participants would not be used in the assessment of their study in the programme. Participants saying ‘nice things’ because of power relationships could not be wholly avoided. It was also possible that revelations in stories and interviews could embarrass or endanger relationship among students, coordinating teachers, School of Education staff and/or researcher (Babbie, 1995). Again, in order for there to be no harm to any participants, I ensured that stories and ideas were kept confidential to individuals or groups and the study. The disclosure of personal information in the research process was to serve the purpose of the study only – not any individual. Because of the close nature of the relationships often developed within school-based placements, especially between student and coordinating teacher, reflection on ones’ own behaviour and relationships may have caused doubt or anxiety (Babbie, 1995) and as a consequence, a placement may have suffered. This was also guarded against by open and ongoing availability of the researcher to all participants in the sample.

#### ***4.5 Limitations and Difficulties***

As is typical in educational research there were limitations and difficulties. These aspects of this inquiry were recognised early in the process and openly acknowledged. Some of these were tensions associated with my teaching, research and administrative roles while others were as a result of investigating a phenomenon involving a range of people with variously vested interests.

##### *4.5.1 Limitations*

One limitation to the evidence gathered was the lack of direct observation of this complex setting. There were three issues here, the first being my inability to visit all nine placement settings in order to carry out appropriate observations. Given my workload and the location of the potential settings it was logistically impractical for me to spend time observing in all settings. This issue could have

been addressed by reducing the number of settings. However, this was not deemed appropriate. The second issue associated with this limitation was the appropriateness of gathering data directly relating to the actions, behaviours and words of all three participants associated with each placement. The approach of this investigation would have changed, requiring a closer and more trusting relationship between student teacher, coordinating teacher, university lecturer and myself. Collecting such data could have exposed each participant to direct interrogation by others. A third issue was my ability to observe first hand the factors that were likely to impact on these placements. It would not have been possible to observe the background experiences that each partner brought to the setting and also this would have required first year students as the participants.

A second limitation was the size of the sample used for gathering evidence. This issue arose from several points. First, the total student teacher population was only 43. Choosing only the second year group of this particular ITE programme limited the population size. Second, the logistics of data gathering determined a sample geographically compact. Third, the methodology used suggested a small sample to ensure a manageable data set. With these three issues for the student teacher sample, this determined the coordinating teacher and university lecturer samples would also be limited as it was important to have connection between the participants for triangulation and validity purposes.

A third limitation may be the lack of children's voice included in the data. Given that I have noted the important role that children play in the placements, it might be considered limiting to have not included the voice of the children in validating the perspectives of the student teachers. Many of the factors identified in this study relate to the organisation and management of the school-based placement rather than to the issues directly linked to learning teaching. Including children as participants would have created further difficulties for me.

#### *4.5.2 Difficulties*

There were three difficulties encountered in this study. The first was the differentiation between placement and practicum. In ITE programmes in New Zealand, student teachers have intense blocks of teaching practice called practicum and many also have school-based teaching experiences for shorter

periods. In this study the participants were asked to describe their perceptions of the one-day placements. However, at the time of study the participants had already experienced two and a half semesters of placement and a four-week practicum, which created potential for confusion. When student teachers were talking about expectations, anxieties, and relationships there was some confusion. Additionally, the coordinating teachers were also prone to confuse the realities of the placement with that of the practicum from the previous year. As I was aware of this possible confusion, I attempted to guide conversations to focus on the placement and disregard any data that pertained to practicum experiences. This confusion was mostly related to the second difficulty, that of remembering.

The student teacher participants were all in their second year and so needed to recall aspects of their programme from up to 18 months earlier. For some student teachers this was a challenge and it was often the focus group conversations that prompted them to remember aspects and occurrences from the beginning of their placements. Likewise, some coordinating teachers and university lecturers also had difficulties remembering back to the start of the placement and confused issues.

Perhaps the greatest challenge was the construction of the collective stories. This task presented tensions that both researcher and participants needed to manage and accept. For me it was my ability to convert the nine narratives and two focus group conversations into one story that was representative of the main points for the student teachers. Highlighting individual 'voices' that represented specific participants while at the same time concealing the identity of any one student teacher's perceptions was a challenge. This was especially important for any 'story' that may have caused tension with their coordinating teacher or university lecturer. For the student teachers it was the acceptance that not all their narratives could be included and that the alternate view of a fellow student teacher could be used to represent the collective view. Similarly, the coordinating teachers and university lecturers were required to read and explore each collective story without personalising any of the content or attempting to identify the thoughts or comments of their own student teacher. While the collective stories were methodologically sound considering ethical and validity aspects, they were

also a challenge. My re-telling of the student teachers' stories may in fact have marginalised some voices.

#### **4.6 Conclusion**

A constructivist, qualitative research methodology was used to carry out the research for this study. In particular, elements of interpretive, naturalistic and case study were selected as methodological approaches that best suited the epistemology and ontology of the researcher, the investigation and research questions. The relevance and utilisation of these approaches were described and discussed in this chapter, highlighting the importance of personal realities and knowing, the significance of interpretive inquiry, attention to ensuring trustworthiness, the ethical considerations, and the sample.

Details of the research design were provided and discussed. These include the phases of the process, methods for gathering and analysing data, and the limitations and difficulties associated with the research. These aspects are all presented as chain of evidence contributing to the quality of this study. According to Bassey (1999), an educational report such as this is an empirical inquiry that provides “an audit trail by which other researchers may validate or challenge the findings or construct alternative arguments” (p. 58). The details provided in this chapter are my attempt to make available to the reader and other researchers, evidence that the research methodology used is of good quality and that the findings, discussions and conclusions are based on sound methods and worthy of due consideration.

From the process of data collection and analysis, six themes were highlighted in the research data and are presented in the next chapter: *Meeting the demands of this distance ITE placement; Partnerships through commitment to this placement; Clarifying the roles and responsibilities in this distance ITE placement; Thinking and talking teaching while on placement; Relationship building in this distance ITE programme; and Participation for learning in this school-based ITE placement.* The findings of this study followed by a discussion, are presented in the following chapters, Five and Six respectively.

## Chapter Five: Findings

### **5.1 Introduction**

This qualitative study set out to gather data to explore how student teachers made sense of school-based placements in the University of Waikato's Mixed Mode Presentation (MMP) primary programme. The experiences and relationships of the participants were probed to better explain and understand these placements. An interpretive approach was used to analyse the data, highlighting the emerging themes and concepts. These findings are my interpretation of the participants' perspectives on their specific placement. It is acknowledged that the realities for each of the participants are locally constructed, limited to their own experiences, thus 'fuzzy' generalisations have been made across these placements.

In beginning this study, a conceptual model was developed (see Chapter Three) based on my own experiences, knowledge and reading to guide my thinking and actions. The processes of gathering and analysing data were used to generate evidence useful for evaluating the model. While the following themes and concepts were grounded in the data, they were also mediated by my own thinking. For all research participants the realities of the placements were difficult to separate out from other roles, experiences and involvement, especially those events that had occurred since beginning this programme. While the student teachers often agreed with each other's comments and ideas on what occurred, each particular 'view' was inseparable from that participant but all data helped to better understand these school-based placements overall.

The thesis of this research was that where key factors such as relationships, belonging, commitment, knowledge, support and experience existed for participants in a distance teacher education school-based placement, student teachers would have positive perceptions about this as a learning experience. The data were gathered and analysed to explore the following research questions:

- 1. What are the perceived key factors of a distance primary teacher-education school-based placement?*



2. *How do these perceived key factors link and which factors are critical to this school-based placement?*
3. *Does the developed model provide a way of explaining a distance school-based placement?*

As detailed in Chapter Four the processes of data gathering and analysis were thorough and extensive. Data gathering began with the student teachers writing narratives focused on trigger topics provided. In the writing of the narratives, the student teachers attempted to make sense of the placement as it had been for them and then in the focus group conversations they had the opportunity to re-interpret ideas from their own and others' stories. The focus group interviews became a site of further data production (Elliott, 2005; Kvale, 1996). The individual narratives were shared with a group of student teachers and from the transcribed focus group conversations representative collective stories were created. Each of these was shared with all the student teachers independently for affirmation or alteration before each was presented for triangulation purposes to the coordinating teachers and university lecturers as the basis for interviews.

The collective stories were second-order narratives (Elliott, 2005): my interpretations and representation of the student teachers' narratives and associated focus group conversations attempting to provide a collective view. My embeddedness in these data, through my work and interest, was openly acknowledged. My connection with the student teachers was value-laden thus influencing the evidence as a fair and true representation. Being close to the setting enabled me to have in-depth understanding of the placement but this also meant that assumptions might have been made about realities and perspective without thoroughly exploring the data, stressing the importance of the coordinating teacher and university lecturer interviews.

This chapter presents the findings in two ways: firstly using the collective stories of the nine student teachers; and then linking the views of the student teachers, coordinating teachers and university lecturers. In this chapter the data is interpreted and collated into themes grounded in the data and conceptual framework. The themes are factors relating to this MMP school-based experiences rather than any chronological or theoretical framework.

The framework of themes comes from two sources. Initially, in the reading of student teacher narratives, the sharing of focus group conversations, the writing of collective stories, interviewing and re-reading of the transcribed data, 14 themes emerged. Throughout the analysis and writing process these themes have been revised and reviewed. The two most obvious of these, *Relationship building in a distance ITE programme* and *Meeting the demands of a distance ITE placement*, appeared to be directly related to the model as developed. Two others, *Commitment to the partnerships in ITE*, and *Thinking and talking teaching while on placement*, also appeared linked to the model and resulted from further discussion with students, teachers and lecturers about specific factors. The remaining 10 evolved from the literature and data during analysis. Of these 10, eight were not considered for further examination due to lack of depth in the data, limitations in the scope of the study or limited connection to the research questions.

For the voices of these student teachers to be heard as primary data, I have included a synopsis of each of the four collective stories and evidence from narratives and focus group conversations. To set the scene for these findings the four collective stories are presented first. The student teacher narratives were written in the third person and are presented here without alteration. The topics of these four stories derived from the supplementary questions identified to support the main research questions. The first was based around the trigger topic *assumptions and beliefs*, followed by *expectations and requirements*, both requiring the student teachers to remember their feelings and thoughts before they began the programme. The third came from the trigger topic *roles and responsibilities* and was focused on what the student teachers found they and others were accountable for. The final story was based on the trigger topic *collaboration or connection*. Following receipt of the narratives, the theme of this final collective became *connections with a learning community* based on the overall content of the student teacher stories. These final two stories required the student teachers to remember their first year experiences, to remember ‘last year’. The rest of the chapter identifies themes that arose from the stories and interviews:

- Meeting the demands of a distance ITE placement;

- Partnerships through commitment to a placement.
- Clarifying the roles and responsibilities in a distance ITE placement;
- Thinking and talking teaching while on placement.
- Relationship building in a distance ITE programme;
- Participation for learning in a school-based ITE placement.

## **5.2 The collective stories**

These stories were developed independently. The process involved interrogating each of the appropriate narratives and data from the focus group conversations. From this data, the collective stories were composed, endeavouring to reflect the individual and collective voices of the students although no one student-participant is fully represented in each story. Each story was then made available to the student teachers for critique. Following are synopses of the full stories that were shared in the interviews with the coordinating teachers and university lecturers (see Appendix B for full versions). The names used in the original stories have been changed in the synopses for ease of reading and there is no attempt at equivalence across the stories such as whether 'Ruby' knew her coordinating teacher before starting the programme in one story but not in the other stories.

### **5.2.1 Collective story #1: Assumptions and Beliefs**

Ruby had long believed she would become a teacher after growing up in a 'teaching' world. She was a parent to three children and had often looked after friends' children, taking a teacher role with them, so she never felt nervous about her ability working with children. The time was right for her to give teaching a go as the jobs she had been in recently were not fulfilling or challenging any more and her own children were growing fast.

Ruby was first accepted into 'teachers' college' just after secondary school but life took a different path so she never made it. With her family duties and commitments now reduced, she decided it was time to think about herself and her own future. The opportunity to study via the Internet meant she could still be at home for her children and study at the same time. Having studied before, Ruby imagined she could cope with the study aspect of this programme, anticipating her start with confidence, motivation and determination. She had been talking recently with a good friend about

the issue of not knowing what was expected of her as a university student but she had been at Cold Mountain School such a long time with her children and work that she had a great confidence in the school being able to provide what she thought she might need for her study. Ruby had heard of a student nearby, Shylo, who went into a completely new, unknown school where “she didn’t know them and they didn’t know her”. Ruby felt the familiarity of her situation would be to her advantage but it might be handy to have another student nearby.

Ruby thought it fair to assume that the university must have confidence in her and a willingness to support her as she had passed the selection interview. Initial support and encouragement would come from a range of sources. Her children should be very supportive, perhaps by leaving encouraging little notes, helping around the house, providing the space she would need to do her work. Support from her husband might be less obvious however.

### ***5.2.2 Collective story #2: Expectations and Requirements***

Ruby had expected this journey to be a tough one, a huge learning curve with problems to face along the way – for her and her family. She knew the principal and base-school through her involvement as a parent at Cold Mountain School and how they had been involved with this MMP programme in the past. Fitting together the pieces of the ‘teaching’ puzzle, Ruby expected would be the role of her coordinating teacher, Ada, who would be confident and knowledgeable about teacher education. She expected to have a close relationship with Ada that would develop over the two years, although they would see each other for only one day in each week. Ruby expected to be able to ask Ada about anything and everything, to talk directly with her about experiences, issues and practices.

Having been a parent in the school, Ruby knew that her relationships would change with her new role as this small school had been like home for her at times. She expected that she would get strong support from her school and anticipated that the university would provide her with information about getting started – on coursework and the Internet. Of course there would be other support, especially from Ada. However, Ruby expected her commitment to be severely tested at the beginning because she felt there would be hard times with everything being so new. Of all the aspects that Ruby had talked about, it was the ongoing transition between roles of parent and student teacher that concerned her most.

### *5.2.3 Collective story #3: Roles and Responsibilities*

Ruby thought mostly of her own 'superwoman' role and how she needed to sort out her own problems and just "get on with things" since it had been her choice to do the Mixed Mode Presentation programme rather than attend an on-campus programme. Mostly, the help and support for Ruby came from her student teacher colleagues, especially the study group she had been lucky enough to be part of. She also realised that her course lecturers were approachable for advice and guidance about her study and placement tasks.

Ada was another of Ruby's primary support, providing an effective learning environment. When asked to list the roles of her coordinating teacher, Ruby reeled off mentor, role-model, inspiration, helper, adviser, provider and critic. Ruby found Ada a great help in her work and worked on building their relationship. Ada provided support and feedback on specific teaching and learning issues and also made sure Ruby was included in whole school activities. Ada and other staff members "rejoiced" in Ruby's successes and improvements. She had been told many times that the development and maintenance of key partnerships was critical.

Of all the responsibilities that Ruby had, the role of teacher education student placed the greatest demands on her ability to prioritise and organise. She just loved being a student teacher, especially the 'teacher' role she experienced when at school placement. In all her roles and responsibilities she felt sure that change would be a constant but she expected to learn so much about herself as well as teaching.

### *5.2.4 Collective story #4: Connecting with learning communities*

Ruby's preferred style of learning demands that she has personalised experiences, especially where she interacts face-to-face. In the past her learning communities have been both extensive and diverse and now, in addition to her existing communities, she has developed others, one focusing on her computer and technology, another based around her reading and studying, and a third based on her teaching practice experiences. Ruby feels that in order to gain a deeper appreciation of the communities in which she will work as a teacher, she needs to be exposed to diversity early. She really likes her communities for their obvious diversity. The people are diverse in culture and pedagogy. Ruby finds that in all her communities, while she is learning herself she is also helping others, and this occurs across all of them.

Ruby's relationship with Ada has developed into a strong tie as they spend a lot of time together. Ruby finds it really affirming when Ada seeks her opinion. While Ada is definitely her number one teacher, Ruby works with many other teachers on Cold

Mountain School's staff as well. Having been a giver most of her life (perhaps from her motherly role), Ruby does not find it easy to seek help but with Ada she has always felt included and supported.

The principal had selected Ada as Ruby's coordinating teacher because of her knowledge, experiences and leadership. When the principal of Cold Mountain had first spoken to Ruby, she had implied that other staff would be involved with her placement at different times, as there is a real culture of learning in the school. Ruby trusts her coordinating teacher, base-school and study group. She knows she can talk with them in confidence about issues and ideas. Ruby likes being given opportunities to utilise her new and developing knowledge and in Ada's words, "Each of us is on our own personal learning journey and I am so pleased to be a part of yours".

These collective stories come from the unique stories and voices of the student teachers. As such, they represent their perspectives but at the same time, they also cloak the distinctiveness of each individual. While these form the foundation of this study, the narratives, focus group conversations and interviews were all analysed independently in producing the following themes and findings. The findings are reported under six themes.

### ***5.3 Meeting the demands of a distance school-based placement***

The requirements and realities of this school-based placement were a new experience for these student teachers. When they accepted a place in this MMP programme, they did not imagine how demanding it would be. Helen said, "It blew me away how much I really do need help; not only with the study itself but its the life around us that you need support with" (FG#1<sup>5</sup>). These student teachers all remembered at their selection-interview they had discussed the need for support and Mary-Lou even recalled saying,

I've got family support, I've got this, I've got that ... and then after I'd hung up [from my phone interview] I thought 'far out, I don't know if I have'. I just said that just to get through the interview and I really honestly did not know whether I would have the support that I began to realise I would need. (FG#1)

The establishment and development of each school-based placement was primarily dependent on the people and time assigned by those responsible for the placement, such as the school-based leaders (principal and coordinating teacher)

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<sup>5</sup> From Focus Group conversation #1. See Table 4.2 (p. 132) for code explanations

university-based staff, and the student teacher. This section explores the participants' perspectives on meeting the demands of this placement by considering supporting strategies, collaboration with student teacher colleagues (study group), support from the coordinating teacher, utilising classroom teaching time, involvement of the whole school, and university-based staff responsibilities.

### *5.3.1 Support needed to meet the challenges*

Support was considered important in meeting the challenges. Eight student teachers talked about specific instances of support from their family. They appreciated this help. Mostly this came in the form of encouragement and just 'being there', for example, "people have been there to support me too but it's family support rather than some organisation such as a school" (Claire, FG#1). Helen talked about family members just needing "to be ears to her – listening to her moan, while not knowing what she is talking about. They will say things like, 'That's okay, you can do it'" (FG#1). Sarah did point out that she was "nervous about assuming family support because [she] had circumstances where the idea of it was fine but when the reality came the support wasn't there" (FG#1). UL1 spoke at length about this, emphasising the importance of having family support, describing what was considered a "perfect example of the family support - they juggled and balanced the whole lot and it worked" (Int#1). CT8 commented that she felt "the support from family and home is paramount" (Int#1). This support varied in form and extent. Some felt "blessed" to have the support of family and/or friends, while others wished they had received better help to manage the demands. As mature adult learners they acknowledged that "if I need help then I have to ask" (Teresa, FG#1) while others were reluctant to ask for help for various reasons. The issue of family support came out strongly in the collective stories.

The issue of support from husbands or partners in meeting deadlines and demands was significant. Helen, Jamie and Teresa were sole parent so this was not a source of support for them. Claire's partner also did not feature in the discussions, unlike the other five. At times these five reported excellent support:

I think the pleasant surprise for me has been my husband's support. Whereas the first time I tried to study he seemed to be so hard, this time he's just bent over backwards to make my life easy so that I can finish work and then have something to eat and not do any housework and then go back to school and study. (Margaret, FG#1)

But while Margaret, Sarah and Catherine reported their husbands as being mostly supportive, Sandra and Mary-Lou were reluctant to even talk to their husbands about their initial application.

No, I didn't actually tell him I was going to [apply]. I didn't tell him because I was worried about not being accepted and I just couldn't handle saying that I wasn't accepted so I didn't actually tell him. So, when he found out, he was actually a bit gob-smacked and since then he hasn't been a lot of support at all. Actually, I think I've been expected to do more in the house and he's done less for the children so he's sort of a no-hoper in the support field. (Sandra, FG#1)

Mary-Lou felt that she had support from her husband to begin with but then the encouragement and support waned with time. Both Sandra and Mary-Lou felt that their partners were not there for them while Catherine, whose husband was often overseas, felt he was her "main support. He was right behind me ... He's never given me a day's grief about it. Totally supportive!" (FG#1).

Teresa, Sarah, Claire and Catherine reported their children had shown support and encouragement also. Teresa said, "My daughter writes little notes and sticks them on the computer like 'you can do it mum', 'we love you, we've got faith in you' things like that. And my son is the same" (FG#1). These student teachers highlighted how encouragement from their children helped them to manage the demands of study and placement.

Five student teachers also talked about how supportive their own parents had been in providing time and space for them to get on with their work. Of her parents Teresa said, they "don't say a lot but when they've seen me stressed or whatever, they've been there for me" (FG#1). Sandra and Mary-Lou got lots of unexpected support from their parents through talking, phoning and caring for their children. Helen also said, "luckily my mum had come through to help me out in that area [financial] as well as looking after my child when I needed her to at times. 'Yeah for Mums'" (FG#1). Likewise, Claire said, "My mother helped me with some of my writing on the application and she's been wonderful. Once I had been accepted my family support has been wonderful" (FG#1). Support for these student teachers came from a wide circle of people. Helen, Margaret, Catherine and Teresa reported that friends also supplemented their supporters. This was verified in Collective story #1. For these student teachers to successfully manage the demands of their placement and study, they required the



support and encouragement from their immediate environment. They also highlighted the importance of a study network.

### *5.3.2 Managing demands by developing collaborative networks*

Support was an important aspect of these school-based placements. Six student teachers talked about other planning for the challenge of study and the day in school. Helen and Claire did not realise how much preparation they would have to do. Claire imagined she would just have to “take notes, observe, discuss, ...” (Narrative #1) and that it would all become obvious. She suggested that some information had been provided on “how the programme worked with one day a week in school for every week of the university year, starting with a three-day block in school to get started” (Narrative #1) but the detail of what to do each week was not clear.

Five student teachers reported that peer networks were great support for this preparation (Collective story #3). CT4 commented she believed “that support from fellow students was critical and that's one of the things you [can] miss out on the most” (Int#2) when in a distance programme. Catherine felt that “the other students, other colleagues in the MMP programme, were the ones that [she] would go to because they would have a better understanding of what was needed” (FG#3). Claire supported the idea that a network of classmates was important, noting that, “when it came to assignments and needing to talk to someone to clarify her thinking she found that she usually called fellow MMP students to discuss the issue” (Narrative #4). Claire, Teresa and Helen talked about how they had developed enduring friendships with their colleagues as they had an appreciation of what was happening in everyone else’s life. This group provided them with “companionship in the tough times – they commiserated and celebrated, whinged and coffee-d with [them] through personal and academic events” (Collective story #3), all aspects considered important by these distance students in facing the demands of learning teaching.

Six of the nine student teachers related specific examples of when they had needed to call on MMP student networks to provide academic support to get them through. Examples given by these student teachers included coping with a failing grade, getting feedback on an idea, preparing lesson plans, getting advice on

specific task content, appraisal of work, generally sharing thoughts to get them started on a written task and managing word limits in essays.

Well that's that peer support again ... 'I'm stuck, my God!' I take my assignments over to Teresa and she helps me cut my word limit down because I've got three thousand words and my word limit is 1500 and this is one day before it's due in and I don't know how I'm going to cut this down and it just works. (Helen, FG#1)

This support was also in the celebration of successes and “good marks”. In Collective story #3, these student teachers verified that they felt they could “talk in confidence [to peers] about issues and ideas, knowing their feedback will be positive and constructive”.

Helen, Mary-Lou, Sandra and Teresa reported access to a local study group as significant to their success. Helen talked of how they “all get together and have a chat and gossip and talk about assignments on a peer level and relax and stuff like that” (FG#3). Helen was adamant that her local study group “... helped immensely in helping [her] to understand what she needed to do” (Narrative #2). Teresa and Helen liked the fact that they were all going through similar struggles. They initially imagined that they would be managing this all on their own – “the only people I'm going to see are on a computer” (Helen, FG#1). Sarah affirmed this thinking. She felt “better” knowing that others were struggling like she was because there were many times when she was “independently lost” and being able to talk with peers about this, online and face-to-face, was essential support.

While immediately accessible peers were certainly great support, other peers such as MMP students in other year groups were “supporters and mentors in different ways and at different times as well” (Collective story #3). These student teachers felt that they could not have just the support of their local environment and peers but needed support from people within the programme also. Time and space for these student teachers to work in their school-based placements required planning, preparation and support.

### *5.3.3 Coordinating teacher providing resources and support*

Collective story #3 confirmed that the coordinating teacher was vital for the student teachers in making available those aspects essential to learning teaching: a classroom of children, resources, an effective learning environment, time and

knowledge. This enabled each student teacher to better manage the demands of required tasks. Catherine wrote that she expected her coordinating teacher would provide “the classroom, the students, and the learning environment that [she] would observe and practise teaching in” (Narrative #3), endorsed by CT3 (Int#1). Five student teachers reported that they had found their coordinating teacher to be supportive, accommodating and helpful (Collective stories #2 & #4). These student teachers reported about specific examples of guidance with planning, teaching opportunities, suggestions and the support to “try out new ideas and practices, to make a mess and mistakes as they learned about teaching” (Collective story #2). Sandra, Sarah and Teresa also felt the support from their coordinating teacher came in the form of ‘modelling best practice’. CT3 agreed that the “best support that [she could] give these students was to have the best classroom possible for them to work in” (Int#1). For CTs 2, 3, 4 and 7, helping came naturally, as they wanted their student teacher to succeed. While these student teachers had expected to be supported by their coordinating teacher (Collective story #2), Catherine and Teresa felt this support truly helped them to get organised, manage their work and move into study. This support allowed the student teachers time to “focus on [their] professional learning” (Teresa, FG#4).

Through Collective story #4 these student teachers confirmed that their coordinating teacher did in fact “spend a lot of time” with them. Having this time was critical. Claire and Sarah emphasised that they had anticipated that their coordinating teachers would have time to ‘devote’ to them. Catherine said she had not expected them “to do [her] assignments, but at the same time they helped with queries and gave their perspective” (FG#3). Having a student teacher to work with was considered a new resource for five coordinating teachers – additional hands to help around the classroom. However, Claire did not believe her coordinating teacher had “realised the time that was going to be involved with taking [her] on” (FG#2) when she had volunteered to have a student teacher. Claire, Mary-Lou and Jamie reported they had not had much time with their coordinating teacher out of class time for various reasons but mainly because of other commitments – family and teaching obligations and school leadership roles. While support time might not have been anticipated during class, they anticipated time to have been given before and after class. CTs 3, 4, 5 and UL3 all believed

that time to talk was important but that the students and coordinating teachers had to manage their time to be together. The coordinating teachers required the student teachers to 'slow down' and spend time talking to them rather than always rushing off (CT7, Int#2).

Sarah, Margaret, Jamie and Sandra said they had firsthand knowledge of how busy their coordinating teacher would be from being an integral part of a classroom or working extensively in a school environment. Helen, Teresa, Mary-Lou and Claire however, went into their classroom initially not fully understanding. They had "a kind of overall vague idea but you 'guys' saw it everyday - you were in the school" (Teresa, FG#2). For all these students, knowing how busy their coordinating teacher was sometimes made them reluctant to ask for time together. Claire said that her coordinating teacher "never really had any time to talk about her lessons before they were taught" (Narrative #4). Mary-Lou found it "very hard to pin her [CT] down – she was a very busy woman and her time was fleeting" (Narrative #2) while Jamie found her coordinating teacher was "easy to talk to. Even if [she] was busy, I could just ask her if I've got a problem and she goes 'yes that's fine whaea'" (FG#3). While it was the student teachers who required the support and guidance, it was the coordinating teacher who was busier during these placement days.

The partnerships dealt with the issues associated with managing the resource of time in various ways. Sandra wrote about how constructively her coordinating teacher used time during her placement day. She mentioned the use of time to work with her throughout the day. As a result of this, Sandra felt "more valued at a professional level and [consequently felt] a lot more confident within herself" (Narrative #4). UL3 suggested that they needed to be inventive in getting together: "if it should be when the teacher is on duty well then so be it" (Int#1). CT4 reported one instance where her student teacher "came in and took the roll and she did something else because what had happened was she came in first thing in the morning and I wasn't expecting her ... [she offered] to do something to help out which is great" (Int#1). CT3 suggested that an alternative was for them both to "meet for coffee so to speak, like what we do with the staff, that's when our best talking happens is if we meet at [a café] as a staff, have a coffee and just talk" (Int#1). There were certainly many ideas suggested in attempting to

ensure time was available. Five of the student teachers said that their coordinating teacher was always able to find time to help and advise. One student teacher suggested that she spent “up to 10 hours a week” in the company of her coordinating teacher (Collective story #4). Sarah found that “if she appealed to her teacher on a specific issue or problem, her CT was always able to find the time to advise her and help her” (Narrative #3).

Five coordinating teachers talked about the length of time these student teachers were required to spend in school as a positive. CT3 suggested that,

... you have time to get to know the training teacher, they get to know you, they're not frightened, they're not thinking 'Well, what are you going to do next?' – they can come here and be relaxed and they know the context so whatever they plan to do in the classroom they know the kids well, they know the teacher well, they know the routine, they know your expectations of behavior – there are no surprises for them. (Int#1)

These coordinating teachers suggested that within this time, the student teachers not only got to know their placement classroom and school well but they also had time to talk, explore, understand and learn so they “don't mind going out of [the CT's] way to give them everything ... [because they] can see that they are really interested and they want to learn” (CT7, Int#2). Mostly the student teacher and coordinating teacher talked about happenings in the classroom and lessons that needed to be taught but they also talked about personal issues.

Four coordinating teachers talked about the need to make time beyond the classroom to develop a good working relationship with their student teacher. CT4 suggested that her relationship with her student teacher had been close because “you see them more often and you do spend more time with them.... It is more intimate” (Int#2). They suggested many strategies for spending time together to develop their relationship such as: trying to create space for social time together (CT3); talking on the phone in the evening or the weekend (CT7); spending time together in the weekend or after hours at their home (CT7); meeting during the term holidays to catch up (CT5); and having the student teacher come into the classroom or school on days other than the set placement day to catch up with the coordinating teacher or the children (CT10).

Four coordinating teachers were more formal in their approach to talking with their student teacher. CT4 talked about having formal meeting times.

I have far more respect for the person asking to book my time than arriving and wanting to have a discussion because it just doesn't work, you know with meetings and stuff but that's a real issue. As much as you are committed to your student and you want them to do well. (Int#2)

As highlighted in the next section, CT6 believed that the classroom time was for the children (Int#1), so she created time outside of teaching time for her student. CT8 also felt she did not have time (Int#1) in which to talk with her student teacher. For CTs 4, 5, 6 and 8 the talking time needed to be outside of class time such as before and after school and during breaks such as lunchtime. CTs 3, 7 and 10 also frequently spent time at morning tea talking about practice and university topics. UL3 strived to get the message across that talking time was a critical factor in managing workload in MMP.

CTs 4, 6 and 7 shared some formal strategies that they used in order to facilitate effective communication and support. CT6 had the student teacher write questions on pieces of paper (“no matter how silly it looks” (Int#1)) that she left for her so they could talk about the ideas. CT7 had a book that “just sits on the desk all the time and she just writes anything in there so that we can discuss it when we have some free time or I write anything in there that I think of so that its discussed” (Int#1). Managing the demands of time was challenging with so many things for these teachers to be doing throughout the day. CT4 required her student teacher made a formal appointment with her as she found this very effective from her own past experiences:

I had a coordinating teacher who was like that, I would say can we talk about this, and she would say to me “yep let’s go and check the diary and make a time” ... she was just amazing. The principal walked into the office one day and she said, “sorry I am talking with [student name] now, you’ll have to wait”, so I felt pretty valued and she was amazing. (Int#2)

On reflection, CTs 3, 6 and 8 felt they needed to talk more, directly, about the student teachers’ own experiences, issues and practices – about themselves. With so many things to talk about, such as self, lessons, practice and assignments, they also sometimes needed a space that was more private.

The coordinating teachers needed assistance to manage the demands placed on them by students. An information booklet outlining the programme and placement requirements was provided to inform each coordinating teacher. Five coordinating teachers commented on the value of this booklet in helping support

their student teacher, while others suggested more would have been helpful: CT4 said “The School of Education could go a bit further in providing more information to the coordinating teacher ... a booklet of suggestions as to structure and ideas of what to do would be a really neat thing” (Int#1). CT10 agreed saying, “I must admit I was given the booklet and maybe read it, but I tended to ask [my student teacher] a lot about expectations and things like that and we would go through the book every now and again” (Int#1). CT6 said, “it would be a help if coordinating teachers had more information about the course structure, ... you know what has been studied and what the focus of their current study is and what’s coming next” (Int#2).

Having a coordinating teacher who was able to support the student teacher’s academic study would have been helpful in terms of managing the demands of this school-based placement. Jamie suggested it “really would help if [coordinating teachers] knew a bit about what you’re learning at uni” (FG#3). Teresa wrote that her coordinating teacher “sometimes brainstormed ideas with her to get the thoughts flowing. She was always there for her if she had a question” (Narrative #3). CT10 felt she needed a general overview of the student’s progress and “what they have to cover to be able to support them” (Int#1). UL3 also commented that effective coordinating teachers “seem to appreciate or understand the idea of what this programme is about ... while some of them get very confused between the associate teacher’s role and the coordinating teacher’s role” (Int#1). The support that Jamie needed early on was help with her study rather than with teaching. This information was not available from her coordinating teacher. Sarah, Claire and Teresa agreed this support helped them to better understand the MMP programme.

At the beginning when returning to study had been hard, her CT had read her essays and provided suggestions to edit them, which Sarah had found invaluable. Sarah felt it had helped that her CT had herself returned to study a few years previously. (Sarah, Narrative #3)

CT7 said she worked hard at being “supportive in what is happening in their personal lives as well but sometimes you’ve got to be like ‘Oh come on, get over it’. I don’t allow for them coming to school unplanned ... I just won’t accept that” (Int#1). CTs 3 and 7 considered their student teacher’s whole life when offering help and support: “Is there something that is going on that even just the

fact that we understand might help them to make it easier” (CT3, Int#1). UL2 reported that when the coordinating teacher was “aware of the problem and has done what they can to help” (Int#1) then usually the student teachers got on with their study.

The teaching of lessons was one of the core requirements for the student teachers during this school-based placement and generally these coordinating teachers allocated little time to assist with lesson preparation. As CT3 said, “I don’t take time to set up their lessons or get resources for them or enquire about things [their preparation]” (Int#1) as she expected they would use time to do this themselves. The influence of the coordinating teachers was certainly essential in managing the demands of the placement and the other partners needed to be mindful of this. Because of the differing approaches student teachers needed to determine their own coordinating teacher’s perspective, especially when it came to classroom teaching time.

#### *5.3.4 Utilisation of classroom teaching time*

As mentioned briefly above, there were two different attitudes to the coordinating teachers’ use of teaching time to talk with their student teachers about learning teaching. On the one hand, coordinating teachers included their student teacher continuously in the daily lessons and talked with them at various times. Four coordinating teachers felt that during class was the most effective time to talk with their student teacher. CT3 suggested that it was the way that she runs her classroom – “I’m not always actively seen to be teaching. So I can talk about things on the spot and I have time to share” (Int#1). She would stop and talk – “all the time” (Int#1). CT8 also attempted to make lots of opportunities to talk during class: “Even in the change or when you are doing something you talk about it” (Int#1). CT2 said she would even “tell the kids to twiddle their thumbs for a minute” (Int#1) while she talked with her student teacher. This idea was echoed by CT7 who said it was “a whole day” (Int#1) affair. These four coordinating teachers would snatch moments throughout the day. Each felt they had the “freedom to be able to talk in the classroom”, where the teacher can identify critical moments in a lesson and “focus their attention on them” (CT3, Int#1). But this practice was not commonplace across all placements.



Two of these four coordinating teachers gave the impression that they viewed their student teacher as a working partner in their class and so created time to talk about teaching and learning throughout the day. For example, CT3 (entry level teacher) said,

If you've got your student teacher working in your room as like with groups and giving them your math's group and your reading group, you'll both be teaching all the time. When would you ever get to collaborate and share the moment and that's what I think is nice. That's probably how I operate even amongst the children in the class. I stop and talk, all the time. There's not a lot of small group activity going on where you are tied up all the time. I don't like to be tied up, if I'm tied up how can I teach that child about that situation that's going on. So I sort of model that really, with the teacher free so you can talk about things and talk about what's happening. (Int#1)

CTs 2 and 3 felt that their strategy of "talking on the run" in class time was an advantage because they get to talk about things as they were occurring (CT3, Int#1).

Four other coordinating teachers considered that class time was 'sacred' and so would not devote any teaching time to their student teacher. They were committed to working with the children. CT6 (entry level teacher) said...

The time in the classroom belongs to the children. The teacher trainee cannot take it. It belongs to the children. But if the teacher does find time to do a bit of talking, they [student] need to listen really carefully because the teacher made the decision to steal the time from the children and give it to them. The talking time is outside of school. (Int#1)

These four coordinating teachers talked about having to manage so many things in a day of teaching that, "there is never a time when you haven't got work waiting – there is always work waiting" (CT6, Int#1). It appeared that some coordinating teachers could organise and manage this and still have plenty of time for their student while others found this a real challenge.

There's no extra time, there's no time ... there's no time allocated to doing this at all. No. If I have a student then I've got to sort that out – No, there's no down time, I have to meet out of my classroom, there's no down time, nothing at all. The school's not given anything. We do get paid to have them. (CT8, Int#1)

Six coordinating teachers talked about using other time slots to talk as well. They all mentioned the breaks such as morning tea and lunch times where they could walk or sit together.

I always spend my morning tea, like we will come over here [staff room] and have a coffee but we always discuss everything.... Then she teaches it then we

sit and discuss if it went okay. So its a whole day, you know your morning tea, lunchtime and after school sometimes. It is a good chunk of time. (CT7, Int#1)

Four coordinating teachers said that most of their discussions happened during casual conversations. CT10 reported on instances like,

... when you have finished the lesson and when you walk together to morning tea. We didn't always sit together ... we walked back together and at lunch we had 5 or 10 minutes as you were cleaning up.... There are times when you are both free and you do it then. You try and make time, do it whenever you could. I think if you make formal, routine times, that doesn't work but if you get chatting at spare times – we both talk a lot. There are lots of opportunities. (Int#1)

As classroom teachers, the coordinating teachers were always busy first thing in the morning and immediately after school. It was suggested that the student teachers needed to use such times to be organised, supportive and involved, to demonstrate their understanding that these teachers were “doing something on top of, as well as, not instead of [their core work]”. So it takes a lot of that commitment going into that and knowing what you are going to have to do” (CT1, Int#2).

CTs 5 and 8 would have liked some release time from their classroom teaching responsibilities to be able to work with their student teacher but five coordinating teachers did not think that release time was appropriate. They coped with the added demands of a student teacher in other ways. CT3 said,

I don't need any release time for my students. If you said '[name] you're having a student a day a week, you can have a day a month to do whatever' to me I wouldn't be using it for the student anyway because they don't take that time. But that's how I work. (Int#1)

ULs 1, 3 and 4 said that being involved in a classroom should be considered a reciprocal arrangement by the student teachers. For CTs 2, 3 and 6, having another adult in the class meant they could “share things with and talk things through. That to me is a huge support” (CT3, Int#1). Four other coordinating teachers said they got support from their student teacher although did not discuss this explicitly. Six of these teachers talked about the new ideas that the students brought to the class and school and CT6 appealed to the student teachers to consider how helpful they had been:

If they can think about how they can support the teacher, they can be a huge support and how they do it. If they actively reinforce the routines, the things that should happen, the everyday things. This can be a huge support. (Int#1)

In return for the time provided by the teachers whether in class or beyond, the coordinating teachers thought the student teachers should be developing an awareness of the classroom and responsibilities. While the student teachers could make life easier for the coordinating teacher, the involvement of other base-school staff members was also considered helpful in managing demands.

### *5.3.5 Involvement of other school-based staff*

Six student teachers found other teachers in their base-school were also very supportive in managing their placement (Collective stories #3 and #4). Sarah said she “found the whole school [supportive] when you go in as a MMP student, especially in small schools. I found that all the teachers are interested in what you are doing” (FG#2). Helen also commented that, “They always say ‘If you need any help just come and ask us’” (FG#1) and Jamie talked about asking around – “just out of casual conversation the other teachers around the school” (FG#2). CT3 said that she tried “to put [the student teachers] on to people and give them the support network” (Int#1). CT5 also confirmed that her support came about when she introduced the student teacher “to other staff who ... they could perhaps work with, ask questions of” (Int#2). UL2 affirmed the practice of “using the whole school as a support network rather than just the CT, in other words going and looking elsewhere” (Int#1). UL1 also reported about such a ‘community’ and felt that “where that has happened, it’s been a pretty smooth ride, almost the perfect model” (Int#2).

Sarah, Margaret and Teresa found that other teachers in their base-schools were excellent help. They often talked with other teachers about specific topics and issues, both through their own initiative and because their coordinating teacher pointed them that way. CT3 found it easier to “direct them to successful teachers that have trained in this way [MMP] to give them that support” (Int#1). Mary-Lou wrote about utilising other staff members in the base-school as valuable resources (Narrative #4). This concept was endorsed by UL1: “The whole school is so beneficial” (Int#2).

Six coordinating teachers highlighted their base-school colleagues as being supportive for them also: “... the support would be there if I had a problem with a student. There is always a support network here based on my own school” (CT8,

Int#1). CT2 highlighted her principal as being “pretty good”, along with the “rest of the staff you know, if there’s something you want they’ll find it” (Int#1). CT10 also mentioned the “whole school” (Int#1) which UL1 commented on during interview #1: “the staff understand it [MMP] too, so that when their class might be needed then they are just as supportive [for] the coordinating teacher and just as happy to accept [the student teacher]. At the same time there’s that whole village approach<sup>6</sup>”. In CT7’s experiences, none of her colleagues ever suggested, “Oh that’s [her] student and she’s the one getting paid. She can do it” (Int#1). They all took some interest in her student teacher. The fact that support for the coordinating teachers came primarily from the base-school was endorsed in Collective story #2.

Collective stories #2 and #4 highlighted that all these student teachers indicated that they expected they would get support from their base-school, that the school would provide all that was needed for their practical experiences “to help make it real” (Helen, Narrative #4). Sarah said she had a lot of support from the school because that was initially where she “helped in the class and they sort of said ‘yes you should do this’ and they were quite committed, all of them, principal downward” (FG#1). Six student teachers talked about how their principal was supportive (Collective story #4). Sandra was “most surprised at the level of faith that was evident in support of her decision” (Narrative #2) as indicated by her principal’s actions and words. Margaret, Mary-Lou and Catherine also found their principals and schools very supportive and accommodating, inspiring them to continue their journeys.

These student teachers supported (Collective story #2) Sarah’s comment that the base-schools were supportive of the MMP programme and people associated with it, especially those schools that had ex-MMP students now on staff such as was experienced by Catherine, Mary-Lou and Teresa (Collective story #3). UL2 suggested that this was true “so long as the student is performing pretty well [and] that the relationships between the school and the student are pretty good. Very supportive!” (Int#1). UL2 stated this was especially so where “it was the school

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<sup>6</sup> From the African proverb that reminds us that it takes “a whole village to raise a child” concluding that it will take a whole school to educate a teacher. This implies that supporting the learning of individual student teachers is a task for many, something too special to be left as the responsibility of just one ‘villager’.

that was one of the driving forces in getting them into the programme. So there's a lot of support there" (Int#1). Sandra and Teresa felt that their long-term association with the school (six years for Teresa) meant that they "knew the school had supported MMP students in previous years" (Teresa, Narrative #2) and this gave them the confidence that the school "would provide all the support necessary" (Sandra, FG#1).

The concept of learning teaching through a 'whole village approach' by the placement school came through strongly from these participants. The findings show that the larger the village, the more people that each partner could rely on for support, the more confident the student teachers appeared about meeting the challenges. The village concept also extended into the university.

#### *5.3.6 Understanding and support from university-based staff*

Studying online was a completely new experience for these student teachers and so the idea of communicating only via the Internet was 'a little scary'. As well as the afore-mentioned sources of support and information that enabled student teachers to manage their demands, Helen, Jamie, Sarah and Mary-Lou talked about their direct contact with university-based staff from the University of Waikato to find help. The student teachers interacted with two groups of lecturers: the course lecturers who dealt with the study, teaching and learning aspects of their own online course and therefore, in most cases had no direct link with the base-schools; and the university lecturers<sup>7</sup> (UL) who were responsible for the placements, meeting face-to-face, communicating and maintaining a relationship with the base-school, coordinating teacher and student teacher. Little was reported about course lecturers.

Each of the university lecturers considered that they had sufficient time needed to know and understand each student teacher in their 'patch' (allocated area). The four university lecturers agreed that the times they met with the students were "pretty regular, even if not formal" (UL2, Int#1). UL1 talked about instances of meeting with student teachers as a cluster as well as meeting them in their schools and on campus:

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<sup>7</sup> Referred to as liaison lecturers in the programme

They would set up a meeting at one of the houses and we would have morning or afternoon tea together and have a couple of hours together. In those years the word liaison, if you like, seemed to have more impact, and of course I suppose I haven't got as many students either at the moment so maybe that lessens the effect of impact. (UL1, Int#2)

The university lecturers' communication with each student teacher in their area varied and often the role was more about putting each student in contact with the people who would be of greatest assistance to them.

Teresa found the approachability and support of the university lecturers helped her manage her work in MMP. Catherine believed that these lecturers were "supportive people who she could communicate with regarding queries, ideas, help and feedback if needed or wanted" (Narrative #3). Sarah, Margaret, Catherine and Claire reported that they had a good relationship with their university lecturer and UL2 suggested that the student teachers "see me as a friendly, approachable, helpful person" (Int#1) while UL3 wondered whether the student teachers needed more support from the university lecturers. In the experiences of these students, their university lecturer "was supportive of [their] needs and also made sure everyone involved understood [and was organised]" (Collective story #3).

CT8 hoped that her student teacher had support from the university because she felt the student needed "somewhere to go back to if it doesn't work out down here - that there has to be someone supporting her" (Int#1). Teresa, Claire and Sarah expected support from the university to be available to manage aspects of their programme. Teresa wrote that she believed the university would oversee her placement and attend to her needs: "Teresa was quite unfamiliar with computers so she expected the SOE<sup>8</sup> to include some form of tutorial to accompany the online learning forum because there had been no computer literacy requirements for the course – just computer operating requirements" (Narrative #2). Unfortunately, these expectations were not always met (Collective story #2). UL1 was astonished by this comment, suggesting that the student teachers and schools s/he worked closely with were "full of praise for the staff support that they're getting. And particularly from people like [university lecturers] being in there from the outset and so heavily involved. So I was surprised to see that" (Int#1).

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<sup>8</sup> SOE is an abbreviation for School of Education

University support for the student teachers also came indirectly through supporting the coordinating teachers and base-schools. When it came to the university's contact with the coordinating teacher and base-school, university lecturers varied in their view. UL1 felt this was crucial time and often spent "one and half hours on a first liaison visit to a student, particularly if it's a first time [base] school" (Int#1). None of the other university lecturers talked about the length of time spent but they agreed about the impact of the visits. In UL2's experiences the coordinating teachers "made the time to sit down and talk, whether it's in the classroom or most often out of the classroom" (Int#1) to ensure the partnership was working. UL3 suggested that meeting with,

... the teachers in particular at times that they can meet, has been really good, and quite often if they're committed [the school] will arrange for release time for the teacher ... it just makes that pathway a little smoother so that you can sit down and have a one-on-one or a very effective discussion. (Int#2)

ULs 3 and 4 suggested there might be the need for more time to be in the school at a time that suits the coordinating teacher. However, in some schools UL4 found it difficult to "get past the principal" and so spent "not a lot of time with the teachers because that access was not opened up and the teachers were 'too busy' or you got a very brief encounter" (Int#2). UL4 felt this impacted on the student teacher's ability to manage their placement. ULs 1 and 3 emphasised the point that the level of communication between university lecturer and coordinating teacher was determined by the teacher's needs. Where the teacher was seen as requiring greater assistance, then the two visits a year were seen as too far apart. Where the coordinating teacher was competent, the current communications were considered adequate.

Typically the support for the coordinating teacher and base-school from the university came from an early visit by a university lecturer. In some instances this visit was supplemented by an information letter from specific course lecturers to "let them know why we're doing what we're doing because ... it's important to try" (UL3, Int#1) but this was not reported as standard practice or effective. The university lecturers all wondered about the effectiveness of their support. Four coordinating teachers were not so confident about such support from the university and UL3 commented on the need for the university to involve the coordinating teachers more, "to see the purpose of what [the lecturers] are doing

[in their papers]. Once the purpose is explained I find that the problems go away, people can see that there is a reason” (Int#2). CT6 agreed with this concept, saying it,

... would be useful knowing what you have actually been doing and are doing and will be doing next. It would help the teacher work out the stage of learning and the knowledge of the student, ... then maybe the teacher could focus on those things to help facilitate current learning, outside the [practical teaching] tasks. There is a wide range of things to be able to just focus on all things that will help with that current study. (Int#2)

CT5 would have liked someone from the university to “sit down at the beginning of the term” to inform her so that she could “relate it to what is happening in the classroom” (Int#2). CT8 agreed that there was the need for “more information. Getting the university to ‘sell’ themselves to the schools if they want a placement” (Int#1), to communicate expectations, support and resourcing. She suggested that this might happen between the principal and the lecturer but it needed to be directly with her as coordinating teacher. Three of the coordinating teachers were not familiar with a ‘face’ for the university. UL2 conceded that the coordinating teachers work “without really that much help from us” (Int#2). The coordinating teachers and university lecturers varied in their view on how well supported they felt but the lecturers considered the booklet, as a resource, was adequate for the job (as reported in section 5.3.3; p.151). Both coordinating teachers and university lecturers considered the tension between not enough and too much information being provided was a fine line.

Opinion about how well the university currently resourced the partners in order for them to meet their own school-based placement challenges, varied among students, coordinating teachers and university lecturers. However, opinion about the need for support from the university in managing the placement was consistently positive. Where resources were provided for all partners to manage the placement these participants perceived it as being of value. Such resources included attention to time allocations, timely provision of information, the availability of funds to support the necessary activities and, most importantly, accessibility to support people to ensure that student teachers, coordinating teachers and university lecturers were encouraged and assisted. As these student teachers highlighted their learning style as co-constructors of teaching knowledge, they needed to create opportunities to talk and share with others – those in school,



at university and locally. They reported that talking and sharing enabled them to better manage all that was happening in their programme and lives. To achieve this the student teachers needed to be involved with a range of groups that could assist them with meeting the challenges.

#### ***5.4 Partnerships through commitment to an ITE placement***

The level of commitment to these school-based partnerships varied depending on the degree of contact and involvement of each individual. There needed to be commitment to teaching, learning, learning teaching, children and the placement. According to the participants, the intensity of commitment varied between student teacher, coordinating teacher, university lecturer, principal, course lecturer, and other staff members involved. Such commitment may be viewed as a reflection of associated philosophies, attitudes, values and beliefs. This section explores the narratives, finding how the participants perceived commitment to: ongoing learning; working with and for children; learning teaching; and dedication to the school-based placement and ITE programme.

##### *5.4.1 Choosing to continue learning*

The motivation for Claire, Helen and Mary-Lou to commit to their study was to “become qualified” and continue their learning. Six of the student teachers believed they always had the “ability and commitment to study”. They indicated commitment to their own learning in a range of ways. Sarah liked talking and loved it when people “got enthused about experiences of teaching and of learning” (FG#1). Helen and Sandra felt that their commitment was a lot to do with learning about themselves, “about finding yourself” (Helen, FG#2). They “actually enjoyed [the] commitment and involvement, liked being appreciated for that commitment and involvement” (Sandra, FG#2). This commitment to learning was endorsed by four of the coordinating teachers and two university lecturers, relating the attitude of their student teachers to the concept of ‘lifelong learning’, which they considered an important characteristic of teachers in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. UL4 thought the student teachers,

... exemplified their commitment to learning by the way in which they organise their study, the way in which they interact with their colleagues. They are people who don't [just] appear at 9 o'clock. They are people who are there,

they are prepared, their material is ready for their coordinating teacher. All of them have a clear idea of where they are heading. (Int#2)

Five coordinating teachers highlighted the fact that as people they were aware of the need to be learning new knowledge and skills continually. They indicated that they have high expectations of themselves and that they thought of themselves as “life-long learners”. CTs 2, 3 and 7 stressed the need for “personal growth”, to be showing the children and student teacher that they consider their own learning as being important. Five coordinating teachers did not want to be seen as teachers who just “sit back”, without constantly working to improve themselves. CT7 was adamant that “teaching changes all the time, it is never ever the same” so she needed to keep abreast of the times,

... everyone is saying ‘Oh God we have got to change, why do we have to change?’ Well that's what education is - keeping up with the trends. So we are always learning. It is not only the kids that are learning, we are learning with the kids what the trends are - to teach it to the kids. (Int#2)

CTs 3, 6 and UL2 thought that it was also important for all lecturers to model that they have a commitment to learning themselves. UL2 suggested that lecturers should also be doing “the best that we can for the students we’ve got” (Int#2).

#### *5.4.2 Commitment to working with children and learning teaching*

A noticeable feature with these MMP student teachers was that all of them brought earlier experiences of working with children, whether as a teacher, teacher aide, parent helper, or their own children. They had worked closely with a school in one of these roles and therefore had a better idea of what it means to focus on children and learning. Jamie suggested that it “comes down to our commitment to the learning of the children that we work with” (FG#2). CT3, CT8, UL3 and UL4 said that it was very important that student teachers have a passion for working with children and that seeing children achieve must be “a driving force behind becoming a good teacher – and it’s hard work” (CT8, Int#1). Jamie spoke openly about the “commitment that teachers do make to teach their kids” (FG#1). UL4 reiterated this point, noting that one of the things observed was the view, “here is our classroom and this is what is important for these kids to be doing” (Int#2). While all the teachers might endorse this, CTs 3, 7 and 8 specifically highlighted the idea that commitment to children was essential:

I think that that is a really important part of teaching; to have that passion and have that belief that teaching is a great thing and to want to be around children. If they're going into teaching for other reasons, well – teaching is about all that – passion for children - kind of the be all and end all. (CT3, Int#1)

But UL3 cautioned that students,

... can like children or children can gravitate towards [them] but that can lead to a feel-good factor rather than being able to think how am I going to help this child move from where she or he is at this particular point in time in whatever they are doing. (Int#1)

Helen, Sarah and Margaret believed they were driven by a passion, 'a passion for teaching'. For many of these student teachers their commitment and involvement started within their local school before they even started learning teaching, mostly where their own children attended. This contact with a school enabled them to realise that going into teacher education required a commitment "to the whole learning thing" (Sandra, FG#3). Helen's words epitomised the feelings of the others:

I personally couldn't have gone into this without really, really wanting to be a teacher because it is such a hard profession, such a hard thing to do that me personally I'd have to be passionate about it. And that's what got me through the first year - was purely the love of wanting to do it. (FG#1)

Catherine and Sarah were also firm in regard to a commitment to learning teaching, holding this "unconscious", strong commitment responsible for driving them into doing their "teacher training". Helen's observation of her coordinating teacher endorsed this:

My CT had been teaching for [a number of] years and she was still so passionate about it and did it so well and was doing all this new stuff. She changed with the times, wasn't stuck in her old ways and all these kind of things and it was really good to see. (FG#3)

This concept was supported by five of the coordinating teachers who showed an open commitment to their teaching. CTs 2, 3 and 7 emphasised that teaching is not a '9 am to 3 pm daily' job but suggested that teachers were constantly investigating, changing, testing, striving and risking, "for the best for their kids – doing the extra mile" (CT3, Int#1). As CT7 said, "that's just teaching though" (Int#1), it really is "just a love for the job, isn't it?" (CT2, Int#1).

Four coordinating teachers talked about the need to commit to the teaching profession, understanding that this was "not a job, it's a career" (CT6, Int#2)). They were adamant that these student teachers needed to know early that teaching

was not a “9 to 3 job”. These coordinating teachers agreed with the suggestion of having “an obligation to grow and rejuvenate the profession” (Collective story #4). Helen endorsed this attitude when she said,

It’s a teaching profession so teachers are willing to teach other teachers as well, you know. And that’s the whole gist of the profession really. Like nurses will care for the families medically, it’s that kind of profession that runs over to other areas as well not just children I suppose. (FG#2)

UL3 saw the same aspect. It was a commitment,

... beyond our programme in some respects. There’s commitment to bringing people into the profession itself, and are quite happy, if you like, to be involved in that aspect of teacher education I guess. That regeneration of the profession ... that seems to me to be really important. (Int#2)

### *5.4.3 Dedication to the placement and programme*

CTs 5 and 7 suggested that commitment to the school-based placement was exhibited in a student teacher’s regular and involved attendance at their base-school. Unfortunately, with some student teachers,

... they turn up at lessons and you can see that they haven’t even done the work at night time. They turn up to do a lesson and they haven’t done the background work, they haven’t even planned for the lesson properly. They have just quickly scribbled down what you’ve said to them in your meeting and think they can teach from that. (CT7, Int#2)

In spite of the passion claimed by most of these student teachers, there were lapses in their base-school attendance and where such “looseness” in attendance was frequent, it was seen as a reflection of the student teacher’s lack of commitment to their one-day a week school-based placement. Commitment to the placement was evident in their attitude to teaching, learning and the programme in general. ULs 2, 4 and CT6 talked about student teachers who showed real commitment to their placement and base-school. UL2 claimed the MMP students were different from the on-campus students in that they showed “an obligation to their base-school, and a commitment to that because it is a much closer relationship and a much stronger tie than for our on-campus students” (Int#2). A general sentiment among the coordinating teachers and university lecturers was echoed in UL4’s words regarding the committed MMP students:

There are two bits to [their preparation] it seems to me: one is to meet the student’s needs in terms of their learning for their teacher education programme. The other is they know the teacher that they are working with, they know the parameters that they are working within and they provide the best

deal so that together they work on situations where the student is not planning something in total isolation. (Int#2)

Dedication to a placement required commitment from all three partners. If the coordinating teachers were not looked after, or if student teachers did not show their commitment, the coordinating teacher would “sometimes feel very disillusioned about the process” (UL3, Int#2) and their enthusiasm for their placement responsibilities would “dwindle away”. CT8 suggested there was a need for “more support and more talking about what it is like to have a student” (Int#1). The idea of the university lecturer visiting the school and spending more time doing this, appealed to UL3. UL3 found meetings with the student teachers and coordinating teachers as being a really good indication of their commitment:

Quite often a school will arrange for release time for the teacher, that sort of thing, it just makes that pathway a little smoother so that you can sit down and have a one on one or a very effective discussion. Then for me, because you can cover a lot of ground in that case and there is not that worry or niggle about what’s going on out there. So it does take that commitment and I find that's quite useful because it tends to give some mana<sup>9</sup> to the coordinating teacher’s role, who takes quite seriously the relationship with our students. (UL3, Int#2)

All university lecturers felt that their role was an important “part of the triangle” and therefore a good liaison team was needed. UL2 talked about all university staff members having a professional commitment “and on top of that we have an extra professional commitment to this particular programme, for one reason or another” (UL2, Int#2).

As also referred to in sections 5.3.5 (p. 160) and 5.8.3 (p. 203), several participants were clear that the strongest situations seemed “when it is a whole school commitment” (UL1, Int#2) to the student teacher and the placement. In their work the university lecturers were sure that when the principal and whole school were involved and interested in the student teacher’s development as well, that it often helped things to happen.

I guess at the end of the day that comes down from the principal and how the principal is feeling about having that student in their school. Sometimes the principals, as well as the schools, are quite committed to a person rather than to a beginning teacher or professional, or even a programme. It wouldn’t matter which programme they were in they would still be committed to that person. That can be quite tricky to deal with sometimes because they are so adamant about this person. (UL3, Int#2)

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<sup>9</sup> Mana is the Māori word closely equivalent to status, authority, reputation or position.

Sarah, Catherine and Claire commented that they were aware that all university staff members were concerned about them as students. These student teachers anticipated that if they required support for learning in their placement then it would be available. Claire wrote that she felt she had the support of the university in making sure that her placement would be ‘good’.

She knew that she would have visits from a representative of the university to make sure that the relationships were working and to communicate with the principal to make sure that she was fitting into the school well. (Narrative #2)

Four coordinating teachers were not totally aware of *how* committed the lecturers were to supporting their student teachers – it appeared they were referring here to the course lecturers. Three of the university lecturers talked of their commitment to their student teachers and shared personal examples of how this looked in practice, for example, UL1 said, “Even though my liaison is minimal I always leave them my phone number” (Int#1).

All partners reported that demonstrating commitment to their school-based placement responsibilities was important. It was crucial that the student teacher ‘felt’ the commitment of their coordinating teacher and university lecturer to teaching, learning, children and the placement. Likewise for the coordinating teachers and university lecturers, that they saw the commitment of the other partners. This, in a sense, gave each partner confidence that others would fulfill their obligations.

### ***5.5 Clarifying the partners’ roles and responsibilities***

If each of the partners in a school-based placement is to fulfill their obligations, then they must be sure that others both know and are capable of carrying out their role and responsibilities. Essential to managing the demands of teaching, study, family and work was not over-working or having to do someone else’s tasks. Knowing that the partners performed their role and responsibilities competently was essential to work-life balance in these distance school-based placements. This section first investigates the student teachers’ role as learners. Second, it presents the important role that student colleagues played for these MMP students. The findings from the narratives about the critical role of coordinating teacher as mentor are then presented followed by the role of

university-based partners. Finally, the importance of student teachers transitioning between roles is explored.

### *5.5.1 Student teachers as learners and more*

At the start of their school-based placement Sarah, Claire and Jamie felt that their role was not at all straightforward. At times they were pushed beyond their comfort zone by being asked to step into a new role, such as when Sarah “was asked if [she] would mind the class while the teacher dealt with an urgent matter” (Narrative #2). At other times, they just seemed to play the roles that were “assigned”. They found that they assumed many different roles and that changing of roles was a constant (confirmed in Collective story #3). However, none of the roles was about being ‘in charge’, giving the ‘orders’ as Claire and Sarah had in previous experiences. These student teachers all acknowledged that there was a range of responsibilities and characteristics associated with their role (such as independence, organisation, initiative, flexibility) but initially they “did not realise that [they] would have to do so much individual research into finding out what had to [be done]” (Helen, Narrative #2).

As reported in Collective story #3, all the student teachers agreed that their main role was that of learner. CT6 commented that she thought that “sounded so limiting” (Int#1) as she considered that they were really learner-teachers. It was not that they did not take responsibility for the role, but that they just did not give any obvious thought to what this entailed – they just got on with things. This issue was written about in the narratives of Sarah, Catherine, Claire and Jamie, although defining their own role and responsibilities, was not something that they spent time thinking about. Catherine affirmed in conversation that her “role would have been as learner, a total learner” (FG#3). Claire wrote that she “wanted to be treated as a teacher in training” (Narrative #2), wanting to learn about the practice of teaching.

These student teachers were participant learners. Right from the beginning, Sarah, Teresa and Claire believed that their student teacher responsibilities would involve valuable time in the base-school and classroom “observing and participating in classroom life” (Teresa, Narrative #2) which would give them insights into their chosen career. Claire had “really wanted to be a part of the

classroom and the school environment to experience it and all its responsibilities” (Narrative #2), she was eager to be a part of everyday school life. Along with Sarah, this led Claire to believe that they would be “learners, like the children” and this perhaps narrowed their perception of their role.

While the ‘teacher’ aspect of their role for these student teachers was an “unknown” quality, they felt that with support and guidance from their base-school they would be eased into the responsibilities. Like most other student teachers in this study, Sarah was “a little bit bewildered about it all - ‘Oh my gosh what am I going to be expected to do when I go to this base-school. Was I expected to be a teacher aide, was I expected to be just an observer?’ - I can remember wondering what my role was going to be” (FG#1).

### *5.5.2 Student colleagues as advisors*

By far the most important role played by anyone in the initial months of the programme for Teresa, Mary-Lou, Sandra and Helen was their study-group peers. These student teachers looked to their peers for advice and guidance. The role that these people played included support for academic, social and personal wellbeing. Predominantly, their colleagues played the roles of friend, companion, helper and supporter for these student teachers (affirmed in Collective story #3). Jamie, Catherine and Teresa looked to peers to provide advice or clarification regarding their study and placement. Helen suggested that “you need kind of a mixture of partners” (FG#3) including peers. Just sitting down or phoning to discuss a task helped Teresa and Catherine to start formulating ideas. These student teachers were grateful for the advice of their colleagues.

Seven student teachers had access to a second-year student in their area who was able to give them good advice about the overall programme. These second-year students “knew exactly where [the first-year students] were coming from!” (Sandra, FG#3) They were able to give hints about the online programme that were useful; places and Internet sites that they found useful in sourcing information. In looking back, Helen “realised that the information was there right from the start, she just wasn’t looking in the right places. She also didn’t ask for help (or know who to ask for help)” (FG#3) as the role of others around her was not clear while she was so busy getting herself set up.



### 5.5.3 School-based coordinating teachers as mentors

While the student teachers had not given any real thought to their own role, Helen, Teresa, Catherine and Jamie anticipated that their coordinating teacher would know about her own role and about the MMP programme. As highlighted in section 5.3.3 (p. 151), these student teachers placed a lot of faith in the coordinating teacher knowing and understanding what they would be doing in their teacher education programme and base-school time (Collective story #3). This was especially so for Teresa whose base-school had supported other MMP students in past years. ULs 1, 2 and 3 confirmed this view, suggesting that in their experiences the teachers read the ‘booklet’ and had a “pretty good idea” of what things this programme required. In their anticipation of starting this programme, Helen, Teresa and Jamie assumed that university staff and their coordinating teacher had talked about their role and the requirements of each student teacher during their school-based days. Teresa knew that an information pack had been sent “to the school outlining the co-coordinating teacher’s role in her tuition” (Narrative #2). However, CT3 considered it was the student teacher’s responsibility to know these things, not hers,

And I tell them I don’t. I say ‘Look I don’t know’. I don’t take a lot of notice of the study that they need to be doing and that could be almost seen as being negative – if you really cared about that I’d know about their study. (Int#1)

Seven of the nine student teachers expected that the principal role of their coordinating teacher was that of mentor, rather like “another tutor, able to assist in any problems and difficulties she might have” (Sarah, Narrative #2). Sarah had anticipated that her coordinating teacher was reasonably well informed about both their roles, but that was not the reality. This coordinating teacher role was seen as one of giving advice, ideas and criticism (Jamie), showing how to create an enriching learning environment (Helen), modelling best practice (Teresa) and being a supportive facilitator (Catherine). In essence, they expected their coordinating teacher to “inspire them to be a teacher through modelling how good it can be” (Helen, Narrative #3). CT3 and UL3 said the coordinating teacher’s main role was to support the student teacher in their practical tasks and transition into the school.

The student teachers indicated that they needed leadership from a knowledgeable and articulate teacher who could give feedback, and suggest and

justify alterations and enhancements. They often required help with aspects of teaching and in particular, in the first semester Helen, Teresa and Catherine needed guidance with lesson planning. There were several partnerships where the coordinating teacher was leader in at least one aspect of the school, such as curriculum leader of literacy, and Claire and Catherine said their coordinating teachers' advanced knowledge through their leadership meant that when 'talking teaching' they brought a lot of information and new ideas.

All of these student teachers anticipated that their coordinating teacher would be knowledgeable in her role as a teacher, a model of best practice (Collective story #2). Helen, Teresa and Jamie expected the coordinating teacher to be able to answer their questions relevant to her teaching tasks. Teresa expected that, "she would receive the guidance and assistance she might need to carry out the subject requirements" (Narrative #2). All these students expected this to be one role of their coordinating teacher (Collective story #2) but agreed with Helen that they "should not ask too much of the teacher" (FG#2). CTs 2, 4, 5 and 8 agreed that they were responsible for providing support and guidance in teaching practice.

All the student teachers agreed that a critical role was for the coordinating teacher to provide opportunities for their learning and teaching in the classroom and school (Collective stories #2 & #3). As stated earlier, they needed to be given the opportunities to try out new ideas in a safe learning environment, to observe and practise teaching. CTs 1, 3 and 6 agreed that they should be facilitating such opportunities, offering "a classroom with students that are well behaved, well routined, including teaching and learning ... as long as my class is functioning and organised and it's the best place for that teacher to learn" (CT3, Int#1). CTs 2, 3 and 8 agreed that their roles were all mixed together but it was about awareness of the student teacher's needs and providing support.

Helen felt that good coordinating teachers took on the obligations with each student teacher. Most of these coordinating teachers were reported, by either student teachers or university lecturers or through their own interviews, as being persuaded into their role by their principal. However one or two did volunteer. Helen said "You know they've said 'Yes I'm taking on a student, I'm taking on all responsibility that comes with it' – so then I thought okay they are here to

help” (FG#2) and that gave her security. CT4 reiterated that she had a responsibility toward her “student to do the best you can and to help them to succeed” (Int#1). ULs 2 and 3 confirmed that good coordinating teachers had this sense of responsibility – it was as natural as their working with children, student teachers and other teachers. UL3 suggested that,

... the not-so-successful ones, it seems to me often haven’t conceptualize the importance of what their role is so they don’t see the significance of it for themselves. They haven’t thought really deeply about what it means to have somebody in your school for two years for example and what that role might be. (Int#1)

Four coordinating teachers reiterated that while they took responsibility for their student teacher in their role, their main responsibility was to their classroom and the children. CT10 said there were many other roles placing constant demands on her. Some of these other demands came from parents, the school, colleagues and family so the student teacher came well down the order. She talked about the constant change of roles that typically occurred for her on any school day. CT3 suggested that the student teachers were an “add-on”, but an important one. She let them know that they were “an important part of the class”, having them “up there with me as teachers” (Int#1).

These teachers required a lot of self-belief (CT1, Int#2), believing that they had much to offer this student teacher that they could be working with for an extended period. The student teachers expected to come in and learn from these teachers so it was fair to assume that the principal and school community had identified these coordinating teachers as ‘leaders of learning’, both in the classroom and in the wider school community. To be effective partners in learning they needed to be able to demonstrate and articulate their practice, to accept the role of having others in the classroom to observe them at work and then to talk about it afterwards – to share and articulate (Claire, Sarah, Catherine).

CTs 4, 6 and 8 wanted more information from the university about the programme – they felt they could have been better informed in their role and thereby better able to assist their student teacher. They believed that they needed to be better informed of the university’s expectations of them as well as knowing about the student teacher and their programme. CT6 wanted to know how she could be better informed so she could have greater input into other tasks – “more

information about what they're doing, and what they have done" (Int#2). While five of these coordinating teachers indicated that they 'try and keep out of it' (the academic study aspect of the programme) due to their lack of information about coursework, the student teachers wanted them to be involved in every aspect of their programme.

However CT7, an ex-MMP student, believed that the university informed her well:

You get the pack including letters and the booklet and everything like that. At the beginning of the year [the university lecturer] always seems to be around, chatting with the students and chatting with us. We have said things about other universities because they don't seem to give you the information as soon as you think you should have it. (Int#1)

Both ULs 2 and 4 endorsed this comment, not being aware of any situations in their 'patches' where the coordinating teacher was not fully informed. They felt that the coordinating teacher booklet had served a useful purpose and that this was an individual perception.

#### *5.5.4 University-based lecturers as leaders*

The student teachers were clear that the university lecturers had a responsibility to them, providing leadership, support and information. All of these student teachers anticipated that the University of Waikato would help them to get started by providing them with information through their lecturer (Collective story #2). Sarah, Catherine and Claire all spoke positively about the role played by their university lecturer. While the student teachers were clear that the university lecturers had a responsibility to them, some of the coordinating teachers did not see the role of these people as being achieved so effectively. However, three university lecturers thought they made good contact with both partners (student teachers and coordinating teachers), talked things through, sent out information and phoned the base-school, coordinating teacher and student teacher as required.

My place is to ask them if they're happy with what's going on with, you know, I found out that they understand what their role is, that they are happy with it, that they're basically in many respects in a mentoring role. And if they're not clear, then I talk to them. (UL2, Int#1)

CT2 suggested that student teachers needed to make sure that they got their time from their lecturer as they were well informed and knowledgeable regarding the

MMP, studying in general and the policies and practices. She believed there was a “whole change in the philosophy and the way people work” (Int#2). Catherine understood the university lecturer’s responsibility as “being to make sure that the teaching placement continued to work for all concerned – student, teacher, base-school and university” (Collective story #3). Sarah found her university lecturer invaluable on one occasion when she needed help to sort through a problem she was having. Claire thought the role the university lecturers played was like “being big brother”, the controllers of whether she passed or failed. She found them well informed about the programme and teaching in general but not so knowledgeable about the school, community and classroom. ULs 2, 3 and 4 thought they had a good awareness of the programme, the structure of most of the papers and the university’s requirements – they were well informed about teacher education.

Claire wrote that “the university [made] sure that she had a good placement within the school” (Narrative #2) through the liaison visits and other communications. She also felt the “university was concerned about the way that the student teachers represented themselves in the schools” (Narrative #2), so with “reputations on the line” they took their responsibilities seriously. Sarah wrote that when she “had some problems with a paper her liaison person helped her voice her concerns” (Narrative #3). Catherine “took it for granted that [her university lecturer] would organise everything in her base-school” (Narrative #2) and said that her university lecturer always made contact with her - whenever in town. These university lecturers considered their main role as making sure that the school-based placement functioned efficiently.

Each partner needed to be informed to enable them to carry out their obligations to the others in this distance teacher education programme (UL4, Int#1). This was more so because of the remote or distant location of many of these student teachers. For example, five student teachers commented that a student based in a remote location needed to be well informed about the programme and study and should have been able to rely on the coordinating teacher and university lecturer as being well informed. As mentioned previously, Helen suggested that each student teacher needed “the support of your lecturer or your CT. You can’t just have the support of your peers, it needs to be a mix”

(FG#3). And Mary-Lou suggested, “it’s about knowing what it is that you need from those people and extracting all that you can at the appropriate level. It all just adds to making an amalgamation of information” (FG#3).

#### *5.5.5 Transition into the role of student teacher*

In terms of roles and responsibilities, continuing to work in a school where the student teacher had already been working had advantages and disadvantages. For example, on the one hand, the student teacher had an existing relationship where they felt comfortable with staff and resources, while on the other, everyone already knew all the other roles and responsibilities they were committed to. Of all the role aspects that these participants had talked about with other people, it was the transition of roles that concerned them most. All these participants agreed (Collective story #2) that if you had been a parent in the school then the relationship they had developed with that school would change in their new role as student teacher. Jamie, Catherine, Mary-Lou and Teresa already knew the school and principal but had some concerns about how they would develop a close relationship with the one person that they did not fully know – the coordinating teacher. All expected there to be some changes, from parent to student teacher, but they had no real understanding of what that might entail (Collective story #2).

Six of these student teachers were vital people within their school community because they had so many roles and responsibilities (see section 5.7; p. 189). All nine were parents, helpers or teacher aides and they anticipated that the role of student teacher would become an extension of what they already did in school. A student teacher expecting to relinquish some of her existing roles to be able to assign sufficient time to acquire new skills and knowledge in the new role of student teacher, often encountered problems (CT6, Int#1). Opinion among the participants in this study on continuing involvement within a school the student teacher had been connected with earlier was divided.

While the large majority of teachers and lecturers were not overly concerned about such situations, CTs 6 and 10 and ULs 2 and 3 warned that there were risks that partners needed to be alerted to. CT6 and UL3 talked about times when the roles of the student became blurred or confused. UL3 highlighted the point that a

parent “actually operated at a different level with children and to make the transition from [parent help] into being a student teacher was very difficult for them to come to terms with” (Int#1). CT10 talked about ‘the successful canteen operator’ who had a ‘great relationship’ with the children and the problems encountered when trying to make the shift to student teacher. UL2 also stressed situations when “a student who has been on a board of trustees or is a board of trustees member or something like that or has a wife or husband working [in the base-school] because sometimes that’s not appropriate” (Int#1). Changing the work you do in a school changes your relationship with that school and therefore a student teacher must expect to be treated quite differently (CT6, Int#1). CT6 suggested there was a danger of the student teacher “slipping back into [her] familiar role” (Int#1) to avoid any conflict.

CT7 held the view that student teachers should not go into a base-school if their own children were there or if they have been a teacher aide (TA) there – “If they’ve been a TA they think they know the workings of it so I think they need to go to other schools” (Int#1). CT6 suggested that when student teachers have been working as teacher aides, “they are not making any important decisions, they are just carrying out what they are told to do. Knowing what to teach, and how to teach it and why you’re teaching it is what makes a teacher” (Int#1). She suggested that it was this change that was critical in becoming a teacher. UL3 affirmed this idea when it was suggested that many student teachers have difficulty moving into viewing themselves as teachers – they continue to ‘know’ themselves as teacher aides “... if they don’t conceptualise the difference for themselves then it’s very difficult for them to get into that teacher role and think about issues that teachers are thinking about when they begin a teacher education programme” (Int#1). Envisaging and articulating that there was indeed a move to make from the past to the present, from a naïve-teacher to a teacher, was considered one of the big challenges for the student teachers being placed in the same school (UL3, Int#2). These student teachers told stories where it appeared that other student teachers “just got taken in” and expected to get on with their work as their coordinating teacher was too busy. However, these students were “lucky that [their coordinating teachers] were there and they offered their help” (Helen, FG#2).

On the positive side, those five student teachers who had been in their base-school working with the children and staff for some time had great confidence in the school being able to provide what they thought they might need for study (Collective story #2). Their local school was almost like home for Sandra, Catherine, Jamie and Sarah and the staffroom was a familiar place of empathy and support. All these student teachers considered that a good part of going into a school that was already known, was that, as a student teacher, they had some choice and felt that many of the staff would be interested in their progress (Collective story #1).

CTs 2, 5 and 7 agreed that having been a parent helper in their base-school in the past could present some minor challenges. Through past involvement with the base-school, these student teachers felt they had been appreciated for their work as a parent, such as tidying up in the classroom to allow the teacher and children to get on with their learning and teaching. They also had a sense of being trusted through the time they had spent with the class. Sarah shared one experience when her coordinating teacher greeted her with,

Great! You are here. Listen I have to go to a meeting and I'll be out for the morning, you will be alright with them won't you? I'll be back as soon as I can. Just do what you like with them. I've written up the handwriting books, they can write about anything for story writing, and that's about it. See you later!  
(FG#3)

Five of these student teachers considered that they were so well known in their base-school that they “could just walk in everywhere; it was like an open door, her with her own key and all – it was fabulous” (Collective story #1). CT5 suggested that at least they would “know the routines ... and know [their] way around” and “that must be quite comforting in lots of ways to those people” (Int#1). CT2 thought that the change was really just in front of the children:

We just had to say that ‘Now Mrs. [student name] is coming ... in as a teacher, so she's not just going to do the reading she's going to be doing other things with you as well and the university that she's at are sending her particular things to teach you to try out and all sorts of things’ so I just said ‘Well you guys are just so lucky because lots of kids don't get these opportunities’. So I set it up really, put her out there. (Int#1)

Sandra said “it was just amazing what [her coordinating teacher] was like – change of hats now and we've managed to do that” (FG#2).



CT3 suggested that transition and change in roles was more about valuing people. She considered all adults in her classroom as “teachers, absolutely! ... they’re teachers – everyone, parent helpers, teacher aides I try to make us all the same, we’re all educators. I don’t want them to be called student teachers or training teachers” (Int#1). She also made sure the other teachers in the school knew that on [day (for example Tuesday)] her student teacher was a teacher in her room “because also, four days a week she’s a teacher aide within the whole school and works in lots of classrooms” (Int#1). She tried to “empower everyone into teaching, no-one kind of has a label. And that’s what I do with the students – they’re teachers right from the start, they’re teachers just like me” (CT3, Int#1). She felt that her action helped make the role transition less difficult.

Generally, those student teachers who were in their ‘old’ school were quickly given a more meaningful role during the school day. They would help run the morning programme under the guidance of their coordinating teacher and began to feel more comfortable working with the class. The children knew them well and expected to see them every week. Sandra, Margaret and Catherine believed that the transition from teacher aide to teacher would be easy and come naturally. Studying toward a degree in teaching seemed like a natural progression for those who had been ‘teaching’ or teacher aide for years. They had been in and around classrooms and were reasonably familiar with routines, expectations and classroom procedures. Consequently, they started thinking that perhaps they should consider learning teaching. Especially for Sandra who wrote,

Everyone seemed to have faith in her abilities and people whom she both respected and liked seemed to have high expectations of her. This suddenly made her feel very apprehensive and concerned. How would relationships be affected with this change of roles? She was making a transition from a parent/teacher aide to a teacher, a qualified profession. How would she cope? What changes will occur? (Narrative #2)

These coordinating teachers had varying views on the acceptance of teacher aides becoming student teachers within their own school. There were those participants who considered it more prudent for the student teacher to be placed in a base-school where she had no previous associations. CT6, CT10 and UL3 considered it better to go into a base-school where the student did not know anybody, “as teachers cope with such change all the time” (CT6, Int#1). CT10 commented that her student teacher started “with a blank canvas, new, and the

children took her as a teacher” (Int#1). All three of these participants said that building new relationships is what teachers do all the time and it allows the base-school to start out without “any prior conceptions of what you are like” (CT6, Int#1). Certainly, as UL3 commented, the student would be “a bit unsure” (Int#1) but typically, this was quickly overcome. Claire and Helen both deliberately sought out schools where there had been no previous association – family or work. However, five of these student teachers had been totally involved in their local schools through their own children and they were not looking forward to becoming a “stranger in an unfamiliar role” within a familiar environment (Sandra, Narrative #2). They felt the need to belong very strongly and this was best achieved by being placed in a school that they knew.

Knowing that others had a grasp of the roles and responsibilities of all people involved in the distance placement made for better management of the demands of the situation. When the partners were able to fulfill their own obligations competently and confidently, others were able to progress. Where everyone knew the new roles that a student teacher was undertaking (with accompanying responsibilities) then the transition from old to new roles was made easier for all. Significant relationships developed between the student teachers and a range of people associated with these school-based experiences. A noteworthy aspect of these relationships appeared to be the time and opportunities to talk teaching. Learners need the time to reflect with others on what they observe, practice and think about.

### ***5.6 Thinking and talking teaching while on placement***

CT10 talked about the importance of feedback as a reciprocal learning strategy in this distance ITE programme. Not only did she consider it was essential for her student teacher to receive feedback from herself, other teachers and lecturers, but she said, “... you get feedback from the students and ... you feel good about something that you worked on and they say something and so you tend to repeat the way you’re doing something that does work” (Int#1). However, mostly the participants talked about the impact of feedback received by the student teachers. Catherine wrote:

At the beginning of her training, Catherine believed that the students, base-school teacher and university lecturer gave an important supportive role as part of her MMP training. Her beliefs were that they were there as supportive people who she could communicate with regarding queries, ideas, help and feedback if needed or wanted. (Narrative #3)

Primarily the focus of this section is about the importance of feedback relating to teaching practice. This is followed by comment about the impact of feedback on learning teaching and study, the importance of being able to both give and receive constructive feedback and having the time and ability for reflection in learning teaching.

### *5.6.1 Talking about teaching practice*

The narratives of six student teachers focused on their expectations of receiving feedback from their coordinating teacher regarding their own teaching practice opportunities. Claire, Catherine, Sarah and Jamie anticipated being able to observe and talk with their coordinating teacher in order to learn teaching, as this was their impression of what mentoring involved.

Being in her school one day a week Claire thought that her associate teacher would be like a mentor for her. Someone who she could observe to learn from and someone that would give her feedback when she taught her compulsory lessons as part of her course work. (Claire, Narrative #1)

Sandra, Claire, Teresa and Mary-Lou expected constructive feedback as they had received this from teachers in the past. They talked about how positive and supportive this feedback was for them. These same four and Sarah reported the impact of constructive feedback, enabling the student teachers to learn and move forward. Claire expected to get some further hints about her teaching, hoping for “suggestions for trying in the future” (Narrative #2) but this had not consistently occurred in her particular placement. On the other hand, Sarah said her coordinating teacher,

... would actually write out like an evaluation of how I did, suggestions for improvement, things that were really good .... She actually did it a few times, not that she did it every time or anything like that, but she did sit down and write some feedback. (FG#2)

Sandra shared one teaching incident where the feedback from her coordinating teacher “was not all bad, and the advice was ‘just relax, be yourself’ - easier said than done!” (Narrative #1) she decided. Teresa’s coordinating teacher gave “great

feedback as to how [the lessons] went, what could have been altered and why” (Narrative #3) and she would also read her lesson plans and,

... let [her] go with it and then say at the end of it ‘well what did you think?’ and then she would make [Teresa] say how [she] felt and then she would say her point of view and it was really, really good feedback [she] got from her, she was excellent. (FG#3)

Sarah said of her coordinating teacher that, “even though she was busy, she sat down quite often” (FG#2) and Teresa wrote that hers “was always happy to critique lesson plans and gave great feedback” (Narrative #3). Teresa, Claire, Sandra and Sarah reported that their coordinating teachers sometimes made time to provide written feedback, not a general requirement of this school-based placement. Claire remembered she received “one written feedback which was the one we had to have for the English [task] when we read a story to the class and apart from that there wasn’t any” (FG#2). UL4 tried to encourage the student teachers to become a colleague “so that the coordinating teacher can sit alongside and watch what goes on and give some feedback” (Int#1). UL4 found that, “it depended a bit on the student, on whether they wanted to expose themselves and on their attitude. Also it depended a bit on the structure of the school and the relationships in the school” (Int#1).

Unfortunately, some of the student teachers reported no constructive feedback at all. Jamie said she felt her coordinating teacher was “totally the opposite. I’d give some lessons and I’d get a few nods, that was pretty much it” (FG#2). Claire and Mary-Lou considered overall, they received ‘little feedback’. Claire wrote that she “would teach [lessons] then not really have any sort of feedback at the end. This made [her] not really feel like she had a connection with her CT” (Narrative #4). Mary-Lou wrote that her feedback “was little and often negative” (Narrative #4). Generally their perceptions were that their coordinating teachers were too busy to provide feedback. Jamie said that her coordinating teacher was,

... a busy person when I was expected to get feedback from my lesson plans and I’d try and fit it in wherever I could. Every time I wanted to she was gone! And I just thought I didn’t want to interrupt whatever she was doing. (FG#2)

Claire had similar experiences to Jamie. She felt she had “not very much time” with her teacher whenever she needed guidance with her lesson planning and preparation (Narrative #2; Narrative #4; FG#2). Sandra, on the other hand felt that her coordinating teacher believed she knew a lot more than she really did,

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... but in actual fact there's lots of things that [Sandra] really would liked to [have asked] her and got reassurance about but [she didn't] really want to because [she was] scared that [her coordinating teacher] would realise that [she didn't] know as much as she thinks [Sandra] knows. (FG#2)

### *5.6.2 Confidence in responding to feedback on teaching practice*

Claire, Sarah, Jamie and Teresa commented on the importance of building sound relationships so that conversations and feedback could be constructive. UL1 suggested that “being reflexive and reflective was a confidence thing and some of the students ... certainly had the capability of being those sorts of people” (Int#1). Sarah talked about her coordinating teacher wanting to be “confident how [she] would behave with feedback” before she received any (FG#2), because critical feedback was not always readily received by student teachers. She felt that many students “would probably be almost devastated if someone said that to them [criticism]” (FG#2). She got the feeling that her coordinating teacher wasn't going to give feedback until their professional relationship was well established. On the other hand, Teresa felt her relationship with her coordinating teacher was so comfortable she “could speak to her about anything. She was straight down the line and [Teresa] knew [she] would get honest feedback from her and that's what [she] was going to need” (FG#1).

CT8 was aware of authority that existed in the relationship with her student and talked about student teachers as expecting their coordinating teacher “to actually be not critical of them but to give them feedback on what they might improve” (Int#2). CT1 talked about the maturity and motivation of the typical MMP student and how,

... they really come looking forward to getting as much as they can from the school and ... they have like an implicit trust that what [the school was] going to give them they could take and they can deal with and they can absorb and use straight away - that they are not going to have to test it in some ways. (Int#2)

UL3 also suggested that these student teachers and coordinating teachers “are open to being challenged in their thinking. Their attitudes and beliefs and things are not fixed but are fluid in a way that they will see things from different perspectives, it is really important - reflexive and reflective” (Int#2). CT3 agreed with the importance of this open-mindedness (Int#2). She commented on the importance of ability,

... to reflect on what you have done, what you did. [To ask] has it had an impact, did that work, didn't it work? Some people they just keep doing the same thing and you think, 'you have got to change that. It's not working'. (Int#2)

CT2 called this empathy and commented on the importance of “standing in somebody else’s shoes” and “being prepared to listen” (Int#2). In terms of learning to teach, she said, “You can't help a child unless you really listen to what they have got to say and there are a hang of a lot of teachers out there who don't listen to what kids have got to say” (Int#2).

### *5.6.3 Reflection time and ability*

One critical aspect for these student teachers was in availability of time for study and preparation. Five coordinating teachers and two university lecturers talked about the amount of time these student teachers needed to devote to their programme. CT10 said “it’s a huge amount of work but we all did it; like we all did the same kind of thing” (Int#2). UL1 often showed students a school timetable and then asked them to show “where you’re going to put those 35 hours just roughly, anywhere?” (Int#1) because UL1 believed this was the minimum time needed including the time in school.

Helen, Mary-Lou, Sandra and Sarah talked about having the time and ability to think and talk about teaching practice in order to learn. UL4 noted the comments made by student teachers about coordinating teachers often being too busy. UL4 did not agree but conceded that “They’re often too busy with their students .... Its all too busy” (Int#1). CT10 suggested that time to talk teaching came “in more casual situations, out of school. There is no time” (Int#2) (see section 5.3.4; p. 157). She talked about,

... sitting down at a staff social evening and just saying well you know, we’ve just done this, this and this .... Reflections come from very casual conversations, whereas if we were all asked to sit back and reflect on it and the professional development we’d all be going ‘but we’ve got work to do, we have got far too much to do’. (Int#2)

CT2 disagreed, saying that feedback and reflection with her student was “exactly why I’m here” (Int#1). Also, CT6 suggested that because this school-based placement and ITE were all new, “they [student teachers] should have thousands of questions” (Int#1). Through liaison with base-schools, UL4 has found that coordinating teachers like CT2, “the good coordinating teachers, are

giving strong feedback or are asking ‘Why did you do it in that way?’ or ‘Why are you planning this in this way?’” (Int#1). Helen suggested that she learned “from watching students, talking to people, to your peers and your lecturers and all that” (FG#3) so needed a coordinating teacher who was prepared to listen to her questions and share with her frequently. Mary-Lou agreed with Helen and added that she also needed to “reflect on her own experiences” (FG#3).

Sandra and Sarah talked about the value of having guidelines and being told how well they were doing with their teaching (FG#3). Both these student teachers needed time to talk and share but CT10 was not so sure about the value of reflection – “oh, stand back from their practice in order to make good judgments? To reflect on all parts of their practice... Yea, for what it really is worth” (Int#2).

The concept of reflection had various interpretations among these participants. Three interviewees talked of reflection as being the student teachers’ ability to talk meaningfully about their teaching practice. UL4 suggested that this was “not always easy for students to do. I think it is a very difficult thing and if you think about the students, there are not too many, only our very good students, can do that to any great degree” (Int#2). UL1 and CT2 were not in agreement with the concept or ability though. UL1 suggested that students were reflective “in the sense that they read notes, read feedback and [then] they were going to do some thinking about that. Then they’d move on from that, they’d build on it” (Int#1). CT2 said the students “can be taught to be reflective very easily.... You can also teach empathy.... Oh that's easy, reflective listening particularly. It is not hard to teach but to be reflective you have to be receptive to the teaching” (Int#2).

Four of the coordinating teachers talked about how the one day school-based placement created limitations for sharing and talking. CT2 suggested that,

... rather than her coming in one day a week, if she came in three days one week and did those tasks, she’s got follow up, otherwise [the lessons] are all so high and dry and isolated and there is no feedback for her. Sometimes when you can follow things up that's really good. (Int#1)

Claire confirmed this, saying that “without having the feedback you’re sort of like in no man’s land and you don’t know where you are and you’re not receiving anything either way” (FG#2). CT3 felt the same about her position as a coordinating teacher, saying that she did not “get feedback on whether or not [she

had] done a good job” (Int#1). She also needed feedback on her working with students and currently there was no such feedback available. Having the time to talk and think teaching was important and judging by these comments, the establishment of sound relationships was influential.

### ***5.7 Relationship building in a distance ITE programme***

Being in sound relationships with others was reported as being critical to the success of this distance, school-based placement. The student teachers agreed with the idea that their coordinating teacher would help them most to become a teacher (Collective story #4) and so the implication was that this relationship required careful nurturing. They suggested that when such relationships were professional, then each partner brought appropriate knowledge and skills to every learning teaching opportunity. When one partner sought help and support from another, then it was vital that the other had had opportunities to be well informed (Collective story #2). Being a well-informed coordinating teacher, student teacher or university lecturer was considered important. This section first considers the partnerships that were established prior to the placement beginning. Second, it explores the idea of friendship in relation to placement relationships. Third, it considers relationship as a deliberate and collegial act before considering the importance of school-based relationships in helping to overcome the desire for face-to-face interactions. The final section considers the impact of other relationships beyond the coordinating teacher and student teacher.

#### ***5.7.1 Being partners before the placement began***

As introduced in section 5.3.5 (p. 160), several of these school-based placement partnerships had developed from a previous relationship and there were varying views on such settings. Five student teachers had a previous role in their base-school as a parent. Sandra, Teresa and Sarah reported that for them this had been successful (for example Sandra, Narrative #2). Eight of the 22 interviewees did not see a problem with building from past connections and most others did not express a strong opinion on the issue. All five student teachers with past associations confirmed that they “knew that [their] relationship [within the base-school] would change with [their] new role as student teacher” (Collective story



#2). Certainly they identified the need for subtle changes in the relationship but this was not discussed as a barrier. CT8 said that,

... you are going to work that closely together and we do lots of talking together, basically I find out lots of things about them and we talk about them, its their future we are talking about, and I think that there is quite a strong bond. (Int#2)

As highlighted earlier, CT6 suggested that “the minute you change your job in that school you change the relationship and you will be treated differently. They have to treat you differently” (Int#1) and CT4 talked about how the different circumstances might change the relationship: “A person who is already connected to a school might feel they have to put more in” (Int#1); “If your children and you had had a positive experience with that school and those connections might be positive.... She’s already got a connection and I think that’s a really good thing” (Int#1). CT10 agreed with this concept of having an established connection: “At least they know where to go for the right help” (Int#1). UL2 agreed while UL4 suggested there were two sides to the situations saying,

... it depends on the student from this perspective that, if they are already known in the school and they have a good history in that they are seen to “conform” they know the way schools operate, they’re more likely to know the politics of the school and how it operates and so that relationship with a coordinating teacher is likely to be better set up. (Int#1)

UL4 also suggested,

Well it seems to me you have to think about what was their previous relationship with that school. Did they come in cold, did they not? It is not to say one is better than the other but it says that the approach is different in terms of setting up where they are. (Int#2)

CT6 truly thought a student teacher was,

... better to go to a school where [they] don’t know anybody [as] this is what happens when you are a teacher anyway – you apply for a job, you go to a school, you don’t know anybody. You’ve got to build relationships right from scratch and ... you can build the strong relationships you need. So don’t go to a school where you are known. (Int#1)

As reported in Collective story #4, the student teachers confirmed that where the coordinating teacher was an integral part of their learning journey from before their placement began, they developed a strong bond from the earlier time spent in each other’s company. The coordinating teachers and university lecturers viewed the impact of such strong bonds with varying support. Where student teachers

already knew the school and the principal, this produced some “anxiety about how [they] would work on developing a sound relationship” (Collective story #2).

CTs 5, 6 and 10 talked about the transitory nature of this placement, that contact was for only one day each week to a maximum of 12 weeks each semester. CT6 suggested therefore that mostly the relationships between coordinating teacher and student teacher were created only briefly including transitory bonds that were usually weak. They were only “a means to an end” (Int#2) unless the student was able to spend more time in the base-school (CT5, Int#2), such as continuing as sports coach, parent helper or teacher aide as well (CT10, Int#1). CT6 also agreed with the idea that strong bonds between student teachers and other partners were based on emotions which she felt could hamper learning because constructive criticism may have been avoided. The student teachers agreed in Collective story #2 that friendship might get in the way of harsh truths and honest feedback.

### *5.7.2 Dealing with friendship in a placement partnership*

The narratives of five student teachers referred to friendship within their relationship with their coordinating teacher. It was however apparent that the terms friendship and friend have been used by these student teachers quite unproblematically. Claire wrote that she expected her relationship to be formal and then talked about forming “a friendship - we talk but it’s nothing out of school” (FG#3) so her relationship did not develop into them being friends. Sarah agreed, saying “we don’t socialise together, we go to school and we are friends, we have a mutual respect for each other, we enjoy each other’s company” (FG#3) but she also considered her friendship stayed within the base-school. CT3 felt that a strong friendship relationship outside of the placement,

... doesn't work as well, no you have to be, and that's the hard part and it's the same with our roles in teaching with our colleagues, sometimes you do make a good friend on the staff and you might do other things but you have always got to remember that you're colleagues. (Int#2)

Sandra had worked with her coordinating teacher for four years so they “had formed a great respect for and friendship with” (Narrative #2) each other. Like Sandra, Catherine had a very close relationship with her coordinating teacher, even going out to her home to “work on an assignment and have dinner” (FG#3)

but this ended as a consequence of conflict involving others. Three coordinating teachers and a university lecturer talked about the dangers of such relationships. CT4 talked about being “emotionally attached and you don't want to hurt their feelings” (Int#2) even though this attachment gave her greater “empathy for what [your student] is trying to do”. CT6 foresaw problems with a strong bond when the coordinating teacher would only “write nice things and it is not of help if there is nothing constructive in there, just glossy praise” (Int#2). Through Collective story #3, the student teachers reported that friendships typically included school social occasions and activities that may not truly be regarded as a ‘friend’ relationship. The relationships were really based on being friendly as professionals rather than friends.

### *5.7.3 Relationship building as a collegial and deliberate act*

Expecting to have a close relationship with their coordinating teacher, one that would develop over the school-based experiences into a ‘reciprocated respect’ for each other was confirmed by the student teachers (Collective story #2). CTs 2, 5 and 6 agreed with Collective story #3, that the development of the relationship was a collegial act where the coordinating teacher treated the “adult student more like an equal” (CT2, Int#1), where the coordinating teacher employed a strategy in striving for a fully inclusive environment for the children and the student teacher. CTs 2 and 4 were certain that the “relationship needs to be a professional relationship where people can get on well together” (CT4, Int#2). UL3 stressed that the coordinating teacher needed to “fully appreciate what that student is doing in her classroom” (Int#1), because when there was no “collegial relationship” the student felt “as though he or she was struggling on their own” (Int#1).

CTs 6 and 8 and UL4 talked about the authority relationship involved in such partnerships. CT6 was very mindful of this, suggesting that it was,

... unequal because one person has more power than the other. No student teacher is going to come in and pick a fight with their coordinating teacher, because the teacher has got the power. So it is not a good bond, that is not a good basis for a bond at all, and that worries me because I am never quite sure what they're thinking about me because they are not going to let you know. So this is not a bond that's of any value and it is much weaker than the bond you have with your children. (Int#2)

Commitment to the base-school was considered vital to developing a collegial relationship and minimising the hindrance of authority. UL4 talked about student

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teachers “exemplifying” themselves to the school and having to live up to expectations (Int#2). CT3 also talked about the student teacher “wanting to fit in” (Int#2), to be seen as ‘one of the teachers’. This certainly appeared to work best in schools where the staff were collegial (CT2, Int#2; UL2, Int#1), where there was a lot of across-school interaction, swapping of ideas, and where everyone was welcome.

CT6 suggested a successful relationship between coordinating teacher and student teacher implied a working together and for this to be achieved the partners needed to be well informed and knowledgeable (Int#2). Sarah, Sandra, Catherine and Teresa had thought the coordinating teacher would “know everything about this teacher education programme” (Sarah, Narrative #2) and guide her through. CTs 2, 5, 8 and ULs 1 and 2 raised the idea of sharing as a significant characteristic of their partnerships. Sandra “noticed that [she and her coordinating teacher] had slipped into a comfortable pattern of sharing” (Narrative #4). CT2 enjoyed sharing the teaching with her student (Int#1) and she also liked the fact her student teacher brought books in to share as they “discussed quite a bit of stuff” (Int#2). CT8 liked to be the “sounding board for her [student teacher] with her studies” (Int#1), just as UL2 recalled had been observed during a liaison visit: “They get themselves involved in what the students are doing” (Int#2). CT8 confirmed trust as important to the partnership. With trust came sharing and openness.

Working together appeared to allow for an openness that was confirmed in Collective story #2. Five of the student teachers used words like *approachable* and *easy* to highlight the openness in their relationship with their coordinating teacher. Four coordinating teachers used words like *flexible* and *adaptable* to show that they “can still be open enough to help and change” (CT7, Int#2) in an effort to make the school-based placement successful. Mary-Lou said how important it was to develop a good working relationship through open communication and respect (Narrative #3). It was suggested by the student teachers that effectively working together required openness (Claire, FG#2), easiness in the partnership (Jamie, FG#2), spending enough time together (Claire; Helen; Mary-Lou; Jamie, FG#2), and connection (Claire, FG#2).

Six interviewees talked about the advantage of a relationship where student and coordinating teacher were like each other and got on well together:

The fact that we are so much like each other we've basically cut through all the 'crap' to put it bluntly and we actually have a rapport straight away. We have got the relationship and we have an understanding, and I think it could be very effective because we can be very honest - straight up. (CT8, Int#2)

CT2 suggested it was probably easier to work together with her student teacher because they both seemed "to work in the same way, [the student] is very receptive to doing anything really and flexible and that kind of thing" (Int#2). CT2, CT8 and UL4 talked about the student teacher and coordinating teacher being similar and they suggested that meeting the student teacher before the school-based placement began would certainly help: "To make a good job of it you've got to have a good relationship before you start" (CT2, Int#1). Helen, CT2, CT8 and UL2 highlighted the fact that effective placements were not dependent on the partners being alike but rather that they had "a good working relationship" (Helen, Narrative #3). All four university lecturers recounted partnerships where coordinating teacher and student teacher were quite different "yet the relationships are still workable, they still carry on" (UL2, Int#1).

Six interviewees commented that relationship building was a deliberate act. ULs 2 and 3 divided the responsibility for developing collegiality evenly between coordinating teacher and student teacher. Some coordinating teachers felt that it was their responsibility to develop the partnership while some university lecturers felt that it was the responsibility of the student teacher "to make the effort" (UL4, Int#2). CT1 and CT3, however, were adamant that it was not the responsibility of the student teacher as they,

... are coming into your classroom, into your school territory type thing, and they are coming in as the unknown. There is a visitor in the place and you don't generally come in and act all trying to build a relationship, you generally come in quiet and observing and look around and see where you fit in. I don't expect them to come in to be the building relationship type. (CT3, Int#2)

While seven interviewees recounted that a relationship had to be worked on, to "go out of their way sometimes to make sure it works" (UL2, Int#1), CT2 suggested that her relationship with the student teacher was "just part of the thing isn't it; I mean I certainly don't work at it. You can't make yourself have a relationship with somebody" (Int#1). UL2 remembered relationship building as

being “a problem with the student rather than the coordinating teacher” (Int#2) and UL3 could recall similar situations, putting it down to student teacher “confidence or whatever, [being] able to articulate those thoughts and so the relationship thing has never developed” (Int#1).

CT2, UL2 and UL4 talked about student teachers having the opportunity to be deliberate in selecting their own base-school and coordinating teacher. With this group of students, the choice of schools was mostly limited by their location, but CTs 2, 4, 6, and ULs 2 and 4 thought this was a concept worthy of investigation:

So probably there needs to be some kind of contact set up so that the university can say ‘Well look, we have a teacher at such and such a school, why don’t you go down and meet her and see if you can spend a day in the classroom with her and see how you go. (CT2, Int#1)

#### *5.7.4 Overcoming the challenges of not being face-to-face*

The reality of learning teaching through a distance programme may be, as suggested by Helen, a challenge to effective learning interactions. She suggested that where a student teacher considered being away from campus as a barrier, then this positioned their face-to-face relationship with the coordinating teacher more favourably. The only time student teachers met with course lecturers face-to-face was at the short, intensive on-campus courses: “Helen wished that she could just go and speak to her lecturer or tutor face-to-face about an issue to do with her assignment or marks” (FG#3) but this did not happen easily. Also, the only time they had with their university lecturer was typically when the university lecturer visited the base-school briefly to talk with the coordinating teacher, principal and student teacher.

These student teachers reported that they felt ‘safest’ with those they had face-to-face relationships with, such as their coordinating teacher, other students and some university-based staff. The idea of personal safety in a relationship was reported in Collective stories #2 and #4 when talking about being able to “ask ‘the stupid questions’ without fear” (Collective story #2) and being in a position to “feel confident about taking work and ideas to [the coordinating teacher] and the [study] group to try them out” (Collective story #4). CTs 8 and 10 talked about creating a relationship where the student felt comfortable and safe.

### 5.7.5 Capitalising on relationships with others

The one-day a week school-based placement was considered as both strength and weakness of the programme, primarily based on the nature of the student teachers' relationship with their coordinating teachers. However, Helen, Claire, Sandra and Jamie also talked specifically about how they enjoyed working with the children. Helen said she had "always really loved kids: same as my mother, and my grandfather was the same, and they had really good rapport with kids" (FG#1). Sandra wrote that she had "a natural affinity with children and enjoyed working with them" (Narrative #1). Jamie loved being in the environment where she could work with kids (Narrative #1).

Sarah commented on the 'negative' perception of the class being used as a 'child-bank' for the student teacher for school-based experiences.

I really resented visiting things on the children that were requirements [of the university] that we had to fulfil, which had no relationship to children and the classroom programme. (FG#3)

CT10 and UL4 felt that the time these students spent in school overcame this relationship issue to a degree. CT10 liked "the one day placement - I like to see them perform regularly – to come in and share some time with me and build that relationship with the kids" and over the long term "the [student] teachers get to see the children grow" (Int#1). UL4 suggested that such a placement "gets us away from that [concept of child-banking, but] how you remove that totally I don't know" (Int#2).

CTs 2, 7, 10 and UL2 referred to the maturity of these MMP student teachers and how this meant they had "more rapport and understanding" (CT7, Int#1), that they were experienced in developing relationships with others (CT2, Int#2) which gave them a solid foundation for developing effective relationships with the children in the class. CT6 talked about the need for teachers to be good at relationships as they have,

... to form working relationships even with people they don't like – they have to because often – you don't get to choose who you work with, you've got to form a relationship with them: children they don't like particularly, they don't like their moral code or the character. You've got to get to like them otherwise it affects how they're learning. So they are expert at relationships. (Int#1)

CTs 3 and 6 emphasised that teachers have the responsibility to make sure that a child must feel safe in their class: "We don't have the right to have negative



relationships in our classroom, and that's the difference because it's a job, it is a job and our job is to come here to make all kids feel safe" (CT3, Int#2); "[children] come in, they feel welcome, they feel wanted, they feel valued and therefore they just learn, ... they really love coming to school" (CT3, Int#2); and "you've become the centre of their life for some children - you are the safe person, the centre of their life because it is not like that at home" (CT6, Int#2). CTs 2, 5 and 10 reported that enthusiasm for working with children was essential. CT2 talked of teachers coming to school "fizzing" so that the children would "fizz with you" (Int#1). CT5 talked about the student teacher becoming "part of [the child's] life" and having things to offer (Int#1). CT10 talked about her style of developing personal relationships with children and the "buzz you get out of it all" (Int#1). Developing a sound relationship with the children in the class was considered important for the student teachers' practice opportunities.

The student teachers talked about their relationships with other students as being both for friendships and purposeful in the placement. Sarah, Catherine and Claire talked about their experiences on campus and how that had been a big advantage in being "able to consolidate a relationship with others on the course" (Sarah, FG#3) because this gave them a further relationship to call on for placement support. Mainly though, relationships with colleagues existed through electronic means. Good relationships with peers allowed Sarah to work more freely online, being "especially responsive to people that [she] had met on [campus]" (FG#3). Claire also wrote about having formed friendships while staying on campus (Narrative #4), which carried over to her online interactions. These effective online relationships gave them more confidence in their school-based placement tasks.

Just as each student teacher had varying relationships with her coordinating teacher, children and colleagues so were the relationships with personnel involved in the MMP programme. Helen wrote about some "fantastic connections with her lecturers" (Narrative #4). Through Collective story #3, the students reported that it was possible to establish an effective relationship with course lecturers. Establishing one sound relationship with a course lecturer was considered crucial to the success of five student teachers (FG#3). Five student teachers wrote and talked about their good relationship with their own university lecturer. Sarah



typified this group. She said she “had a really good relationship with [her university lecturer] and always felt that there was not a problem whenever visited or [she] could ring up” (FG#3). ULs 1, 2 and 3 endorsed these comments suggesting that they know their student teachers well (UL2, Int#1), working with them on at least four occasions each year. UL3 suggested that there was “the odd student that we communicate with quite frequently” (Int#1) and generally it was a working, workable relationship. UL3 also commented on the fact that student teachers often “bypass” lecturers and make contact with other MMP programme personnel, “And maybe that’s good” (Int#1), to have access to others.

Briefly, Sarah (FG#2) and Catherine (Narrative #2) commented on how fortunate they had been to have such supportive relationships including other staff in their base-school. Relationships with other teachers and the wider community were commented on by five student teachers but not in significant depth to report in this section.

Generally speaking, the relationships between school-based and university-based staff was not considered of importance nor well developed by seven of the nine teachers. CT4 felt she would “have no qualms about contacting” her university lecturer if needed (Int#1) while CT5 said “there does need to be something there where we can have time to have a chat with [a university lecturer] ... maybe once a term” (Int#1). UL4 suggested that relationships between university lecturers and the base school were arbitrary, depending on personal circumstances. UL1 talked about the importance of the relationship between university lecturers and coordinating teachers also, noting how this relationship was not highlighted in the collective stories (Int#2). UL3 endorsed this perception,

...when you sit down with the teacher and student they’ll start to talk like they’ve never talked before but that’s dependant on time as well as having that opportunity to sit with them to work these sorts of things through.... The isolated schools, they do appreciate what seems to me even though they may not put ticks in boxes they do seem to appreciate the liaison role that you have in that relationship that you set up. I think it’s a partnership thing that we might need to work on. (Int#1)

The four university lecturers talked about various aspects of these relationships, noting the significance of each and the importance of continuing or extending such relationships: they talked about continuity, impact and benefits

(UL1), professionalism (UL2), commitment and establishment (UL3) and compatible purpose and aspirations (UL4). They stated that as university lecturers they developed solid relationships with a variety of people. In the first instance it was within the MMP programme administration team and other staff members involved in the programme. ULs 1, 3 and 4 also reported that supportive relationships for them and the programme often came from outlying schools: “Support has also come from principals, often principals I know and teachers too, to some extent” (UL4, Int#1).

In summary, Collective story #4 suggested that a student teacher’s relationship with their coordinating teacher was the strongest aspect of the partnership and these student teachers affirmed that it was critical. There were however student teachers who felt they were not “part of the school community” (Catherine, Narrative #4) and had concerns about their relationship with their base-school (Claire, Narrative #2). They were not blaming but rather suggested factors such as size and time as being vital. CT4 and UL3 talked about the student teachers relying “a little too much on their coordinating teachers” (CT4, Int#2) and noted that they were after all completing a university degree so “they also have to remember don't they, that they are coming for this particular qualification as well and the qualification won't happen with only having an effective relationship with the coordinating teacher” (UL3, Int#2). Relationships are so important, that the participation and involvement of a student teacher was dependent on this factor.

### ***5.8 Participation for learning in a school-based placement***

In Collective story #4 all the student teachers agreed that their learning occurred within a range of communities. The involvement they reported was with communities that focused on academic study, teaching practice, social and familial outcomes. They agreed that they learned “best by co-constructing knowledge and practices with others and so rely on interaction with others to help learn and reflect on new concepts, theories and practices” (Collective story #4). To achieve this, each student teacher needed to be both involved in many communities of learning and to have many different people included in each of their communities. It was acknowledged that not all communities facilitated

learning; some were for support or other such outcomes. The communities of learning for the student teachers in this distance teacher-education programme had been extensive and diverse. Learning in these communities was both overt and tacit. This section highlights the following themes from the narratives: first, the importance of involvement in a range of learning communities; second, those which expose the student of teaching to diversity; third those networks that helped connect to the school-based community; fourth with the university-based community; and finally how such communities enabled the partners to develop other important networks.

### *5.8.1 Involvement in many communities*

The narratives of these student teachers confirmed that they had been involved in many learning communities. As examples, they talked about various communities that focused on different aspects of their particular programme of learning teaching: computers and technology; reading and online study; and teaching practice experiences. They agreed that, “these learning communities have had a major impact” on their learning (Collective story #4) and subsequently, the school-based placement. Jamie, Catherine and Mary-Lou highlighted the importance of students needing to be connected to a number of learning communities. Jamie suggested she “probably would have given up if not for all those who encouraged, supported and strengthened [her]” (Narrative #4).

All students identified their academic learning communities (Collective story #3) as being the heart of their assistance and encouragement. Jamie and Helen drew attention to university and course lecturers’ academic guidance and support as important for the retention and wellbeing of student teachers in this distance programme. The views of four participants were reflected in Collective story #4 in talking about the valuable contribution that “classmates” made through their interactions, words of encouragement online and through other communication channels. One dimension that most participants talked about, and was reflected in both Collective stories #3 and #4, was that of the students’ “workmates in education” (Jamie, Narrative #4). Three university lecturers agreed that isolated student teachers such as in this programme, were often at risk academically because,

... it is difficult for them unless they get hooked into that online community. It is very difficult for them to actually make that transitional shift because they don't have anybody else to talk with or think about unless there is support within that local school, within their communities as already established. (UL3, Int#2)

It was apparent that some of these learning communities were a matter of circumstance while others were deliberately selected or constructed by each student. For example, other than choosing to study for this degree, the selection of lecturers and tutors was beyond a student's control. While they did not have control over their cohort of classmates, they did have choice in deciding whom to work closely with. UL2 felt that the study groups developed as a result of characteristics such as age, maturity, confidence and physical proximity rather than for any other factors – it was a matter of convenience. There was a suggestion that students would be working with others because “they're close and live reasonably handy” (UL2, Int#2). Each of the student teachers in this study did have some control over the base-school chosen and maybe even the coordinating teacher. It appeared that students sought others with similar needs, personalities, attitudes and values when developing their learning communities. However, UL4 suggested that in “self-selected communities there may be little or no learning” (Int#2) because it was a comfortable environment with few challenges,

... where the school is a given, the community that they live and work in is a given, then the people that they have their relationships with are givens. So there is actually quite a lot if you put that together collectively and then we come along. It is actually asking quite a bit from an individual to keep all those [communities] but add this other one when people are so used to moving in and out of a whole range of things within their community and they are known in a heap of them. (UL3, Int#2)

For example, Claire often “phoned her sister, who is a practising teacher, to discuss some ideas for lesson planning” (Narrative #4). CT6, ULs 1, 3 and 4 reported that some students ended up at a school by default because this was the only local school, or the only one that agreed to their placement – there was really no choice for them so their involvement in a learning community focusing on teaching practice outcomes, was limited. Of these student teachers, only Sarah was limited in her base-school options. This effectively curbed her ongoing exposure to diversity in terms of teaching communities.

### 5.8.2 Exposure to diverse communities

The diversity of each student's communities of learning varied significantly (Collective story #4). This diversity covered a range of characteristics including culture, backgrounds, life experiences, employment, family circumstances, community involvement and educational experiences. This diversity for these student teachers was as noticeable as the number of communities in which each student was involved.

In order to gain a deeper appreciation of the environment in which they will work as teachers, the student teachers felt there was a need for them to be exposed to such diversity early in their programme (Collective story #4) through being placed in diverse schools and classrooms. The coordinating teachers endorsed this concept,

[Diversity] is just what the job is, isn't it? I mean, once you are in teaching you are involved in so many different networks.... I guess the whole thing does - basically you have got to be adaptable and responsive to any, you've got to be able to fit in and adapt to the learning environment you are in or the community you are working within. (CT10, Int#2)

It was suggested that exposure to such a rich source of people and ideas contributes to each student teacher's learning and effectiveness as a teacher (Collective story #4). The student teachers also felt it valuable to get differing perspectives on things associated with becoming a teacher. This issue of diversity was important for Sarah, Teresa, Sandra and Claire who felt they were each based in a school that was a close reflection of their other communities of learning, giving them limited experiences that were new.

For Catherine, Jamie, Margaret and Mary-Lou cultural diversity was already a part of their life and in reality their base-school was either more of the same or more narrow than their everyday life. For example, it was reported by CT7 about her student:

I don't think this [school-based placement] has been diverse for [student name] because this is a very Māori<sup>10</sup> school and she's married to a Māori so she is aware of our culture at the school and things like that. (Int#2)

CTs 3, 7 and 10 all confirmed that teachers in classrooms today need to be able to mix and work with a whole range of people,

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<sup>10</sup> Meaning that the student population at the school has a very high percentage of children identifying as Māori.

... definitely the networks [are critical], you have got to have, that's your diversity, your groups, your network groups and things like that because I think that's what brings it all together, each person being different. (CT7, Int#2)

Such involvement with a diverse range of schools and teachers was identified by many of the student teachers, coordinating teachers and university lecturers as being an integral part of this ITE programme.

### *5.8.3 Connecting with the school-based community*

As reported previously through Collective story #4, these student teachers agreed with Helen's words that their connection with their coordinating teacher was "much more important than with her colleagues or university lecturers" (Narrative #4). Helen suggested that teaching could not be learnt entirely through "textbooks, papers and lectures" so she considered "it was very important to establish connections within the teaching community, especially her CT" (Narrative #4) in order to discuss and debate issues and concepts.

CTs 1 and 3 talked about knowledgeable teachers understanding their own practice, being able to articulate their practice, relate it back to theories, to evaluate and justify the teaching and learning opportunities. CT1 suggested that,

... one of [the coordinating teacher's] big jobs as a teacher is to link theory to practice. That's what you are actually doing. See, if a student came to us and cognitive learning was part of their study, we would feel very comfortable with talking to them and linking that theory to our practice. (Int#2)

The majority of these coordinating teachers were knowledgeable and informed about issues associated with teaching experiences, although, as four of them highlighted, this was based on experience rather than any further study. For these student teachers to learn from their coordinating teacher there had to be opportunities for discussion, for the teacher to demonstrate their knowledge in providing advice and feedback to students about teaching and learning (Claire, FG#2). The student teachers said they needed help in talking about and implementing good learning opportunities. As already highlighted, seven of these student teachers spent what they felt was adequate time with their coordinating teacher.

Some coordinating teachers wished they could have been more informed about coursework so that they could have been of greater help to their student teacher directly with their study. CTs 1, 6 and 8 said they were reluctant to give

advice on study issues without access to the course readings, the lectures and the lecture notes, as they lacked necessary information. CT3 believed that having a background in university study would have been a positive benefit. She did not and so felt her “very unkind” teacher education experiences influenced her ability to support the study aspect of the placement directly. CTs 1 and 7 suggested that as coordinating teachers they gave their perspective on study queries but certainly could not “do’ their assignment for them” (figuratively speaking)(CT1, Int#2) as they were inclined only to steer them in the right direction, provide suggestions rather than give explicit advice (Sarah, Teresa). Catherine wrote that she,

... learnt to be very careful asking for information or getting her base-school teacher’s advice because sometimes it was not always accurate. [She] had been caught out a couple of times where the information was inaccurate. (Narrative #3)

It was apparent from discussions that there were times when student teachers felt they knew more than their coordinating teacher could tell them. When it came to some aspects of the students’ study programme, Catherine suggested that “it was a bit much to expect information from someone who does not know the full facts and circumstances surrounding what is being asked” (Narrative #3).

Claire, CT4 and UL3 believed that effective learning communities extended beyond the immediate coordinating teacher to include others associated with the base-school such as the principal, non-teachers and other teachers. Right from the beginning, Sandra’s principal had “implied that other staff would be involved with her programme at different times” (FG#4) so she had exploited this idea when seeking support. As previously highlighted, CT1, UL3 and UL4 suggested that successful partnerships were based on whole school communities. CT1 suggested, “that’s where your professional learning community comes in, with the school as a whole” (Int#2). ULs 3 and 4 suggested this was particularly so for the smaller rural schools and that effective coordinating teachers utilised the strengths of others in the school. CT2 and UL3 considered the involvement of other staff members as a “strength of being in a school where [the student teacher] feels a part of the community” (CT2, Int#1).

CTs 2, 3, 5 and 7 talked about how their student teachers contributed to their schools’ community of learning. Being able to “see self in everything they do and how much that impacts on their own little communities” (Int#2) was considered

by CT5 to be an important perspective to develop as a teacher. Many student teachers were not aware of how the communities were supporting them (CT7) and it was only when these were taken away that the reality was observed. Other student teachers gathered communities (resources) around them and managed them effectively,

... a student who's committed to their learning and to somebody else's learning says, how best can I use and manage the resources that I have and so they see their coordinating teacher as a resource.... they use their coordinating teacher, they use other teachers, they use principals. (UL4, Int#2)

The student teachers noted that in a school where there was a culture of learning, they felt they were encouraged to be an integral part, "always talking about learning" (Collective story #4). Being in such a school, Catherine, Sandra and Sarah said the staff were professional and valued them as a team member, a teaching colleague. All the students agreed (Collective story #4) that such schools demonstrated a 'reciprocal trust', allowing them to feel connected and accepted. CT1 considered that the culture of the school was a significant influence on how a student teacher connected with the community. She also said it was "to do with the culture of the school and how you view your professional learning community within a whole school. [Learning teaching is] like donkey [in the movie *Shrek 2*] asking, 'are we there yet, are we there yet?'" (Int#2). She suggested that schools "seeking constant improvement" were good places for student teachers to be learning because the journey was continuing. CT2 and CT10 both endorsed this idea, suggesting that having a student could be "a form of professional development" in itself (CT2, Int#2) for the coordinating teacher and base-school. UL3 also believed this but tempered it with the fact that for busy teachers,

... it's difficult sometimes for them to think beyond today and that's fair enough when you're in there and they don't necessarily view the student as a colleague in a way that brings them into a profession. (Int#1)

All of these student teachers highlighted the importance of working with many other teachers, involving the wider teaching community in their learning (Collective Stories #3 & #4). Claire worked hard at "establishing connections with the teaching community" (Narrative #4) and five other students had utilised teachers beyond their immediate base-school setting to help with study and practice.



#### 5.8.4 *Maintaining the university-based community*

The University of Waikato was one other large community of learning for each student teacher. It was composed of many smaller communities. For example, each of the papers within the MMP programme became a community of learning. These student teachers reported that the connections they developed with each of these communities varied perhaps according to styles (learning and teaching), personalities and opportunities to meet face-to-face. When the connections were good, they felt they could ask questions openly (Helen) however when the connection was not so good they felt they didn't suffer (too much) as they just relied on other communities. In fact these student teachers did not regard the university as one of their strong communities. UL3 suggested this as a problem that needs addressing. UL3 believed that,

... one of the things that is crucial is to try and encourage the students to see that partially it is their responsibility to maintain that contact and to develop that community [of learning for each paper], not so much with me, but with their colleagues as well so again that triad thing is going on rather than just them and me. (Int#2)

Claire and Helen did not fully appreciate the extent of the university as a learning community - not realising that they could contact university-based personnel if they were struggling with something. Claire thought of this more as her responsibility, her "job to sort out her problems and get on with it since it had been her choice to do the MMP programme rather than being on the campus" (Narrative #3). Helen did not "contact any lecturers" she also just got on with what she believed to be her responsibilities (FG#3). The other student teachers confirmed this initial understanding about course lecturer approachability as reported in Collective story #3. They acknowledged that the "more astute" students took advantage of such opportunities from very early in the programme. Sarah reported that she expected that "if she required it, support would be available" (Narrative #2). Five students were all grateful for the support they had received but "honestly didn't realise that the tutors were there to ring [phone] - at your beck and call sort of thing" (Catherine, FG#3).

UL3 also believed that one of the things that made,

... a huge difference is the way that you approach things when [the students] come in on campus, having to think really, really hard about how you are going to introduce this cohort.... It is like seeing them as a whole new bunch of

people with different ideas and different thoughts ... because of what people are saying and what people are bringing to that process like trying to encourage them to see themselves as a community of learners and that I am part of that but I am not the only bit of it - so helping them to see that. (Int#2)

The university lecturers reported that attitude was an important consideration when working to bring the community of learning together – “it can be quite a struggle at times, trying to encourage our students to see this not as something that has to be endured but something to be enjoyed and learned from and thinking about” (UL4, Int#2). These university lecturers talked about the need to encourage the student teachers to be aware of all possible learning networks.

#### *5.8.5 Developing other networks*

Each student teacher brought something different and there were “so many networks out there that interlink and help” (CT7, Int#2). CT7 suggested that such networks for learning could change frequently and considerably. For these student teachers, such changes could entail their inclusion in the group, the intensity of their involvement, the value for them, the formality and the access directness. The student teachers confirmed in Collective story #4 that some communities wanted to be involved with them directly and formally while with others it was quite informal, less direct and of little value to their learning teaching.

In terms of becoming a member of a useful community of learning it was only in hindsight that the participants knew or understood how successful (or not) their choices had been. For these student teachers, joining a community of learning may or may not have been a choice. Mary-Lou, Helen and Claire did select their base-school (and hence community of learning) based on what information they had and hence what they considered might be a ‘useful’ community for their learning. These three students lived in larger communities and did not have to confront any of the problems associated with smaller communities. CT6 and UL3 challenged the notion that a student teacher could predetermine the value of a community of learning from the outside and then make the judgment that “this other community is offering something that none of these others can” (UL3, Int#2). They agreed that it could be difficult for a student teacher to know what criteria would have helped with their decision.

Students in this distance programme were used to having a limited number of interactions and those were usually within a narrow network. Helen felt the oncampus connections were an important part of maintaining her community of learning because she needed “to see face-to-face the people she knew from the photos online” (Narrative #4). When the student teachers came on campus, the university lecturers reported that they tried to help them become established in communities of learning but sometimes the student teachers chose to remain outsiders - for whatever reasons. These student teachers frequently mentioned the sense of isolation associated with distance study and, like Helen, they all confirmed their peers became their first ‘port of call’ (Collective story #4). Helen reported that student teachers in this programme needed communities beyond the computer: “the thought of only communicating with people in her learning community via the computer scared her” (Narrative #4).

All other MMP students in the same cohort as these student teachers were considered potential members of a most important network – predominantly their academic community of learning, which impacted on their school-based placement. Five student teachers talked about their cohort community of learning, communicating frequently via the computer or telephone and this “formed some great friendships that continue on to this day” (Claire, Narrative #4). Five student teachers stated that where they were in a position to develop links with peers, either electronically or face-to-face, this had positive impact on their study and placement. It gave them confidence to try things out, to take their work to others such as their study group, and to submit their lesson plans. Helen felt that without a study group, it “would have been too hard at the start”(FG#3) and she may have given up. She found she leaned on the group and they became her most important connection, “they were some of the only people who she could see face-to-face on a regular basis to discuss the highs and lows, and questions and answers of this course of study” (Helen, Narrative #4).

These communities of learning were reported as being about ‘give and take’. These students agreed (in Collective story #4) that while they may have been learning themselves they were also helping others in these communities. This occurred across all learning communities. Many of them have been givers all their lives, as mothers, helpers and supporters but in their new role as student

teacher they must also be receivers. Teresa and Helen talked about how it was as important to give opinion, support and guidance, as it was to receive it. While it may seem so obvious, Mary-Lou said it took her some time before she realised that others actually do want to help – she “did not realise how willing people were to help her out” (Narrative #4). Initially she had this idea that asking for help was a weakness, she had this “strong desire to preserve [her] integrity and not appear slow on the uptake” (Narrative #4), not reveal to others that there were things she needed help with. She also had the idea that others would be too busy to help her and “she didn’t want to be perceived as being a burden” (Narrative #4). The idea of ‘making a mistake’ in front of others did not sit easily with Mary-Lou, but Jamie understood from her learning community that mistakes and trials were a necessary part of learning, that,

... trials would happen but eventually smooth out, those who caused me to see with open eyes and even those who tested my walk but in the same breath, made me move in the other direction. All for the better I believe, all for the better. (Narrative #4)

CT2 and UL4 pictured the student teacher as the centre of a number of learning communities and stressed that the bond between student teacher and each of the communities would have varied – from strong through to weak. CT2, UL3 and UL4 also suggested that the strengths of these bonds would have varied throughout the course of the ITE programme. At times, one or more of the academic communities might have been very strong while at other times the strength of the school-based community became super strong. UL3 was insistent that through this programme some of those learning community bonds “were given up” (Int#2) – the student teachers needed to be able to evaluate which were of greatest help to them at any time. UL4 on the other hand, suggested that there were times when student teachers did not give up the ties and their commitment to the programme came into question.

As a strategy to better develop the university’s influence on the school-based placement and hence the student teacher, UL3 suggested that there was a need “to encourage ... our coordinating teachers into *our* learning communities” (Int#2). The university lecturers reported that there were times when a ‘divide’ existed between the school-based personnel and university-based lecturers. UL3 placed importance on “trying to explain and to help people when they are in their school

learning community to become part of that triad if you like, rather than seeing it as a dyad for them” (Int#2). UL3 also suggested that involvement with new communities of learning often had the effect of the student re-entering their existing communities “with renewed vigour and with a whole lot of ideas” (Int#2).

### **5.9 Conclusion**

This chapter presented the views of the student teachers, coordinating teachers and university lecturers in themes derived from the participants’ data. The themes evolved using an interpretive approach in analysing the narratives of all 22 participants.

A characteristic of these findings is the similar perceptions of the student teachers, for example, the perceived importance of collegial relationships and support to manage the challenges of a placement. There were also issues on which they had differing perceptions such as the provision of feedback and using class teaching time for reflection. While the participants came from different backgrounds and settings, their views about issues associated with school-based placements were comparable, although still not sufficient to make generalised statements. They agreed that establishing effective relationships was critical to the placement and particularly in maintaining the partnership, even where they had been an earlier relationship with the base-school. While there was agreement in principle, they also had varying ideas about how this was best achieved. These participants highlighted the importance of establishing and maintaining relationships with a range of colleagues, each producing opportunities to think and talk about learning teaching and access and involvement with other communities and networks. Relationships were dependant on strong interpersonal skills and some of the relationships were stronger than others as shown by commitment and support for the student teacher.

The students also confirmed that being able to manage the challenges and demands of distance study and school-based placement required their deliberate attention rather than any wait and hope approach, such as building networks and asking for assistance from various sources. The understanding of and commitment to the roles and associated responsibilities for each of the significant

partners was identified as being important to the placement, better enabling each of them to manage the demands by knowing their own obligations and what could be expected of others. The partners, especially the university lecturers and coordinating teachers, felt that where the student teachers demonstrated commitment through attendance and planning, the other partners were more inclined to support and value the student and the MMP programme.

Coping with demands, understanding roles and responsibilities, participation, thinking and talking, and commitment were linked and interdependent. While the participants identified these themes as important, there may well be other important characteristics that have not been mined from the data within the scope of this study. The following chapter discusses these findings, linking the perspectives of the students, coordinating teachers and university lecturers to the literature and the earlier conceptual model.

## Chapter Six: Discussion

### 6.1 Introduction

Using a narrative inquiry approach this research examined perceptions regarding a school-based placement for student teachers in a distance initial teacher education (ITE) programme. The thesis of this research is that where key factors such as relationships, belonging, commitment, knowledge, support and experience exist for student teachers in their placement, they will have positive perceptions about this learning teaching experience. Based on this, data were gathered and analysed to explore the following research questions:

1. *What are the perceived key factors of a distance primary teacher-education school-based placement?*
2. *How do these perceived key factors link and which factors are critical to this school-based placement?*
3. *Does the developed model provide a way of explaining a distance school-based placement?*

The study began by investigating the key experiences of a group of nine student teachers. Their perspectives were then validated against the views of nine coordinating teachers and four university lecturers involved in the same placements. This research was undertaken with a sample of second year students from the University of Waikato's Mixed Mode Presentation (MMP) programme, a distance option of the three-year Bachelor of Teaching (primary) undergraduate degree.

This chapter addresses the question "Which key factors are perceived as critical to a school-based placement?" based on the literature reviewed in Chapter Two and findings highlighted from the detailed narratives in Chapter Five. Given the factors identified in the conceptual model (Chapter Three) and the influences explored through the analysis of the gathered evidence, this chapter discusses the characteristics that are perceived as critical in this distance school-based ITE placement. While a primary purpose of school-based experiences (SBE) is for student teachers to learn and theorise the practice of teaching, this research was

not an investigation into this particular purpose. No attempt was made in this research to directly address the practices of learning teaching but inevitably associated issues are included.

This research was undertaken to provide new knowledge and better understanding about these particular placements. The gathering, analysing and reporting of stories provided opportunities to explore how each of the participants perceived their own experiences and to share the findings and new knowledge with the wider ITE community. The chapter is organised to discuss the findings and identify new knowledge. The key ideas discussed are:

- The relationship between student teacher and coordinating teacher was found to be influential.
- There was a greater sense of belonging and improved perspective where the base-school acted as a ‘village’ for learning around a placement.
- Where student teachers showed commitment to learning, teaching and the placement, the coordinating teacher and university lecturer reported they were more likely to devote time and engage with their student teacher.
- There was a perceived importance regarding support for managing demands and challenges of a distance placement.
- When coordinating teachers felt they were well informed about the placement they reported greater confidence in working with a student teacher.
- There were varying views expressed with regard to previous experience or involvement with the base-school, ITE or MMP programme.

The conclusion of this chapter shows how each of these key findings, which appeared critical to these placements, links to the factors within the model (Chapter Three).

### ***6.2 Influential relationships in school-based placements: student as teacher***

This first section discusses the influence of relationships in the placement. It was found that positive relationships influenced the perceptions of these placements as suitable locations to learn teaching, especially for the student teachers. The discussion first considers the relationship between the student



teacher and the coordinating teacher, identified by the participants, a range of literature (including Ferrier-Kerr, 2004; Haigh, 2004, White, 2006b) and my own experiences as most influential in the placement. Where this relationship was perceived as effective, the student teachers talked from a position of self as teacher and therefore perceived they had greater status among colleagues and within their base-school. This is followed by discussing the apparent impact on the placement of relationships between these student teachers and others, including their peers, school-based staff and university-based staff. The final section briefly discusses perceived impact on the placement of the relationship between the coordinating teacher and university lecturer.

### *6.2.1 Relationships between student teachers and coordinating teachers*

All participants described the relationship between student teacher and coordinating teacher as the most influential relationship in this school-based aspect of their ITE programme, consistent with my own professional experiences and the findings of other researchers (Calder et al., 1993; Hastings & Squires, 2002; Lind, 2004; Rivers, 2006; Turnbull, 2005). Examples of the participants' ideas were affirmed in Collective story #4:

Learning communities and support was all about people and Ruby's CT had been essential to this. Ada [CT] and Ruby spent a lot of time together, working through issues, planning, teaching, reflecting and learning. Of all Ruby's relationships this had developed into the strongest.

Other comments by participants which matched my own observations relating to this student teacher-coordinating teacher relationship included: "...you are going to work closely together and we do lots of talking together" (CT8, Int#2); "they probably are closer because you see them more often and you do spend more time with them (CT4, Int#2); and "from what I hear those relationships are fairly well developed" (UL2, Int#2).

The narratives of Sarah, Sandra, Teresa and Jamie and their associated coordinating teachers and university lecturers suggested that effective relationships developed because the student teacher and coordinating teacher spent a lot of time together. They emphasised how a previous relationship with the base-school was also to their advantage in terms of an established relationship. Being in a position to be placed with a teacher where there was already a sound

relationship (between student teacher and coordinating teacher) was seen by participants and some researchers as advantageous (Dunne & Locke, 1996; Murray-Harvey et al., 2000; Williams, 1994) as it accelerated the process at the start of the placement developing into a close, open and reciprocal partnership. In his work, Posner (2000) commented that student teachers new to a placement took time to adjust and that where the school-based teacher educator was well informed about the student teacher's knowledge and abilities, as was the case for Sarah, Sandra and Teresa, the relationship typically developed quickly.

While some researchers noted that there would be a power imbalance in these relationships (McGee et al., 1998; Whyte, 2000), these participants felt that where the connection was a deliberate and collegial act on the part of the coordinating teacher it was more likely to lead to being a suitable location for learning teaching. The findings indicated, through the suggestions made by six of the participants, that relationship building was a deliberate act, "probably the first thing that you do when [the student teacher] comes in and that is the responsibility of the associate teacher" (CT1 Int#2). As UL3 also highlighted,

... successful partnerships, seems to me, work with the student teacher in a collegial way and by collegial I mean they listen to what our students have to say, make suggestions often but then they expect the student to go and think about these things for themselves.... Seems that those partnerships are really successful. (Int#2)

Emphasising 'being deliberate' ensured the participants had time together to observe and talk about teaching – to reflect. The coordinating teachers felt that it was their responsibility to develop the relationship while some university lecturers felt that it was also the responsibility of the student teacher "to make the effort" (UL4, Int#2). CTs 1 and 3, however, were adamant that it was not the responsibility of the student teacher, as the student teachers were the visitors in their classrooms and needed to behave appropriately rather than being the one trying to build a relationship. Such things take time as well as effort.

These student teachers concurred that when they were treated collegially as peers by their coordinating teacher, they could participate in a teaching role more easily, as also indicated in other research (Beck & Kosnik, 2002; Clarke, 1997; Lind, 2004; Maynard, 2000; McGee et al., 2001). The narratives of six student teachers reported a positive influence where both partners considered themselves

as equals and learners. Likewise, CTs 2, 5 and 6 reported treating their “adult student more like an equal” (CT2, Int#1). These participants suggested that this made for a more inclusive environment for the children and the student teacher. These student teachers felt valued by the coordinating teacher when they were treated as a peer, also reported in other research (Beck & Kosnik, 2002; Jones, 2001; McGee et al., 2001).

The student teachers in this investigation reported that some relationships assisted with their learning about teaching, learning and study, while others they felt hindered their progress because of impediments such as time commitments. However, while two student teachers had some relationship challenges, no student reported a conflict situation that seriously hindered her development. If a goal for this teacher education programme included encouraging critical reflection (University of Waikato, 2003), then “the barrier of distance education itself needs to be overcome” (Spencer, 1995, p. 101) before this is achieved. The participants in this study hinted that distance ITE needs to be conceived not as unsupported, individualised learning, but learning as a social practice within specific relational and cultural contexts. These findings indicated that establishing the most influential relationship between coordinating teacher and student teacher, between ‘old-timer’ and ‘newcomer’ (Lave & Wenger, 1991), was critical. In this study, where the student teachers felt they belonged to the base-school they talked about a sense of being a ‘teacher’.

### *6.2.2 Student teachers developing a sense of ‘self as teacher’*

The second aspect of developing influential relationships was the student teacher developing a sense of self within the placement. One purpose of an ITE placement is to help a student teacher develop a sense of “self-as-teacher”. In a placement where the student teacher reported that she was predominantly perceived as ‘teacher’, this typically had a positive consequence (for example as reported by Beck & Kosnik, 2000; Bullough, 1997), reasoning that this was a suitable place to learn teaching. Sandra reported such an inclusive relationship:

She had managed to build on her relationship with her CT; she now felt less like a glorified teacher aide and was given a more meaningful role during her school day. She would run the morning programme under the guidance of her CT and had begun to feel more comfortable sitting at the front of the class. (Narrative #4)

Like most student teachers reported in ITE literature (Beck & Kosnik, 2002; Bullough, 1997; Maynard, 2001), the student teachers in this research demonstrated a strong desire to build up a relationship where others would view them as ‘teacher’. The perceptions of the participants in this study and the ideas of Posner (2000) illustrated that as student teachers move into an ITE programme, they have their own constructions of ‘teacher’ and during their placement they strive to achieve that ‘ideal’ through their relationship with their coordinating teacher. Margaret and Catherine were already working as ‘teacher’ in a local secondary school so they came with relatively fixed perceptions about the role. Sarah, Sandra and Jamie had been working closely with teachers as teacher aides and Teresa, Mary-Lou and Claire had been parent helpers so it is assumed that they also had relatively fixed perceptions of what teaching ‘is’.

An open relationship between student teacher and coordinating teacher is a prerequisite for meaningful reflections on the complex dynamics of teaching. The novice teacher must not get the idea that teaching is unproblematic, that it continues along a preordained pathway (Loughran, 2007) as is typically the perception through the uncritical lens of a naïve student teacher. In the University of Waikato’s MMP programme, the development of a sustainable relationship between student teacher and coordinating teacher, was critical to the student teacher’s perception of ‘self as teacher’ and therefore their perception that the placement was a suitable place for them to learn teaching. The coordinating teachers and university lecturers agreed that an important task for teachers, schools and ITE providers was to develop a critical perspective which would help student teachers begin to understand what it means to be ‘teacher’. This point is highlighted in the MMP programme goals (University of Waikato, 2003). Maynard (2000) cautioned that this desire to become teacher, learn teaching, to create their own teacher identity, was potential for conflict as all student teachers strived to be ‘teacher’ themselves. The student teachers suggested the potential tensions came from this desire for identity and independence alongside inclusion and acceptance. As also found by Ferrier-Kerr (2005), in this setting many of these student teachers strived to facilitate their own learning teaching and were reported by their coordinating teacher as valued co-learners. The placement was a safe place for them to “problematise the ordinary” (Loughran, 2007, p. 2) in an

attempt to unravel the complexities of teaching as was typically expected (Beck & Kosnik, 2000).

### *6.2.3 Impact of relationships between student teacher and others*

The third aspect of influential relationships was the importance of the student teacher connecting with a range of others and how each connection impacted on the perceived effectiveness of the placement. For student teachers these placements were a social context (Posner, 2000) involving many people including a coordinating teacher, university lecturer and children, and others including base-school staff members, colleagues, family and friends, many at a distance from the university campus. Most ‘others’ involved with these student teachers were reported as having a limited number of interactions with the student teacher, especially those beyond the placement classroom, as time was limited. However, not surprisingly, relationships developed with significant others within the electronic environment also had an impact on the placements for these student teachers, also reported by Anderson (2004).

These student teachers, like those in the research by Donaghy et al. (2003), reported that the most effective relationships beyond the coordinating teacher were with colleagues, either in a face-to-face study group or through electronic communications. Some study groups were reported as being organised locally but the majority of interactions were electronic, facilitated through the online discussion groups associated with papers and the programme. As in this study, Mayer’s (2002) study concluded that electronic media provided effective “ways of linking to colleagues ... and lecturers” as well as providing networks for “seeking advice and ideas” (p. 191). These student teachers judged that relationships with peers did not initially appear to have a direct impact on the placement but helped them develop more effective relationships within the placement. The student teachers, coordinating teachers and university lecturers reported that where student teachers had strong ties with their peers, this helped with pastoral care but did not always provide the professional or academic support required (CTs 3, 6, 7 and ULs 1, 4). It was noted that those student teachers who reported participation in a study group felt this gave them both pastoral care and professional support.

The findings in this study supported Lind's (2004) research that the relationship between the student teacher and university lecturer was not regarded by participants as having the strongest influence on student teacher progress but was regarded by some as influential in the overall effectiveness of their placement (Calder et al., 1993). Nevertheless, where the relationship between university lecturer and student teacher was perceived as effective (for Sarah, Sandra, Margaret, Catherine and Jamie), the university lecturer was recognised by the student teachers as another mentor and again assisted in overcoming any perceived barriers to having limited contact with other university-based teacher educators. I stress that I was aware that a small number of my student teachers contacted me frequently to seek support but others were rarely in communication. Nonetheless, the student teachers in this study suggested the relationship was considered more as a formal arrangement. This was due in part possibly because of the perceived supervisory aspect of the university lecturers' role as highlighted by Calder et al. (1993) and Claire who "thought of this relationship as rather formal" and "that she would have visits from a representative of the university to make sure that the relationships were working, and to communicate with the principal to make sure that she was fitting into the school well" (Narrative #2). While other relationships existed in these placements they are not discussed here, as they were not noted by the participants as impacting to any large degree on the placement. Other reported examples of useful relationships included the base-school principal and other staff, other MMP students and locals.

#### *6.2.4 Impact of relationships between teachers and lecturers*

No perceived impact on the placement emanating from the relationship between coordinating teacher and university lecturer was reported significantly by the student teachers. The time that the coordinating teachers and university lecturers in this study spent together was typically limited to the visits made by the university lecturer to the base-school. The research of Calder et al. (1993), Rivers (2006) and Williams and Soares (2002) indicated clearly that time was the major issue in developing and maintaining a relationship between these partners. However, it was not clear from the narratives how significant such a relationship truly was. The value and extent of the time allocated to visits described in this study was reportedly determined by the culture and attitude of the base-school

staff toward ITE and the MMP programme, an issue also identified by Beck and Kosnik (2000) and Soliman (2001). Brief greetings or non-appearance of coordinating teachers during visits testified to a lack of connection between coordinating teacher and university lecturer. One aspect that I had concerns about in this ITE programme was the utilisation of a large number of schools as base-schools, where the quality of teaching and learning was an unknown. McGee et al. (1998) also proposed that such an issue could be detrimental to school-university collaborations. CTs 1, 2, 4, 5 and 7 all made mention of the lack of time to talk with the university staff or work within the programme which was reflected in the comments of these university lecturers and my previous research (Ussher, 2003).

With time being perceived at such a premium in school-based placements, it was emphasised by Hastings and Squires (2002) that “power and traditions” would dominate school-university partnership meetings. However, it is noted in this study that the meetings between coordinating teacher and university lecturer were perceived as attaining the desired result – to ensure that student teachers were provided with opportunities to achieve in their placement. For these placements, the expectations for these meetings were perceived as being met. Nonetheless, Lind (2004) suggested from his study that such visits might be “diluted by the diplomacy the [university lecturer] felt obliged to adopt” (p. 174) because of the busy schedule of schools. Similarly, there were times when my own visits were brief encounters rather than including any lengthy dialogue. This being the case, the coordinating teachers and university lecturers in this research indicated that their time together was generally restricted to talking about the student teacher – meeting requirements, progress, future needs, and problems. However, Williams (1994) suggested that the agenda at such meetings did not really matter, so long as it was “to the benefit of the student teacher” (p. 179).

Opportunities for these coordinating teachers to talk about teaching and learning were confined to topics directly associated with the student teacher as reported by CTs 4, 5 and 8. They drew attention to the fact that there needed to be more information provided and time to sit down before the year began to “look at the programme for these students” (CT5, Int#2). However, the university lecturers had quite a different view, suggesting that the level of this

communication was determined by the teachers' needs. These university lecturers felt time was made available to talk with teachers, to make sure they were "happy and knowledgeable" (UL2, Int#2) about what they were expected to provide for their student teacher. While it would be encouraging to see greater opportunities for professional learning in these meetings between coordinating teachers and university lecturers (as suggested by Clarke, 2000; Haigh & Ward, 2004; Hastings, 2004; Lind, 2004), neither group reported any other significant conversations, primarily because the relationship was fleeting and focused on student teacher progress.

In summary, effective relationships developed within these placements were seen as reciprocal, relying on each partner's ability to provide as well as seek and accept support. The primary, most influential relationship in these distance placements was that between student teacher and coordinating teacher. Where these were developed quickly and deliberately into a collegial bond they facilitated an effective setting for learning teaching. Such relationships were explained as allowing student teachers to portray themselves as 'teacher' rather than 'student' and to participate successfully in a range of communities of learning and partnerships involving professional and pastoral care. As expected, the student teachers were the central focus of the placement and it is argued that their relationships were fundamental. On the other hand, the coordinating teachers and university lecturers indicated that they would like to have had a relationship which involved more opportunities to work together on aspects of teaching but conceded that circumstances in these distance placements did not make this possible. Knowledge of and skills in establishing and maintaining interpersonal relationships is portrayed in the model as a critical factor. *Relationships* is positioned as a pivotal factor in the effectiveness of MMP distance school-based placements.

### ***6.3 Base-school as 'village' for learning: facilitating perspective***

The second factor perceived as critical to the success of the placements was the concept of the base-school as a 'village' for learning. The African proverb, "it takes a whole village to raise a child", implies it may take a whole school to educate a teacher. Supporting the learning of individuals is a task for many, too



special for just one ‘villager’. While these proverbs are simplistic, in the context of ITE the metaphor of ‘village’ is relatively unexplored. This metaphor implies the ‘village’ includes adults and children, (teachers and learners), families and individuals (classrooms and students) and insiders and outsiders (class members and the whole school). People in the wider school-community are ‘villagers’ and can share in the growth and development of a student learning teaching. Learning teaching is a complex and highly interactive endeavour (Clarke, 1997) so it is natural to assume that it will take more than the handful of teacher educators in a teaching placement to complete the task.

In the placement settings studied, where the student teacher, coordinating teacher and university lecturer felt included as part of the base-school, this was reported as engendering a greater sense of belonging and accomplishment which was assessed by the student teachers as feeling valued. In turn, it was reported by each group of participants that such situations enabled each partner to better understand the placement from the other partners’ perspectives, perhaps because each partner interacted with a range of people. This was especially apparent in the findings for: the student teacher having a better appreciation of their coordinating teacher’s obligations to school, children, profession and family; the university lecturer having a greater appreciation of the student teacher’s commitment to work, life and family; the coordinating teacher having a better appreciation of their student teacher’s wider community involvement and study requirements; and, I predict, the reciprocal understanding for both coordinating teacher and university lecturer in terms of their own roles and responsibilities.

This section explores the significance of a student teacher’s inclusion in a ‘village’ for learning and the surprising impact this had on perspective. I had not expected this to be such a significant factor. In summarising the findings, the aspects of belonging, accomplishment and perspective often challenged the student teachers’, coordinating teachers’ and university lecturers’ values, beliefs and attitudes associated with teaching, learning and study, which in turn impacted on their perceived suitability of a placement to learn teaching, especially for the student teachers.

### *6.3.1 Belonging to the base-school village for learning*

Where student teachers claimed a sense of belonging to their base-school, they perceived the placement to be an effective place for their learning (especially Sarah, Sandra, Margaret, Catherine, Teresa and Jamie). The coordinating teachers who were perceived as successful by their student teachers (such as CTs 1, 2, 3, 7 and 8), worked together with other teachers and schools, seeing the relationship with their student teacher as a collegial act where others could be actively involved and engaged. As discussed previously, Beck and Kosnik (2002), Clarke (1997) and McGee et al. (2001) found in their research that many coordinating teachers liked to foster a collegial relationship with their student teachers. Such teachers deliberately connected to a range of learning communities where teaching was discussed and ideas shared freely.

Learning teaching requires exploration of the wider schooling and social context (Bullough, 1997) and student teachers like Sarah, Teresa, Sandra, Catherine, Mary-Lou and Claire looked for every opportunity to develop their placement contacts as widely as possible. The narratives in this study highlighted the importance of the coordinating teachers and student teachers establishing networks that extended across the school and sometimes beyond to link in with other “experts” in specific aspects of teaching. Little indication is given of any connections made beyond a placement classroom in the literature because reviewed studies focused primarily on the practicum. However, enabling the student teacher to work with other teachers in their base-school and beyond, I believe, was reported as having a positive impact, providing each student teacher with a range of people for purposes of reflection and resources (Calder & Whyte, 2000; Farr Darling, 2001; Mueller, 2003). As in other research, in this study such connections were reported as ensuring that student teachers and other teachers were in a position to help each other (Beck & Kosnik, 2000; Goodfellow, 2000). Six student teachers found other teachers in their base-school were very supportive (Collective stories #3 & #4) and six coordinating teachers and two university lecturers endorsed the importance of support from others in the base-school. Those who spoke positively about the base-school involvement suggested that all base-school ‘villagers’ took an interest in the progress of the student teacher. Six student teachers talked specifically about how their principal was

supportive and five of them found a lot of support from at least one other school. The concept of learning about teaching through a ‘whole village’ approach to the placement came through strongly from these participants.

My experiences indicated that having the opportunity to work with many teachers within a placement is a further positive advantage. Farr-Darling (2001) suggested that being involved in a community of inquiry, such as can be provided within a placement school in this MMP programme, can provide purposeful and inclusive learning opportunities. The student teachers in this study considered their involvement in a range of networks including the base-school, was beneficial for them, and Smith (2000) also pointed out that where *only* the school was responsible, then student teacher learning was diminished. For these participating student teachers, having extensive and diverse communities of learning helped with the isolation of distance study (which impacted on the placement) and helped to form a positive view of teaching. The findings suggest that the greater the number of ‘villagers’ involved, the more confident the student teachers felt about meeting the challenges.

The inclusion of the university lecturers into this ‘village’ was also considered by the participating university lecturers and some researchers as being important to the progress of the student teachers and establishment of such placements (Calder et al., 1993; Simpson, 2002; Timperley, 2001; Williams & Soares, 2002; Winitzky et al., 1992). Such opportunities to share and reflect with a wide and diverse range of people assisted these student teachers (especially Sandra, Helen, Teresa and Jamie) in overcoming the lack of face-to-face interactions that they considered a challenge in distance learning.

Along with Lind (2004), I believe that those partners who had a positive and open perspective, valued the place of school-based placements as an integral part of teacher education programmes and they demonstrated this worth in various ways. This theory was endorsed by UL3:

So I think some schools get quite excited about the possibility of having a student, they like the idea.... And if the school is sort of into looking at how to enhance children’s learning via technology they sometimes will accept the fact that the student teacher will be a really good asset and really valuable. (UL3, Int#1)

The student teachers in this study reported varying experiences in their base-school, from those who felt fully included throughout their school (Sarah, Sandra, Jamie) to others who pushed themselves forward (Claire, Helen), to those who at times felt excluded or marginalised (Catherine, Mary-Lou).

Catherine has been welcomed into other schools that she has come in to contact with through work. She feels these schools supply her with the connectedness and acceptance needed in being a valued member of a team [that her base-school now did not]. (Narrative #4)

However, Catherine also cautioned, “It’s probably not all my base-school [’s fault]: it could be [my perceptions]. You have to look at yourself” (FG#3). As reported throughout the findings, this research showed that where the ‘villagers’ discussed tasks and assignments, provided resources, helped with planning, sat and talked about study and life, made available their class for teaching practice, or generally showed an interest in the student teacher’s learning teaching through conversations and supported reflection, the student teachers responded and testified to a sense of belonging, accomplishment and perspective.

### *6.3.2 Accomplishment in the base-school village*

The second aspect of the main idea ‘base-school as village for learning’ highlights that student teachers felt a growing sense of accomplishment in such placements. The student teachers, coordinating teachers and university lecturers in this study who classified a base-school as focused on learning, commented about being included, able to contribute, part of the whole school and suggested that feelings of distance were reduced. These participants affirmed this idea in Collective story #3.

For Ruby, Ada had endeavoured to have other teachers on the staff take on a supporting role. It was natural that the ex-MMP students who were now staff members would be interested but Ada encouraged other teachers to take on the roles of mentors, supporters and advisers, after all Ada’s role was one of coordinating teacher. To her, this implied that she was not to be the only staff member involved in Ruby’s programme and progress. The university suggested the role of a coordinating teacher would be more of a facilitator for Ruby in the school.

The participants in this study suggested that ‘learning-focused’ schools demonstrated a confidence and competence about ITE, similar to how other researchers described effective places to learn as successful practicum settings (for example, Deng, 2004a; Graham & Thornley, 2000; McGee et al., 1994; Pring,

1999; Smith, 2000) where theory and practice were treated as interrelated - as Lind (2004, p. 169) suggested, “bridging the theory-practice divide”. Settings where the placement was perceived as an integral part of the school, created opportunities for student teachers, coordinating teachers, and university lecturers to access, contribute and feel part of the whole school and work with many teachers and a range of supportive educators. Such placements appeared to have a greater chance of being perceived as successful in terms of student teachers bridging the theory-practice gap. The student teachers and university lecturers agreed that the base-school was vital to facilitating this process.

In my experiences, where there were limited meaningful learning opportunities which challenged the student teacher’s thinking then the student teacher’s initial perspective of teaching, derived from their own school experiences, was too embedded to allow for construction of contemporary knowledge of theory and practice. They were ‘stuck in the past’. Five of these student teachers pointed out that their initial school-based perceptions about teaching and learning were not challenged during their placement because of the limited time given to observation, practice and reflection. However, where the student teachers in this study reported being exposed in their placement to many other educators, where the school was seen as a centre for learning, with opportunities to talk and think with others, this impacted significantly on their perceptions and development toward ‘self as teacher’.

### *6.3.3 Inclusion in the base-school village: Adding perspective*

The third aspect of the ‘base-school as village’ idea was that of providing a broader perspective on learning. The six student teachers in this study who had previously been associated with schools, whether the base-school or another, reported that working with their base-school and/or coordinating teacher was a good thing to do and consequently, that they did not feel so isolated at the start of their ITE programme. The three student teachers who had limited or no prior experience with their base-school (Claire, Mary-Lou, Helen) did not share similar feelings of belonging. This feeling of belonging to the ‘village’, I believe impacted positively on the student teachers’ perspective of aspects associated with

their placement such as teachers, teaching, learning, schools and education. However, as UL3 warned,

... they also have to remember don't they, that they are coming for this particular qualification as well and the qualification won't happen with only having an effective relationship with the coordinating teacher, will it? You have got to engage at all levels. It seems to me like there is [*sic*] multiple situations with which they have to engage in and this is the one that is hard for some people. (Int#2)

Cameron (1995) concluded from his study that school-based teacher educators needed to show a “willingness and desire” to work with student teachers, where there were opportunities for “mutual benefits”. The participating coordinating teachers in this study agreed that they were willing partners the majority of the time, especially when their student teachers showed a commitment to the placement (see section 6.4; p. 230). The willingness of these coordinating teachers communicated a positive attitude to the other partners in this ITE programme. Calder et al. (1993) also found this effect during their interviews with university lecturers.

The student teachers participating in this study who reported a feeling of belonging to their base-school, wrote and talked about their coordinating teacher, the principal, other staff and the university lecturer positively. Two examples were:

Sarah was feeling more confident about what she might teach and roughed out a plan. This was taken back to the staffroom. [Her CT] and the other teachers looked at it and made some valuable suggestions. (Narrative #4)

And,

She had worked in the local school as a parent and a teacher aide so was familiar with staff and students. They made her contributions seem valued and were always asking for ideas and help with areas she was familiar with. She was consistently involved in school activities, which she really enjoyed. (Sandra, Narrative #2)

None of the literature reviewed addressed this chain of events, where inclusion in a ‘village’ of learning was reciprocal and cyclical. However, my experiences indicated that coordinating teachers, who took their role seriously, were more likely to create an effective setting for their student teacher. CT3 talked about this point:

Yes and they are important to me and them being in the room is important to me and I tell them and try hopefully to show them how important they are in the room, what an important part of the class they are, having them up there with

me as teachers, you know right along side, trying to teach along side by showing them how important they are as teachers. ... They are going to feel a lot better and do a lot more for children and learning in the classroom if they are feeling important and valued. (Int#1)

I endorse Catherine's comments when she wrote that she expected her coordinating teacher would provide "the classroom, the students, and the learning environment that [she] would observe and practise teaching in" (Narrative #3) but it was more than just providing. Where this occurred the student teachers were motivated.

In fact her CT had even started asking her opinion about some of the students in the class. Sandra was feeling more valued at a professional level and feeling a lot more confident within herself. (Sandra, Narrative #4)

The student teachers who perceived their placement as suitable places to learn teaching, were excited and motivated by the notion of learning and study, they actively sought out time and opportunities to talk and practice. The five student teachers who felt this motivation through belonging, worked hard at producing results – both tangible and subtle.

The five student teachers who produced such results encouraged other 'villagers' to reciprocate. Deng (2004a) and Graham and Thornley (2000) commented that a commitment to new learning by student teachers showed a forward-looking perspective rather than the more traditional "knowledge as a commodity" approach. Such commitment prompted a positive attitude on the part of the coordinating teachers in this study toward the student teacher and ITE programme.

In Ada's words "Each of us is on our own personal learning journey and I am so pleased to be a part of yours. We have developed a very strong bond, which I am sure the on-campus students would develop with their lecturers. I feel an integral part of your journey and I hope you feel part of mine as I value what you have contributed to my journey." Ruby feels a real loyalty to Ada. (Collective story #4)

CT3 endorsed this idea at interview:

Well I can see that they value me because I've seen them modelling off what I do and saying what I do.... they come into the room and as well as getting involved they're not trying to take it over and that's really important.... they of course don't want to become a clone but on the other hand I can see a lot of what I say in that I can see it coming through in them. That to me shows respect and value that they've listened to what I've said. (Int#1)

Such interested 'villagers' gave confidence to the student teachers in this study, which materialised as commitment. The high level of commitment of

seven of the nine student teachers was evident in their narratives and the comments of their associated coordinating teachers and university lecturers. This was affirmed in Collective story #1.

Ruby was more passionate about teaching and children than that. Being the 'parent as first teacher' for her three children gave her the experience, the first 'taste' of real teaching, and since those first beginnings, children had always been her mission – she just loves being with children. She was accepted into teachers' college just after secondary school but life took a different path so she never made it. She now has many life experiences and maturity and realises that she still wants to be a teacher.

And the writing of several student teachers including Helen,

It had always been her dream to be a primary school teacher, so she was excited. ... Helen felt she'd be comfortable around students' as she'd always had a good rapport with children. She also felt that, because she had a daughter, she had a slight advantage in understanding children. (Narrative #1)

Such an attitude on the part of these student teachers was reported as prompting a positive reciprocal perspective on the part of the university lecturers toward the base-school. I also expected and found that support and interest in a placement from the university-based personnel impacted positively on the student teacher's perspective. I assert that this was because it revealed a positive view about the student teacher's chosen career – teaching.

In summary, perspective is reported in this study as the way in which each partner applied values, beliefs and attitude to their distance-teaching placement. Perspective was grounded in the life and experiences of each individual participant and this study has not attempted to investigate the depth of perspective, but rather to explore the attitudes of the partners pertaining to this placement setting. People entering teaching hold attitudes and beliefs and these may or may not be compatible with the current thinking or approaches encountered in this ITE programme or the base-school. Deng (2004a) wrote about this as a possible point of conflict for the student teacher. In this study where a student teacher felt that she belonged to the base-school, was included in the social, professional and cultural milieu, and that the school was a 'village' for her learning, then she showed greater commitment and a more positive perspective to teaching and becoming teacher. This commitment was reported as being typically demonstrated through her attendance, application to tasks, planning and preparation. This in turn, I believe, prompted the student to commit



more time and effort to the placement and its requirements. Perspective is suggested as a key, driving element by some researchers (Asher & Malet, 1999; Graham & Thornley, 2000; Sivan & Chan, 2003). The conceptual model positioned *Perspective* as a critical factor.

#### ***6.4 Opportunities for reflection through professional commitment***

Based on the evidence in this study, the university lecturers and coordinating teachers indicated a greater penchant for and support of those student teachers who showed a commitment to learning teaching. Commitment by a student teacher was reflected in the time and effort devoted to planning, preparation, attendance, meetings, task achievement, academic success, classroom involvement and initiative, traits also highlighted by other researchers (Cameron et al., 2006) and the Graduating Teacher Standards which also requires ITE graduates to be “committed members of the profession” through being ethical, professional, cooperative and articulate (New Zealand Teachers Council, 2007b). I considered attention paid to these student teachers, perceived by others as committed, as natural for the coordinating teachers and university lecturers. It was suggested that such commitment encouraged the coordinating teacher and university lecturer to devote a greater amount of their time to this student teacher, engaging in ongoing conversations about teaching, learning, self and others. It followed that this in turn provided opportunities for the student teacher to be involved and then, as was reported, to reflect on practice and learning.

##### ***6.4.1 Commitment by the partners to learning and teaching***

Where placements in this study were perceived as suitable sites for learning teaching, the student teacher, coordinating teacher and university lecturer all demonstrated capability and commitment to learning in a broad sense - their own and others. In the narratives, the participants reported that wanting to learn was elementary and having a desire and ability to work with and for children was perceived as a driving force behind the decision of most of these partners to become involved in this aspect of ITE (Younger et al., 2004).

Student teachers in this study and in other literature, attached a great deal of importance to firstly, being welcomed into a school and classroom (Maynard,

2000; Turnbull, 2005) and secondly, being valued as a learning teacher (Dobbins, 1996). The student teachers in this study acknowledged that being welcomed was also dependent on their own commitment, that is, when they gave time and prepared well for meetings and classroom tasks. Like Sarah, six of these student teachers “always thought [they] had the ability and commitment because [they had] done it before and because [they had] always enjoyed [the teaching]” (FG#1). It could have been that having had a previous long-term association with their local school was taken as commitment to teaching and children, especially as reported by six of the student teachers. They had moved to the MMP programme from a previous relationship in schools where they worked closely with teachers and children. These student teachers had sought out teachers and other like-minded people to work with, those who would help them in working towards becoming their ‘ideal teacher’ (Maynard, 2001), especially where there were frequent opportunities for further teaching practice.

Eight of the nine student teachers in this study reported that they wanted to be a teacher well before they became enrolled in this ITE programme. The narratives of Helen, Sarah, Sandra, Margaret and Catherine referred to “making a difference for children”; some of these student teachers wanted to make a difference for all children while others for those children perceived to be at-risk in the education system. Lind’s (2004) research similarly reported student teachers who had a “desire to ignite and excite the pupils’ interests” (p. 172). Younger et al.’s research (2004) also found student teachers wanted to be a teacher in order to work with children; making a commitment to make a difference for children, contributing to society and being a good role model.

The student teachers in this research reported enthusiastically about the idea of being a ‘teacher placed in a local classroom’ rather than being a ‘student studying at a distance’. The one-day placement appealed to their perception of teacher education, engaging with children in a ‘real’ classroom. The Developmental Studies Centre (2000) suggested that student teachers must work hard at becoming an integral part of the classroom community and in order to achieve this inclusion, they must begin with and maintain high expectations of self and success in terms of learning teaching throughout the placement – committing day after day.

Seven of the coordinating teachers reported their student teacher as committed to teaching practice and the placement. Not surprisingly, the associated behaviours were their student teacher's initiative, responsibility, preparedness and communication. The following are examples of the coordinating teachers' perceptions of their student teachers' commitment:

Yes I expect the student to know exactly what they have to do because I would expect them to have plans and be ready and to come and say to me 'Today I want to do this'. (CT8, Int#2)

Initiative, they've got to have, if they come in and show initiative and they are willing and they want to. (CT7, Int#2)

And Catherine also confirmed this point,

I know I have the ability and commitment to study and practice to be a teacher, ... I know I have. And to practice at being a teacher I have enjoyed working with children. (FG#1)

However, as in Robinson's (1999) study, these participants also reported student teachers who lacked commitment and professionalism. All university lecturers observed differences in the application by student teachers to their planning but this alone could not be taken as a criterion for commitment. University lecturers suggested that long term "involvement in community" was also an indication of commitment (ULs 1, 3 & 4).

Commitment to the placement also showed in the student teachers' narratives. Most of the coordinating teachers reported that this placement design gave the student teachers the opportunity to become involved in the general classroom milieu:

... this would have to be one of the best models because you have time to get to know the training teacher, they get to know you, they're not frightened, they're not thinking 'Well, what are you going to do next?' – they can come here and be relaxed and they know the context ... (CT3, Int#1)

It was assumed that each of the coordinating teachers was committed to the children and their learning, because as Williams (1994) indicated, that is what they were 'trained' to do. The children's learning was their main focus. In addition, as confirmed by Posner (2000), the coordinating teachers in this placement were also independently responsible for creating the contexts for their student teacher to learn teaching. However, as reported from research, learning teaching in placements was more than following set criteria (Clarke, 2000; McGee et al., 2001). As stated previously, the coordinating teacher must show an

openness and willingness to assist the student teacher (Danaher, 1994). The effective coordinating teacher, according to the perceptions of the student teachers in this study, paid attention to them as a learner and showed their support of the student teacher's study, sharing in the learning. Researchers found that coordinating teachers must be committed to the role and tasks of mentor (Kwan & Lopez-Real, 2005) in order to guide the student teacher through their placement opportunities (Clarke, 1997; McGee et al., 2001). Lind (2004) and Hoben (2006) also reported that coordinating teachers must take a positive, professional learning community approach to working with their student teachers. The student teachers in this study reported the benefits of their coordinating teachers' commitment.

Those coordinating teachers perceived as effective by other participants in this study demonstrated a commitment to teaching, teachers and the profession, contributing willingly to the school and its culture of learning. CTs 2, 6, 7 and 8 reported that being able to 'welcome' their student teacher into the profession was considered an important task. In their research, Calder and Whyte (2000) found that some schools had a strong desire to share in the responsibility of emerging teacher development while for others this was not a consideration. Simpson (2002) also suggested that teachers "support student teachers from a sense of commitment to the profession" (p. 5). It appeared in this study that the coordinating teachers perceived as effective by student teachers and university lecturers wanted to be there – volunteering for the role of teaching and sharing with a student teacher. These coordinating teachers made sure their student teachers were made to feel part of the teaching profession which the student teachers valued (Maynard, 2000) as detailed by Sandra, Sarah, Helen, Teresa and Claire.

Coordinating teachers perceived by their student teachers as being committed (such as CTs 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, 10) supported the ITE programme openly in their comments. As noted by other researchers, they made time to reflect and facilitate opportunities to complete required tasks (Calder et al., 1993; Ferrier-Kerr, 2005). These seven coordinating teachers talked to others freely about student teacher progress and issues of interest. As also recorded in other studies, four of the coordinating teachers self-reported that they were committed to helping their student teacher link theory to practice (Bullough, 1997; Jones et al., 1997; Lind,

2004; Sutherland et al., 2005). Interestingly, Beck and Kosnik (2000) found that teachers took greater responsibility for a placement when they were required to evaluate student teacher performance but there was no such requirement for these coordinating teachers in this placement. They said that they liked to know that their student teacher, the school and the university supported them. Those coordinating teachers perceived as effective by university lecturers worked hard at developing a reciprocal relationship with university staff whenever an opportunity arose. However, the student teachers highlighted through one collective story the pressure for time to talk and work with their coordinating teacher.

Ruby thought she would have time to talk with Ada in class, at meetings and through feedback. She did not expect Ada to be too busy to spend much time with; after all, she had volunteered to have Ruby in her room.... Ruby hoped Ada would be accommodating and not feel that her presence in the classroom was either an intrusion or a nuisance. (Collective story #2)

In particular, Helen, Mary-Lou, Margaret, Claire and Jamie reported coordinating teachers who were always or at various times, too busy to provide them with time for their work.

There was a sentiment expressed by some schools in McGee et al.'s (1998) research that school-based teacher educators felt they were there to meet the university's requirements rather than as a shared, collaborative approach to student teachers' learning, as suggested by other researchers (Beck & Kosnik, 2000; Clarke, 1996; Lind, 2004). The participants in this study did not report this sense of collaboration. Typically in this placement, the structures of both institutions (school and university) provided little or no mechanisms or incentives to work together (Winitzky et al., 1992). This was also highlighted in this placement by the fact that there was no formal contractual approach between any of the schools and the University of Waikato, instead relying on informal arrangements (Calder & Whyte, 2000) and goodwill.

#### *6.4.2 Committing time for thinking and talking teaching and learning*

The participants in this study affirmed that the main idea of 'committing time to talking and thinking' about children, teaching and learning was important. To be successful by their own perceptions, most coordinating teachers in this study reported they needed to be skilled at observing. In addition, their role also required them to be able to articulate their own practice and that of their student

teacher. As endorsed in research (Beck & Kosnik, 2000; Clarke, 1997; Lind, 2004; McGee et al., 2001; Rivers, 2006), being a coordinating teacher involved more than just modelling effective practice – implementing all skills required of the mentoring role was vital to the placement (Clarke, 2000; Loughran & Russell, 1997). I emphasise the point made by other researchers (Beck & Kosnik, 2002; Clarke, 1997; Le Cornu et al., 2001; Loughran & Russell, 1997; Simpson, 2002) that coordinating teachers should be of high quality, leaders of teachers and be well positioned to create and utilise time and opportunities at school to reflect on practice and theory. It was obvious that some of these coordinating teachers expected to talk openly with others (students, teachers, university lecturers) about teaching, to articulate principles and theories (Timperley, 2001) and to provide constructive feedback. These findings are consistent with those of Clarke (1997), who showed in his research that coordinating teachers, among other things, should be “coaches” to student teachers. Consistent with other research these student teachers said it was imperative that the coordinating teachers were skilled at providing feedback and reflection opportunities (Timperley, 2001; Williams & Watson, 2004). Through Collective story #4, these participants supported the importance of positive and constructive feedback, which they felt acknowledged, affirmed and rewarded the effort and commitment of student teachers.

In recent years, reflective practice had currency in New Zealand and international teacher education literature as a popular concept (Goodfellow, 2000; Grushka, 2005; Lee & Loughran, 2000; Mueller, 2003). Ability and opportunities to think and talk about learning and practice were categorised by these participants as reflection, an influential factor in their placement, although considered low-level by most ‘reflection’ researchers. The concept of reflection had various interpretations among these participants. Three interviewees talked of reflection as being the student teachers’ ability to talk meaningfully about their teaching practice. UL4 suggested that this was “not always easy for students to do. I think it is a very difficult thing and if you think about the students, there are not too many, only our very good students, can do that to any great degree” (Int#2). UL1 and CT2 were not in agreement with the concept or ability though. UL1 suggested that students were reflective, “in the sense that they read notes, read feedback and [then] they were going to do some thinking about that. Then

they'd move on from that, they'd build on it" (Int#1) and CT2 said the students "can be taught to be reflective very easily, ... You can also teach empathy.... It is not hard to teach but to be reflective you have to be receptive to the teaching" (Int#2). Earlier research indicated that reflection is not an easy skill to learn, that it does take time (Cattley, 2004; Goodfellow, 2000; Lee & Loughran, 2000).

As in these findings, researchers suggested that placement partners needed the ability and time to stand back, observe, think and talk about aspects of the school-based placement in order to make sound judgments about children, teaching and learning (Clarke, 2000; Down, 2006; Sinclair et al., 2004; Smyth & Cherry, 2005). The coordinating teachers and university lecturers reported that all partners must continue to be learners, taking the time to reflect on knowledge, skills, values, beliefs and attitudes in order to be the best teacher possible and career-long learners themselves. As in other research (Grushka et al, 2005; Hastings & Squires, 2002; Lee & Loughran, 2000; Posner, 2000), it was reported by some student teachers and university lecturers in this study that the most effective learning occurred not in the experience itself but in thinking and talking about it with others. Bullough (1997) reported that not all practical teaching experiences were educative, suggesting that reflection was essential to learning about practice. Most coordinating teachers and university lecturers reported creating the time to deliberate on your own practices and knowledge as important. The student teachers also talked about being in a position to create and utilise their time constructively for this purpose. Where reflection on teaching and their own practice did occur with their coordinating teacher, the student teacher reported feelings of the placement being an effective place to learn teaching.

Researchers claimed that reflective teachers and student teachers are first and foremost inquirers (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Farr Darling, 2001). In this study many of the participants constantly asked questions and sought solutions to assist with the placement decisions they faced weekly – "Ruby expected to be able to ask Ada about anything and everything, to talk directly with her about experiences, issues and practices" (Collective story #2). They understood that reflection occurred in, through and about practice, trying out new theories or strategies in their teaching. They were constantly thinking as they attempted a suggested approach from feedback received and then made time to think and talk

about what they had observed or attempted. The findings showed that the participants who were reflective coordinating teachers and student teachers were receptive to the constructive comments of others and were constantly looking to improve their own practice by thinking and talking about what had gone before. As Sarah said,

I like the fact that she's not interested in providing the answers – which she isn't – and that's good! But at the beginning it was a bit hard at times when it was all so new and you're there stumbling along and you're just coping with it all. Sometimes it would have been nice if someone had just said 'oh – this' but ultimately I think it's proved to be the best way. (FG#2)

Many studies reported both student teachers and coordinating teachers had a need for talk and feedback (Beck & Kosnik, 2000; Bullough, 1997; Clarke, 1997; Donaghy et al., 2003; Ferrier-Kerr, 2005; Posner, 2000). Such talk and feedback needed to be “regular, clear to understand and constructive” (Donaghy et al., 2003, p. 37), occurring during and after teaching. Having the time and opportunities to share openly and positively with peers, other teachers and lecturers were rated highly by six student teachers however, not perceived as important as the immediacy they had with their coordinating teacher, suggested by Clarke (2000) as vital. This was heightened where they felt they were included in their base-school's learning environment, also reported in Turnbull's (2005) research. The student teachers sought out others in the base-school and elsewhere to talk teaching.

As reported in other research (Goodfellow, 2000; Sutherland et al., 2005) where reflection time in the classroom was considered a low priority, such as for Helen, Teresa, Mary-Lou, Claire and Jamie, this created problems for the student teachers. The premium assigned to time was highlighted by each of the partners throughout this study. All student teachers considered that their day in school was very busy with their required tasks and working with their coordinating teacher. Often, little or no time was provided for Helen, Claire, Mary-Lou or Jamie to talk through the practical tasks as suggested by researchers as necessary (McGee et al., 2001; Rivers, 2006). On the other hand those student teachers who felt integral to the whole base-school environment (Sarah, Sandra, Teresa) considered their learning community as reciprocal, where everyone would both give and receive in a safe and supported way. The coordinating teachers talked about the already



overloaded classroom programme and how they valued all assistance they got from their student teacher in helping to manage the daily workload. In order to make this time to ‘think and talk’ available the participants felt they needed to establish and utilise many and varied learning opportunities across a range of teacher educators to better enable each student teacher in their learning teaching. They needed to engage with both school-based and university-based educators. Five coordinating teachers (CT4, 5, 6, 8 and 10) felt they were the ones who were responsible for creating the time for engaging in thinking and talking.

Most of these participants indicated that a successful coordinating teacher had empathy for their student teacher’s study as well as creating and utilising time and opportunities to reflect with their student teacher and other professionals about learning and teaching. Many narratives indicated how good some coordinating teachers were at providing time. CTs 1, 2, 3, 7 and 10 commented that they talked openly with others about learning and theories. These findings show, as in Maynard’s (2000) research, that the coordinating teachers knew that they “learn from talk and to talk” (p. 218). As reported above, these partners needed to create time to talk and think, in spite of Greenwood et al. (n.d.) reporting there not being the time. As is well reported, this time to talk and think was critical in assisting the student teachers to put theory into practice in the classroom (Bullough, 1997; Jones et al., 1997; Loughran & Russell, 1997; McGee et al., 2001; Sutherland et al., 2005), deliberately exposing them to the principles and theories of learning and teaching as an integral element of the placement (Pring, 1999).

These coordinating teachers acknowledged they were responsible for providing access to ongoing teaching activity (Lave & Wenger, 1991) where their student teachers could learn teaching and be teacher. They talked about creating time and opportunities for teaching practice, whether for observation, practice or meeting requirements. While Cameron and Baker (2004) reported literature in New Zealand, which identified such placements as opportunities for ‘real’ learning, Posner (2000) on the other hand, pointed out that being in a classroom did not necessarily equate to knowing about teachers and teaching. As Bullough (1997) suggested, teaching is not just the acquisition of practice, there must also be commitment to teaching, the placement and the programme. In this study it appeared that those student teachers who had earlier experiences in the base-

school had a greater awareness of the coordinating teacher's workload and were better able to fit their need to talk around their coordinating teacher's busy schedule. Teresa on the other hand, commented,

... on being worried about being accepted into the class and when [her CT would] get the time to talk to [her] and everything like that. That probably is because [other student teachers] are in the class [as a teacher aide] and you see how busy they are. (FG#2)

For most of these student teachers, their coordinating teacher never said no to any of their requests for teaching practice opportunities. Sarah's coordinating teacher was a case in point – “in my class it didn't matter what I had to do for my school, for university, my teacher never ever said no. She never said ‘no we can't do that’, ‘no that doesn't fit in with our programme’” (FG#2).

In summary, commitment was described as the manner in which the partners attended to the expectations, demands and requirements of the school-based placement. The placement was addressed here in its broadest sense so such commitment included aspects associated with teaching, learning, children, school and partners. ITE is concerned with learning teaching and it was the commitment to all that this embraces that is included in this factor by these participants. It is clear that the partners who found their placement a good place to learn teaching, modelled and valued commitment to teaching and teachers, to learning and learners and to the placement and the ITE programme as a whole. The model in this study positioned *Professional commitment* as a critical factor in the effectiveness of MMP distance placements when learning teaching.

### **6.5 Support for managing the demands of an ITE placement**

In terms of managing placement demands, participants in this study reported that support received was a significant factor in terms of a placement being suitable for learning teaching. The majority of participants in this study needed help in managing the demands and challenges of their placement. Such demands included completing tasks, study requirements, planning and preparation, providing feedback and managing workload. These school-based placements did not function independently; they were an integral part of the MMP programme so demands beyond the placement impacted on the placement itself. For these students, university-based staff and student colleagues provided their academic

support, especially at the beginning of their programme. They reported that the base-school staff provided the learning teaching support so important during placement days. Peers, friends and family gave the pastoral support needed to get them through their academic and teaching challenges. Also, other partners gave and received support in various ways. This section discusses the implications of support for the partners in this study to successfully manage their placement responsibilities, themselves, the relevant aspects associated with studying at a distance, and obligations external to the school-based placement - balancing work and life.

### *6.5.1 Support for managing placement responsibilities*

Support was required for managing the demands and challenges of placement responsibilities. The findings indicated that those base-schools that supported the MMP programme and their student teacher demonstrated this by resourcing the coordinating teacher - making time, other teachers and opportunities available for the coordinating teacher to fulfill her obligations to the student teacher, children and school. Beck and Kosnik's (2000) and Kerry and Farrow's (1996) research supported the need for such resourcing. However, in their New Zealand research on practicum experiences, Julian (1998) and Kane (2007) did not find such support was typical practice. The importance of support being offered to coordinating teachers by their school or university for professional development relating to ITE was clearly verified by research (see Beck & Kosnik, 2000; Calder et al., 1993; Clarke, 1997; Lind, 2004) but was not discussed in any of the narratives in this research.

The practice of these base-schools supporting the student teacher by providing opportunities to work with others and being receptive to their requests, was evident for the majority of student teachers in this research. This was illustrated in the narratives with examples of teaching in other classes, receiving help with tasks from other teachers, and assisting with whole school activities. In the base-school, the student teachers knew or could easily inquire what was expected of them, especially Sandra, Sarah, Teresa and Jamie, who had had some previous experience in their base-school.

When she approached her principal and discussed her decision with her she was most surprised at the level of faith that was evident in support of her

decision. Her CT was to be the teacher she had been working with over the past four years whom she had formed a great respect for and friendship with. She too was equally as supportive of her decision. (Sandra, FG#2)

I propose that some base-schools in this study further demonstrated their support of the MMP programme by openly valuing the contribution made by the student teacher. These student teachers suggested they worked best where and when they felt valued and supported. Some base-schools in this study also demonstrated their support of the MMP programme by being receptive to the university lecturer. Base-schools supported the university lecturer by knowing about this ITE programme, communicating freely and providing easy access to student teacher and coordinating teacher, by scheduling meetings and releasing the coordinating teacher from classroom responsibilities to meet with the university lecturer.

Several people assisted these student teachers in managing their placement responsibilities including colleagues, university lecturers and coordinating teachers. Many researchers have highlighted the importance of the school-based teacher educator in making the placement effective places to learn teaching (for example, Beck & Kosnik, 2002; McGee et al., 2001; Murray-Harvey et al., 2000; Sutherland et al., 2005). Support was vital and each coordinating teacher needed to be able to articulate their support for their student teacher (Clarke, 2000; Timperley, 2001) and facilitate opportunities in an environment where learning needed to be made obvious to the novice (Deng, 2004b). These student teachers reported in individual and collective narratives that they believed their coordinating teacher would provide practice opportunities, feedback, advice and guidance as support, which would enable them to deal with the placement demands. They said explicitly that their coordinating teacher was supportive, accommodating and helpful (see section 6.2; p. 213).

Time management and having a coordinating teacher who could help were critical aspects for these student teachers. The time management of all aspects of these placements, concerned both the student teachers and coordinating teachers. Research in New Zealand schools (see for example Calder et al., 1993; Ferrier-Kerr, 2005; Hoben, 2006; Rivers, 2006) has highlighted the demands placed on the school-based teacher educators. The participants highlighted the challenge of how much time to devote to different aspects of the placement such as

observation, practice and reflection. Bullough (1997), Clarke (1997), Hoben (2006) and Posner (2000) discussed the “importance of time to talk” as being integral to placements as effective places to learn teaching. None of these coordinating teachers received any release time from classroom duties for their additional responsibilities and some said how mindful they were of maximising the time spent together with their student teacher. This issue of balancing commitments to children, school and student teacher was reported as most challenging for these coordinating teachers.

The second issue was that of the actual use of time during these daylong placements including the use of teaching time. The views of the coordinating teachers in this study were mixed. On the one hand these student teachers wanted to be actively involved throughout the day. The balance between observation and practice was discussed with these student teachers wanting to be involved in classroom action as “much as possible”. Like most student teachers reported in other research (Danaher, 1994; Maynard, 2001), they wanted hands-on teaching practice. The coordinating teachers on the other hand were divided. Four (CTs 1, 2, 3 & 7) used the strategy of ‘talking on the run’ in class time because they wanted to talk ‘in the now’ about things happening in the classroom. In contrast, four other coordinating teachers (CTs 5, 6, 8 & 10) felt that class time belonged to the children and so did not use this time with their student teacher. Similarly, researchers (for example Developmental Studies Centre, 2000; Goodfellow, 2000; Maynard, 2000; Ridgway, 2000) have written about the conflict many student teachers encounter in terms of having to take a backseat to the children, as experienced in this study by Helen, Teresa, Mary-Lou and Claire. In justifying this position, Ridgway’s (2000) research highlighted the problems that teachers identified in terms of interruptions, displacement and disruption when hosting a student teacher. The balancing of time and commitments was acknowledged as a major challenge.

A third issue was that of identifying alternative time slots available for these coordinating teachers getting together with their student teacher. The need for such extended contact time was found in Forlin and Gibson’s (1997) Queensland research. These coordinating teachers were mindful of maximising time they spent together with their student teacher and employing effective strategies to

manage the demands made on their time. The strategies used by these coordinating teachers were both formal and informal. CT4 and CT5 required scheduled meetings. Five of these coordinating teachers just met informally at breaks such as interval or lunch. It was concluded that each of the strategies used was effective for the coordinating teacher but may not have been accepted as so appropriate by their student teacher.

### *6.5.2 Managing self*

A second aspect relating to support in managing the demands of the placement was that of managing oneself. These student teachers and other participants emphasised how important it was to make sensible choices about using time constructively in order to meet their own obligations. They reported that they needed to be ready for their work which involved setting aside time to plan, prepare and study. This also included managing their involvement with others including other learning communities and online activities. While researchers emphasised the contribution that learning communities make to learning teaching (Farr Darling, 2001; Pring, 1999; Smith, 2000), the participants in this study reported that such involvement also required restraint. For example, the student teachers and university lecturers said that the university was an extensive community and involvement with the full range of activities on offer to distance students could lead to distraction and procrastination. The Internet Learning Management System (*ClassForum* in this ITE programme) provided access to a wide range of online forums, discussions, and chat facilities. So while research has shown the importance of dialogue and connectedness (Collis & Jung, 2003; Hastings & Squires, 2002; Moon, 1997; Mueller, 2003), such involvement with others needed control and moderation, especially for these distance learners.

The students managing themselves within the placement was reported as important but the university lecturers and coordinating teachers also reported that just as significant was a student teacher's ability to manage beyond the immediate placement. No other research was reviewed for this study that identified the impact of other issues such as financial, family and friends however, it was strongly evident in a range of studies (including Anderson, 2004; Donaghy et al.,

2003; McGee, 1996a) that part of managing oneself was dependent on being able to manage the demands emanating from other sources beyond the programme.

### *6.5.3 Managing distance study requirements*

A third aspect of managing the demands of the placement is the requirements of distance study. While the academic study aspect of this MMP programme may have been regarded as separate to the placement, it was reported as having impacted on the student teachers' perceptions of their placement, especially as the students had required school-based tasks to complete. These student teachers, especially Mary-Lou, Jamie and Claire, talked about creating time for their study and using this time effectively. Support for their study came from others including colleagues, their coordinating teacher and other teachers in the base-school. Having this support to manage their study demands, impacted positively on their perceived ability to manage the placement successfully as they developed the same "sense of belonging to a teaching and learning community" (Simpson, 2002, p. 3) reported in other research (Delany & Wenmoth, 2003; McGee & Yates, 2000; Nelligan, 2006; Ussher, 2005a). A big challenge for these student teachers was in knowing what was expected of them in terms of tertiary study.

The opportunity to be involved with peers and to form a study group, whether local or online, was highlighted as influential for these student teachers. Helen and Teresa highlighted this frequently and Mary-Lou and Sandra reinforced the success of their involvement with a group of peers. Claire and Catherine's narratives referred to them not being involved with a local group but clearly indicated a desire. The participants also reported having access to other MMP student teachers such as second-year and distance programme colleagues as influential. Students and other researchers gave examples of this being achieved electronically by email, telephone or online discussions via the Internet (Moon, 1997; Robinson & Latchem, 2003b). Developing strong ties to peers was highlighted as assisting with the placement being an effective place to learn teaching as it gave the student teachers additional networks to discuss issues.

### *6.5.4 Resources for a distance ITE programme*

A fourth aspect of meeting the challenges of such a distance ITE placement was the provision of resources, including people. Many of these participants felt

they needed to be assured that the programme they were involved in was valued and supported and for them this was demonstrated through: the people who worked and took an interest in the placement; the time allocated for them to fulfill their obligations successfully; and the funds provided to support the time and people. These partners also perceived the value of their placement by how well it was resourced. Such resourcing was seen by these participants to be the responsibility of the University of Waikato and base-school in this particular setting.

Principally, the university through its staff members, needed to provide for the student teacher and coordinating teacher. The resources provided were reported as including information, materials, access, time and funds but also support and awareness. In this distance ITE placement, which involved technology, resourcing was seen as essential. Other researchers (for example Calder et al., 1993; Clarke, 1997; Goodfellow, 2000; Haigh, 2001; Hastings & Squires, 2002; Soliman, 2001; Timperley, 2001; Ussher, 2003) emphasised the importance of developing and maintaining the resourcing of the school and coordinating teacher. Participants in this distance placement setting considered that the university lecturer was responsible for overseeing the University of Waikato's resourcing of the placements.

These participants reported that responsibility for the student teacher and placement obligations within the base-school were assigned mostly to the coordinating teacher although some principals also assumed this to some extent. Within the base-school it was mainly the coordinating teacher who directly benefited from the supporting resources although the university lecturer and student teacher were also benefactors. Again, the resources provided were reported as including information, materials, access, time and funds and also a suitable class, support and interest in the student teacher. Researchers have pointed to the valuable role played by the school in a placement setting (Beck & Kosnik, 2000; Bullough, 1997; Calder et al., 1993; Danaher, 1994; Lauriala, 1997; McGee et al., 1994; Sutherland et al., 2005) and this was considered most important in this study where the school was distant from the university. Valuing and supporting the work and position of the coordinating teacher and student



teacher in the base-school and ITE programme was perceived as fundamental to the placement as an effective place to learn teaching.

In summary, managing these placements was described as being each partner's ability to rationalise and prioritise the demands and challenges they confront on a daily basis from various sources. For all partners, the greatest challenge was managing time in order to fulfill their obligations to self and others. For these student teachers this included commitment to their placement, study and assignments as well as to family, friends or work. For the coordinating teachers there were obligations to the children, to teaching, the school and their own wider networks. For the university lecturers the demands came from the University of Waikato, the student teachers, the base-schools and their own obligations. As in other research, where these student teachers indicated that support came from many and varied sources, the participants demonstrated a more positive attitude to their placement (Beck & Kosnik, 2002; Clarke, 2000). The model in this study positioned *Managing the demands* and *Resources* as important factors in the effectiveness of MMP distance placements as a place to learn teaching.

### ***6.6 Knowledgeable partners confident in their roles and responsibilities***

Another factor indicated in the findings as being critical to the perceived effectiveness of the placement was when the coordinating teacher felt well-informed about ITE and placements. Such coordinating teachers reported being more confident in helping their student teacher learn to teach. Those coordinating teachers who had graduated from the MMP programme or had recent university experience had a better understanding of the student teacher's work and therefore greater confidence teaching teaching. Similarly, when a student teacher in this study felt well informed about the placement practices and expectations, they were more confident about completing requirements. It was also reported that those university lecturers who felt well-informed about their student teachers and base-schools also felt more confident about their role and responsibilities. However, there was a discrepancy in the findings about what being well-informed meant among student teachers, coordinating teachers and university lecturers.

The following discussion explores the concepts of knowledge, leadership, sources of knowledge and the impact these had on partners in these distance placements.

### *6.6.1 Knowledge and leadership*

Those partners considered by other participants to be knowledgeable about their role and responsibilities, demonstrated greater confidence and leadership. The student teachers in this study reported that they assumed the other partners in this placement would be well-informed about the placement and associated requirements. The university lecturers suggested the coordinating teachers were adequately informed and the student teachers, on entering ITE, were just starting out so not expected to ‘know’ teaching (Posner, 2000) or the MMP programme. The coordinating teachers considered themselves well informed in terms of their school and practice however the majority pointed out that they did not know much about the detail of this distance focused ITE programme. Generally they felt adequately prepared for the practical aspects of the placement.

For the student teachers in this study ‘well-informed partner’ meant knowing and understanding aspects associated with an ITE placement such as teaching and teachers, learning and learners, children, placement requirements, programmes, schools and education. While these student teachers assumed their coordinating teacher would have knowledge of most aspects of the programme, the coordinating teachers reported that they felt they had limited knowledge beyond their classroom practice. Perhaps as Kerry and Farrow (1996) reported in their research, these classroom teachers became coordinating teachers because of their teaching competence rather than knowledge of or interest in ITE and teaching and learning theories. Timperley’s (2001) and Hoben’s (2006) studies found that teaching expertise was not enough, that teachers needed to become more knowledgeable about ITE, teaching and learning. The student teachers in this study initially thought their coordinating teacher would be intricately bound to the university and that their university lecturer would be somehow linked with the base-school, suggesting existing knowledge of ITE and the programme.

At the beginning Ruby had the perception that Ada should know everything about teacher education programmes. After all, she was “in the thick of it”, being at the chalk-face and working with children, other teachers and having had students on practicum in the past. (Collective story #3)

These student teachers believed that the university lecturer and university would inform the base-school and coordinating teacher about the programme.

Some of these coordinating teachers wanted to know more about this ITE programme – to be better informed. As suggested by Maynard (2000), they were fundamentally classroom teachers and so typically based their understanding of the placement on their own ITE experiences as suggested by CTs 3, 5, 6 and 8. As was found in Lind’s research (2004), these coordinating teachers also “reported reliance upon memories of their own experiences as student teachers” (p. 165). However as Clarke (1997) theorised from his research in Canada, being competent at something (such as teaching, gymnastics, athletics) does not necessarily make one a good coach.

The lack of knowledge about the placement settings suggested by the coordinating teachers studied in this research, appeared to have stemmed primarily from an uneven distribution of authority. Several researchers have reported on the power distribution in ITE experiences (Developmental Studies Centre, 2000; Jones, 2001; Lauriala, 1997; McGee & Penlington, 2000; Posner, 2000). The coordinating teachers studied were expected by the student teachers to show leadership, to know about the MMP programme. On the contrary, several student teachers felt they knew more about the MMP programme than their coordinating teacher. In their study, Calder and Whyte (2000) reported partnerships based on ‘power over people’ were prevalent rather than partnerships that set out to accomplish outcomes, where the partners were all “teachers as leaders, learning and leading together” (p. 4), indicating ‘power with people’. The authority in these placement relationships may have been more balanced due to the coordinating teacher not being required to evaluate their student teacher. The coordinating teachers and university lecturers were expected by the student teacher group to show leadership in regards to the placement and programme – to the student teacher and other base-school staff. Included in this leadership role were some of the base-school principals.

Sarah had made an assumption that the prior knowledge of the principal would mean that the principal would be able to help answer any questions she had. She had expected that he would know what she was supposed to do when she did not know. ... While he was always happy to discuss teaching matters he was not much help with any questions pertaining to the programme. (FG#2)

The student teachers saw the university lecturers as leaders of the programme and placement, as an important source of information and overall leadership. Certainly during their first year, some of these student teachers reported that they turned more and more to university lecturers for help and advice. Those partners in this study who were perceived by others to be 'well-informed' were considered as being more confident and competent and hence the student teachers and university lecturers perceived the placement as being a suitable location to learn teaching.

### *6.6.2 Sources of knowledge*

The second aspect of being well informed was that a variety of people were considered as sources by the participants in this research for gathering knowledge about all aspects of the placement. For the student teachers, the sources included coordinating teacher, university lecturer, other teachers, their peers and students in other year groups. As discussed in section 6.2 (p. 213), Bullough (1997) suggested that each partner needed to be encouraged to explore the wider context of the placement. This suggested to me that the student teachers needed to engage with a range of others about teaching and learning. These student teachers valued the time spent with peers, teachers, coordinating teacher and university lecturer to find out about aspects of the programme and teaching. They developed important networks including their own peers and other ITE year groups as important sources for gathering much needed information. They valued the communications with peers, base-school staff, coordinating teacher, university staff and university lecturer for further learning. Being able to add the knowledge about the placement of their university lecturer to that of the coordinating teacher (and vice versa) was reported as helpful by these student teachers as well as the research of McGee et al. (2001) and Lind (2004).

It was highlighted in the findings that five coordinating teachers expected to utilise the knowledge of others with regard to the placement and programme, such as the base-school principal and teachers, and university lecturers. Genuine professional development opportunities to further their ITE knowledge were not readily available to these coordinating teachers, also found by Beck and Kosnik (2000) and Calder et al. (1993) in their studies. Clarke (1997), Haigh (2001) and

Lind (2004) reported that there was still much work to be done around school-based experiences in preparing partners who were able to provide effective sites to learn teaching. Initially these student teachers anticipated that their coordinating teachers would be knowledgeable about distance learning. Like some of the student teachers, I suggest this was not reasonable for these teachers who typically reported limited experience with ICT and academic study by distance. These student teachers expressed the view that they did not anticipate their coordinating teacher would know a lot more about the technology required, but they did assume they would have a good understanding of what was required to be successful when studying at a distance. In this study this was not the reality for Helen, Jamie, Teresa and Claire who described their own knowledge as being limited. They found they knew more about distance learning than their coordinating teachers, generally. The coordinating teachers indicated they wanted to know more – to be better informed about such things. Some coordinating teachers suggested that the university could better prepare them for this role.

Initially these student teachers expected the university lecturers to be experts on distance learning. Sarah, Sandra, Catherine, Margaret and Claire regarded the university lecturer as the knowledge base, with invaluable knowledge about all manner of things associated with distance learning and placements. As was reported by McGee et al. (1998) in their research, such situations can create tensions over ownership and authority. However, I believe this was not so in this study as the coordinating teachers or student teachers did not report it. In this setting it appeared that the coordinating teachers were comfortable with not having to know about distance learning, that that should remain the domain of the university lecturers.

### *6.6.3 Well-informed partners*

The third aspect of being a well-informed partner was the need to have the school-based teacher educators “professionally ready” for student teachers. Previous researchers (for example, Calder et al., 1993; Clarke, 2000; Lind, 2004; McGee, 1996b) concluded that coordinating teacher readiness meant preparedness to undertake the pragmatic, interpersonal and managerial tasks such as those identified by Kwan and Lopez-Real (2005) in their Hong Kong research. From

my own experiences and the comments of the coordinating teachers, I suggest that being professionally ready involved having the ability to mentor and coach the student teacher in learning teaching. As previously mentioned, these student teachers imagined their coordinating teacher would be well prepared for the placement, including knowing about the distinctiveness of distance learning. Sarah, Teresa, Sandra, Mary-Lou, Catherine and Claire talked of this, as they knew their base-school had previous involvement with the MMP programme. The contrasting view of five of the coordinating teachers, CT2, 3, 5, 6 and 10, was that they expected to utilise the knowledge of others rather than carry all the information themselves. I suggest that networking and utilising the knowledge of others was an essential skill of mentoring for these coordinating teachers.

The student teachers expected the university lecturers to inform their base-school directly or else utilise time during their visits to fully inform the school-based partners. It was expected by these participants that each university lecturer would be ‘attached’ to the base-school, devolving knowledge that would assist the school and teacher to fulfill their roles successfully (Calder & Whyte, 2000; Williams, 1994), to the benefit of the student teacher. I believe that university lecturers in this study had the knowledge and expertise in teaching, learning, ITE and placements. Whether each university lecturer was in a position to share the knowledge required by the coordinating teachers was contested in the findings. This problem might have arisen from the reported lack of time or rather it may have been that the coordinating teachers did not know what they still needed to know and therefore were not seeking advice. This research may help the university lecturers be better positioned to know what needs to be shared with coordinating teachers.

#### *6.6.4 Knowledge and the base-school*

The fourth aspect of being a well-informed partner was the expectation that the university, through the university lecturer, would inform the base-school about aspects of the MMP programme such as new teaching and learning theories and course requirements. As Calder et al. (1993), McGee et al. (1998), Soliman (2001) and Williams and Soares (2002) reported from their research, communication between these partners was essential as it was important that each

understood the requirements for the student teachers. The university was expected by the student teachers to be connected with the base-school, where the university lecturer would be an invaluable informant to the success of the placement. However, the narratives indicated there was little incentive for this sharing of knowledge to happen (Bullough, 1997; Winitzky et al., 1992). This may have given the impression to some participants and observers of a lack of coherence across this placement and perhaps even the total MMP programme.

There appeared to be a contrary view to this where the university lecturer had previous knowledge of the base-school, whether knowing the principal, coordinating teacher or other staff. In her research Julian (1998) reported such a connection between the normal schools in New Zealand and their local ITE provider, but this MMP programme had student teachers placed in a wide geographical range of schools and the opportunity was not so readily accessible. Typically, where there was an existing relationship it was from a previous association. As endorsed in other research, the majority of these current relationships were contrived in order to meet MMP course and programme requirements (Calder & Whyte, 2000). Other researchers indicated that there was a real need for partners to make the time to share and work publicly and more closely (Calder & Whyte, 2000; Lind, 2004; Timperley, 2001; Winitzky et al., 1992), to better understand the needs of the student teachers and each other within these MMP placements.

In summary, being well informed (knowledgeable), was identified as a critical factor for the confidence of each of the partners in these placements and therefore to the perceived value of each placement. This and other research (Martinez & Coombs, 2001; Perry et al., 2002; Timperley, 2001) endorsed the importance of being a well-informed partner in the placement. Knowledge in these particular placements was restricted to four aspects within the findings. First, the partners needed knowledge about ITE and the specific teacher education programme, in this case the University of Waikato's three-year undergraduate Bachelor of Teaching (primary). Second, they needed knowledge of contemporary theories on learning and teaching. Third was sound knowledge and understanding of current practices in teaching and learning. Finally, in this programme, the partners also needed a fundamental knowledge of studying at a

distance. The participants reported that each of these knowledge requirements should not be restricted to any one partner but all partners needed knowledge and understanding to varying depth and stages of development. While the student teachers suggested that the coordinating teachers should have broad knowledge, I suggest that in being a mentor and coach, the coordinating teachers needed the skills to source information and support as required for their student teacher. The model in this study also positioned *knowledge* as a critical factor.

### **6.7 Earlier experience in the base-school of a placement**

An important factor in these school-based ITE placements was whether the student teachers had any previous experience or involvement with their base-school, or the coordinating teacher had any previous experience or involvement with this MMP programme. It was reported by the participants in this study that such involvement impacted on the likelihood of these distance placements being perceived as effective places to learn teaching. Some participants viewed this optimistically suggesting this allowed the placement to get off to a good start because the partners knew each other and so either had an established relationship or entered one quickly. On the other hand however, other participants viewed this less enthusiastically suggesting that all student teachers needed fresh starts with new relationships. Some coordinating teachers and university lecturers highlighted the placements where difficult decisions needed to be made about the practice and learning of the student teacher. None of the literature reviewed addressed this issue of previous involvement for the student teacher in their school as this was not a common occurrence in ITE, in fact it may be limited to this particular MMP programme. This being the case, the findings are discussed without reference to specific literature relating to identical practical experiences.

#### *6.7.1 Student teacher confidence at the start of a placement*

This research found that where student teachers knew their coordinating teacher prior to the placement beginning, they reported a greater confidence in the placement (Collective story #1). Five of these student teachers suggested that where it was a possibility, then a student teacher could be placed successfully. This idea was confirmed through Collective story #1 when Ruby suggested that because she “had been in Cold Mountain School such a long time with her



children and work, she had a great confidence in the school being able to provide what she thought she might need”. From the student teachers’ narratives, it was clear that those who felt that they belonged to their base-school right from the start, benefited from that situation. In fact, Helen and Margaret, who did not ‘belong’ to their base-school at the start, felt their colleagues had an advantage. Margaret said “it was actually quite scary walking into another school even though [she] knew of the principal and knew some of the teaching staff there – [she] really didn’t know what to expect” (FG#1).

### *6.7.2 A sense of belonging to the base school*

It was clear from the narratives that five of the nine student teachers had a real sense of belonging to their base-school and all five had some prior association with the school or staff members. For the other four it took time to become included in their base-schools and Claire and Helen even felt they never fully achieved this. Along with three of the university lecturers, I have observed in my role as a university lecturer, this strong sense of belonging and bond. The manner in which the student teacher, coordinating teacher and/or principal talked about each other during liaison visits contrasted strongly with those where the relationship was new. Sandra suggested that her coordinating teacher “made her contributions [to the class and school] seem valued and [her coordinating teacher was] always asking for ideas and help with areas she was familiar with” (Narrative #2). Teresa often struggled with her study but she felt she “had had an association with the school for at least six years” (FG#1) which helped her feel “comfortable” and able to ask questions.

The narratives of the coordinating teachers and university lecturers indicated that in times of conflict within any of these placements, the ‘comfortable’ student teacher often fell back on their “old ways” as a method of coping. For example, Teresa, who had been a parent helper in her base-school, became the parent helper again and spent too much time in that role rather than attending to her student teacher role. The university lecturers also reported that where a past association was not so positive, the whole school was not as enthusiastic about being involved and so the coordinating teacher was left to shoulder any burden.

### 6.7.3 Benefits of being well known in the base-school

The third aspect of a previous association with the placement focused on the benefits for the student teacher. Based on the narratives of those participants where the student teachers were well known in their base-school, it was evident that this gave them access to a range of people and resources relatively easily. This was confirmed in Collective story #1 which stated that Ruby “was so well known that she could just walk in everywhere: it was like an open door, her with her own key and all – it was fabulous”. Along with these university lecturers I have also observed student teachers who had been ‘well-known’ in their base-school and take the view that they benefited from that situation in terms of access to resources including other teachers, and being given more meaningful teaching roles (Sandra, Narrative #4; Jamie, FG#2). The narratives highlighted that a past ‘positive’ association with the base-school generally meant the student teacher reported that they got on well with all the staff, and four student teachers certainly considered “that was the good thing about being in the school so long - knowing the staff” (Jamie, FG#2). There was also narrative evidence that the relationship between the student teacher and coordinating teacher developed into a much stronger bond much quicker than those of the student teachers who did not know their base-school before the start of their placement. This was confirmed in Collective story #2:

Her CT was to be the teacher she had been working with over the past four years whom she had formed a great respect for and friendship with. Ruby too was equally as enthusiastic about her decision.

On the other hand, it was also highlighted by student teachers, coordinating teachers and university lecturers that having had an earlier association could also have its problems. This was especially so where a student teacher (or her family members) reported a past ‘history’ with the school or staff. This was not highlighted as a first-hand experience by these participants but they did hint at other student teachers whose own children had not been such ‘well-behaved’ students at the school, as mentioned by some coordinating teachers and university lecturers. This created some difficulties and in some cases ended in the student teacher having to change base-school. While I suggest that there were benefits from already belonging to a school community, there is a contrasting opinion that

such association may also have been disadvantageous in being too well known and therefore taken-for-granted (Simpson, 2002).

A previous unfavourable connection was not the only source of conflict perceived to inhibit the effectiveness of the placement as a place to learn teaching. Other examples shared by these participants included the level of expectations that the base-school and coordinating teacher held for their student teacher – highlighted as sometimes too high but also contrasted as too low. Where student teachers demonstrated commitment and involvement in the past through their planning, communication and attendance, I assert that the school-based staff held high expectations because they had “seen [her] doing it, [hadn’t] they?” (Sandra, FG#2), they had an expectation of her capabilities. These student teachers described instances where they had been asked to do more than was expected by the University of Waikato on their base-school placement.

#### *6.7.4 Showing support by being knowledgeable*

Five of these student teachers reported that they were motivated by the support that their coordinating teacher or base-school gave them as a result of being knowledgeable about them from earlier associations. In fact, five of the coordinating teachers highlighted the support they provided because of the previous involvement and apparent commitment. Sarah said of her coordinating teacher, “I’d worked in the classroom and the teacher had said to me that she was quite prepared to do anything I thought she could do to help. I had a lot of support from the school” (FG#1). Sandra reiterated this:

I knew that the school would provide all the support necessary because I’d been there such a long time and when I told them I was going to be a teacher, they said ‘fabulous’. When I approached the principal and discussed my decision with her, I was most surprised at the level of faith that was evident. (FG#1)

Being an integral part of the school (expressed as a ‘village’ for learning in section 6.3; p. 221) appeared to guarantee support for a student teacher’s work and an interest in what they were setting out to achieve. However, the university lecturers drew attention to the issue of coordinating teachers avoiding “hard truths” during feedback where her student teacher may not have been meeting expectations. As the university lecturers were last to be interviewed, this point was not followed up with the other participants.

### 6.7.5 *Being well-informed through previous work with MMP*

The fifth aspect of previous associations impacting on the placement was when the school-based educators (coordinating teacher, principal, etc) had worked previously in this MMP programme. It was noted, especially by these student teachers and university lecturers, that where the coordinating teacher or base-school had been involved with an earlier placement considered successful, they had a positive attitude toward such placements. Past experiences of coordinating teachers and university lecturers with the MMP programme and/or the base-school, stimulated confidence and the belief that the placement can be an effective place to learn teaching.

Ruby anticipated that Ada would be confident and knowledgeable in her role, a model of 'best practice', and be able to provide opportunities for Ruby to link her reading and the theories to classroom practice. (Collective story #2)

The student teacher participants in this study reported that where the school-based educators had known someone in the MMP programme or that their school was regarded as an effective place to learn teaching, this implied that the base-school would know and understand the programme and therefore brought for them a positive perception. Eight of the nine student teachers were in schools that had previously successfully managed MMP placements. This point was confirmed in Collective story #1: "Several MMP students had been in this school before so Cold Mountain School was experienced working with student teachers". My own experiences and those of the university lecturers confirmed the value of base-schools having ongoing involvement with this MMP programme. This prior knowledge of the programme was important to the student teachers,

Sarah's CT had encouraged her into the programme and Sarah had an expectation that her CT had a reasonable knowledge of both her and Sarah's role. (Narrative #2)

The recalling of past MMP or ITE experiences by the coordinating teacher during discussions and reflections was reassuring to these student teachers. When the coordinating teacher and university lecturer showed confidence and competence through a previous experience in the programme, the student teacher reported a more positive attitude to working with their coordinating teacher.

In summary, each person involved in these placements brought with them a unique background, their context and history (Lind, 2004). In this study a

noteworthy aspect of the backgrounds of the student teachers, coordinating teachers and university lecturers was any previous involvement with the base-school or the MMP programme. Predicting the likelihood of student teacher success was dependent on many factors including age, gender, educational attainment and employment, all aspects of one's background. Certainly the New Zealand Teachers' Council (2007a) emphasised this aspect with its requirement to be "of good character" and "fit to be a teacher" in the New Zealand teacher registration process. Kane (2005), Murray-Harvey et al. (2000) and Posner (2000) all emphasised that to be effective places to learn teaching, placements required a strong correlation with the quality of the participants, acknowledging that learning is dependent on context. The model in this study positioned *Context and history*, such as background and past work in schools, as a critical factor in the effectiveness of MMP distance placements as a place to learn teaching.

### **6.8 Conclusion**

This study was designed to investigate the experiences of a sample of student teachers associated with the University of Waikato's MMP programme. The aim was to better understand the placement setting based on the perspectives of the student teachers in particular, but also through the views of the coordinating teachers and university lecturers. Research, literature and experiences suggested that relationships, community, commitment, knowledge, ability to manage demands, and opportunities for meaningful reflection were all critical factors in these school-based placements.

While such placements remain an integral part of ITE programmes, all partners involved in the school-based component of a programme must be cognisant of the factors that make a difference. The literature and narratives of these student teachers, coordinating teachers and university lecturers endorse factors in the conceptual model as influential in the placement setting. This study has not focused on the content or methods of learning and practising teaching but other factors of a placement. It is also repeated here that this study explored a distance programme that had a reliance on electronic media. As Campbell-Gibson cautioned, "it is the all important human infrastructure that provides the opportunity for learners to succeed" (1997, p. 8) rather than the technologies. It is

important to note that factors identified for this placement are associated with human elements only.

The conceptual model positioned *Resources, Context and history*, and *Professional commitment* as fundamental to an ITE placement. While there was certainly reference to these in the narratives and discussion, the scope of this study has not been sufficient to highlight all the detail of these factors. The relative importance of each of these primary drivers is fully acknowledged and left for further study. The factors identified as outcomes in the conceptual model (*Coherence, Interactions, Connections and Social networks*) are also not within the scope of this study.

In his discussion Lind highlighted the point that, “times for reflection and discussion need to be set aside for the student teacher, visiting lecturer and the associate to review performance” (2004, p. 173). This comment draws attention to factors explored in detail in this study. Of critical importance were the factors *Relationships* and *Managing demands*, both inherent in Lind’s findings. The literature and findings in this study identified both of these factors as influential in a placement. Also integral in Lind’s comments are the factors *Reflection, Knowledge* and *Perspective*. The student teachers, coordinating teachers and university lecturers held the view that each of these factors was critical and they suggested that by paying attention to these there was a greater likelihood of a placement being an effective place to learn teaching.

The concluding remarks of this chapter show how each of the main ideas outlined above, which were reported as critical to these placements as effective places to learn teaching, linked to the factors from the model. The first main idea in section 6.2 related to each partners’ perceived capacity to establish, develop and maintain *Relationships* and the importance of the existence of such connections for their learning. The relationship between the student teacher and the coordinating teacher was deemed the most influential in these placements. However, together with this, the freedom for each student teacher to develop identity of ‘self-as-teacher’ was also highlighted. The third and fourth aspects associated with relationships were of lesser importance however the connections between the student teacher and others, and between the coordinating teacher and

university lecturer were still regarded as having some influence in these placements.

The second main idea in section 6.3 discussed perceptions associated with factors of *Perspective, Context and history* and *Resources*. In placements where the base-school became the ‘village’ of learning for the student teacher, it was argued that there was a developed sense of belonging, accomplishment and inclusion. This stimulated a feeling of confidence in the student teacher and provided a broader perspective on learning teaching.

The third and fourth main ideas in sections 6.4 and 6.5 related directly to three factors in the conceptual model: *Professional commitment, Reflection* and *Knowledge*. It was suggested that where the student teacher, coordinating teacher and university lecturer were committed to learning, teaching, the placement and the MMP programme there was likely to be a positive outcome. It was argued that by committing time each partner indicated the value they placed on the placement and as a consequence other partners reciprocated. A tangible example of this was the time devoted by the coordinating teacher and university lecturer to reflecting with the student teacher on teaching and learning. These two main ideas also highlighted the importance of each partner’s reported ability to *Manage the demands* of their placement. While the focus of this study was these particular distance placements, nevertheless the management of self, study requirements and other resources also impacted the demands of the placements, especially for the student teachers. It was clear that all participants required support for their work associated with these placements and such support was identified as coming from a range of sources for each partner.

The fifth main idea discussed in section 6.6 was that being knowledgeable created a sense of confidence in other placement partners. The well-informed partners, especially coordinating teachers and university lecturers, showed leadership and confidence when seeking information from other sources. The knowledgeable university lecturers and student teachers kept their coordinating teachers and base-school well informed about both placement and programme requirements and issues.

The final main idea in section 6.7 partially addressed the fundamental factor of *Context and history* but also *Relationships* and *Perspective* to some extent. While not identified by all participants as critical to the effectiveness of these placements, those participants in this study who had an earlier association with the coordinating teacher, base-school or MMP programme felt this was to their advantage. This advantage was variously described as giving them greater confidence, a sense of belonging, relatively easy access to people and resources, support from the base-school, and the school-based educators being well-informed about the placement and programme.

In the final chapter, *Conclusions and recommendations*, the study is reviewed, major conclusions and the significance of the findings are highlighted, the conceptual model from Chapter Three is evaluated for its potential to provide a way of explaining and understanding a distance ITE placement, and limitations are identified. Finally, the implications from this study for further research, ITE practices and distance programmes are presented.



## Chapter Seven: Conclusions and recommendations

This research was an exploration of how key factors impacted upon student teachers in a school-based experience (SBE) placement. A conceptual model developed for this study was used to analyse the impacts. The model itself was analysed to assess its viability as a representation of factors that impact upon the success of placements. This final chapter summarises the major findings of the study and their implications for school-based placements in distance initial teacher education (ITE). Limitations and further research are outlined. The chapter structure is:

1. Review of the study;
2. Summary of findings;
3. Evaluation of the model;
4. Identified limitations of the study; and
5. Implications of this research for ITE programmes, distance programmes, school-based placements, and further research.

### **7.1 Review of the study**

Reviewing the large quantity of literature informed me about research on school-based experiences and appropriate research design and methodology. The literature informed the construction of the conceptual model, framed the evidence-gathering questions and focused the analysis and interpretation of the research data.

As interpretive qualitative research, this study set out to explore the perceptions of a sample of participants in seeking answers to the following research questions:

1. *What are the perceived key factors of a distance primary teacher-education school-based placement?*
2. *How do these perceived key factors link and which factors are critical to this base-school placement?*

3. *Does the developed model provide a way of explaining a distance school-based placement?*

The setting for this study was one part of the school-based experiences (SBE) for student teachers in the University of Waikato Bachelor of Teaching (primary) distance programme. I wanted to investigate and better understand this interesting one-day per week placement setting because of the complexities and challenges that faced each of the partners – the student teachers, coordinating teachers and university lecturers. The methodology employed was a multiple-case inquiry. In using a naturalistic approach to study these SBE placements it was important to retain the integrity and natural context without undue interference. To achieve this I engaged directly with the purposively selected participants, gathering their narratives and ‘voice’ as research evidence. As a naturalistic researcher, studying adults in a setting familiar to them, I worked closely with them in gathering and analysing data. This collaboration required establishment of trust, authenticity and integrity, acknowledging that my own values, beliefs and knowledge could influence the study. Trustworthiness and integrity were maintained in the study through my skill, communication and actions within and beyond the project.

As an interpretive inquirer seeking to understand how all twenty-two participants made sense of the placements, I gathered research data through narratives, conversations and interviews. This evidence required rigorous and ongoing inductive analysis and interpretation. Achieving this required involvement from the participants to ensure the data, findings and conclusions were accurate and relevant. To fully probe the experiences, interpretations and relationships of the participants, a variety of data gathering and analysis methods were employed. Construction of meaning from this evidence required sufficient data in order to make plausible interpretations in the collective stories. To authenticate this analysis and interpretation I used the conceptual model and literature as a framework and triangulated the evidence across data sources, levels of analysis and methods of data gathering. The methodology and design for this study were based on well-informed decisions focused on the specific research questions that led to six major findings.

## **7.2 Summary of the major findings**

The thesis of this research was that identifying key effectiveness factors for participants in this distance teacher education school-based placement would provide improved understanding of these experiences. From the large quantity of rich data gathered and interpreted to answer the research questions, the major findings were: the importance of relationships, the concept of the base-school as ‘village’ for learning, the importance of commitment, the support required to manage demands, the confidence imparted by well-informed partners, and the implications of previous involvement. These findings are summarised in response to the research questions, highlighting all key factors, links and the critical factors.

### *7.2.1 Six key findings as factors of a school-based placement*

1. As anticipated, the findings in this study confirmed that relationships associated with school-based placements were a key factor. The quality of relationships was crucial. Different from most other placements, the one-day a week placement provided each student teacher with extended time to develop relationships with the coordinating teacher and other colleagues – in school and beyond. This occurred because of the opportunities to plan and reflect together, often not possible in placements. Relationships needed to be robust, based on honesty, integrity and openness, as there was potential for conflict because of authoritative positioning of the coordinating teacher, traditional views of SBE and time pressures. These students typically started their placement with a close relationship with their coordinating teacher because of a previous association with the school and living in a small community. This closeness also featured because of the geographical distance between these student teachers and university personnel. The building of relationships was enhanced when the partners deliberately employed a collegial approach, resulting in meaningful and constructive learning opportunities for the student teachers through extended opportunities to talk, reflect and practice together. The student teachers valued a secure relationship where they were encouraged to construct their own teacher identity. They were mostly regarded by other professionals as ‘teacher’ throughout the experience as they appeared integral to the school. This gave them further learning opportunities within already busy classroom, school schedules and curricula. It was clear that sound relationships helped these student teachers

to further develop professional agency, which in turn increased their confidence to actively observe, inquire and trial new ideas.

2. The second key finding was that these student teachers felt they belonged to their base-school; it was their ‘village’ for learning teaching. Most participants in this study emphasised working within a whole school rather than only within a single classroom. It was most evident where the student teacher was the only student on placement in a small school. Most of these student teachers already had a sense of belonging to the base-school because of earlier associations and also, as older students, they had the maturity and confidence to build connections. This feeling of belonging enabled them to focus on the school as a site of inquiry, regarding all teaching colleagues as potential opportunities for dialogue and learning teaching. Separation by distance could have impacted their sense of belonging and perspective but the isolation often experienced by these distance students was minimised when teachers throughout the school showed a willingness to assist.

3. A commitment to learning teaching by these mature students was another key finding. Their narratives showed that they all very much wanted to be ‘teacher’, seeking opportunities to be involved, committing time and effort to practising, thinking and talking. Their commitment allowed these students to seek, create and utilise many learning communities to discuss teaching, including other staff members and peers. They considered simple, passing conversations as not being adequate for their learning and sought more extensive interactions involving dialogue and reflection. They responded best to opportunities where they were supported and encouraged to inquire such as invitations by teachers to observe and trial new practices.

Loyalty to those who supported the students into this distance ITE programme was also regarded as commitment. This finding was not fully expected, as most ITE students do not have an ongoing relationship with those who endorse their application. Where a small school supported them, the students were usually an integral part of the local community and attached importance to being connected and belonging to the school. There was a sense of returning past favours and goodwill. Similarly, where the school or an individual teacher had a

past association with this MMP programme, provider or university lecturer, there was an impression of ‘loyalty and repayment’ through their commitment of time and energy to the student and placement. The way in which they spoke of each other showed there was obvious connection and commitment between some student teachers and their coordinating teacher and between some student teachers and their university lecturer in this study. The findings also highlighted commitment of the coordinating teachers by supporting and guiding their student teacher with empathy, providing them with time and opportunities to practice, think and reflect, by observing and communicating about practice.

4. The findings showed that partners needed to be well-informed and confident about all aspects of the placement and programme, having sufficient knowledge to be a leader, an important responsibility in distance placements. Knowledge was freely shared in these partnerships and any lack of knowledge was easily mistaken as a lack of commitment. The school-based partners in this study demonstrated sound knowledge of their student teacher but not significant confidence in their knowledge about ITE and this MMP programme. The evidence showed that fundamental to a SBE being perceived as suitable for learning was the commitment, quality and knowledge of the coordinating teacher where she was reported as a confident leader and co-learner. The university lecturers in this study also possessed knowledge and expertise in teaching, learning, ITE and placements but were not always in a position to share their knowledge with the coordinating teachers.

5. A further key finding was that student teachers’ self-management and sound organisational strategies were critical to the success of managing the demands and challenges of these placements. Being the only student on placement in their school was helpful from the perspective of not having to share resources but it was also isolating, as there were no peers for the student to seek support from or share resources with. Some had the advantage of a local study group to offset this lack of in-school, peer support. The ultimate goal for these students was to become ‘teacher’ so they needed support and guidance to manage every critical learning opportunity. To achieve this, these distance students participated fully in their placements as observers and learners and this engagement was typically rewarded with support from a range of school-based

personnel. For all these reasons, most of these student teachers managed the demands of their placement successfully, often being regarded as another teacher in their school.

6. A range of strategies and people was utilised by the student teachers and coordinating teachers to support the management of their placement responsibilities. They reported that the management of a SBE community required endeavour and inclusion. The coordinating teachers were mindful of maximising the time spent with their student teacher and using effective strategies to manage the demands made on them. The ability of the coordinating teacher to provide a quality placement was linked to support provided, opportunities facilitated, time created, professionalism modelled and interpersonal skills used. Professional development for these classroom teachers was important as support in meeting the demands in their role as coordinating teacher. This support usually came from their school colleagues rather than the university although working with a student teacher was often considered professional development in itself.

A significant challenge for these second-chance learners was study requirements. As anticipated, they talked about how they initially found their return to study a big challenge so support was essential. Successful management of academic study had a positive impact on the placement giving them time, confidence and knowledge for their inquiry and learning. This issue was specific to these distance students. It was clear that the quality of the SBE was critical in the growth of the student overall and that other people, including colleagues, teachers, university staff, friends and family, were important support for these student teachers to manage all the demands.

To this point the research has identified relationships, belonging, commitment, knowledge and management of demands (from support) as key findings. There were however, other findings, which emerged from the data including involvement and perspective. All these findings are linked together as factors with some being highlighted as critical.

### *7.2.2 Linking key findings as factors: Which are critical?*

The first critical factor was the ability of each partner to manage the demands of the school-based placement. As second chance learners or career changers, the

student teachers were focused on their learning and worked hard to manage the pressures of time and workload to accommodate demands. For the student teachers and university lecturers who had previous involvement with the school the placement got off to a good start as they felt they belonged and were familiar with people and resources therefore knowing who to ask for support and where to look for resources. This previous involvement impacted positively on their sense of belonging to the school placement and ability to manage demands. Likewise, where the student teacher, coordinating teacher and university lecturer felt commitment from the other partners it gave them the confidence to seek and provide support in meeting the challenges. This confidence also developed from knowing that the other partners were knowledgeable about all aspects of the programme, including study, teaching, learning and schools.

The second critical factor was the ability of each partner to establish and develop effective relationships within the SBE placement. In some settings the student teacher and coordinating teacher already knew each other and so had an established relationship or entered one quickly. Where there had been previous involvement with the school this meant school staff members had established knowledge of the 'new' student teacher's capabilities and aspirations. This was similar where school staff members already knew the university lecturer. Teaching is a contextual activity and those student teachers and university lecturers who felt they belonged to the school from earlier involvement were able to engage across the whole school context. An association with the school and teachers had benefits and gave confidence and professional agency right from the start of the placement, encouraging them to ask questions, seek support and try things. It was clear that those who showed commitment to the placement through attendance, preparation, responses and application also had more effective relationships with the other partners. These sound relationships meant the student teachers were able to engage across the school to develop a wider perspective on teaching. The partnerships provided opportunities for challenges, varying experiences and dialogue with a wide range of significant others. Students and coordinating teachers created broad, school-wide relationships capable of facilitating multiple learning opportunities.

This summarises the key findings from this research project, highlighting the critical or pivotal factors of these distance school-based placements. The linking of these two critical factors is demonstrated fully in the following re-examination of the conceptual model.

### **7.3 Evaluating the model**

Evidence in this study showed that a number of factors are related to the effectiveness of school-based placements in primary ITE programmes. The findings are a valuable step in helping to better understand school-based experiences and generating discussion and further research. Like teaching, learning teaching is a personal, relational and complex endeavour and school-based experiences are an important part of that. While the model was not necessarily complete, it proved to be a useful tool to review and analyse the data from a group of participants involved in distance learning and SBE placements. This section considers the model as developed at this stage as a useful way of explaining a school-based placement.

#### *7.3.1 Applying the findings to the primary drivers of the model*

In the model three primary drivers of placements were identified – *resources*, *context and history*, and *professional commitment*. Typically the coordinating teacher was found to be the most important resource of a placement. However, the findings suggested that all school staff members should be considered as significant resources also, where advice and guidance comes from an extended learning community. In this distance ITE programme, the students were mostly in their local school, which was often small therefore giving the student easy access to the whole school. There may or may not have been others in the placement community who had previous experience with the ITE programme however the wider school community remained an important resource, including colleagues of the students and teachers. The findings of this study show *resources*, through people and time, as an important factor of the placements.

*Context and history* was described in Chapter Three as the many different aspects that each person brings to a placement, their background experiences, including previous associations. These student teachers tended to be placed in



smaller or rural schools so they were well known; in fact they mostly had already been part of the local community and school (as a parent or worker). In this distance programme the student teachers were likely to be older, more mature, second chance learners or career changers. Typically it was the student teacher who selected the placement setting so it was highly likely they had a previous relationship within the school community. This was acceptable for a range of reasons although a close familial relationship with teaching staff was suggested as posing challenge because of reputation, behaviour or other circumstances. Most teachers linked to this study had not had an earlier experience as a coordinating teacher with this particular programme so they often made judgments based on their own or other ITE programmes. Given the findings, *context and history* had a significant influence on these placements – some positive, some negative.

There are expectations, demands and requirements associated with a school-based placement for all those involved and it takes *professional commitment* to understand and fulfill these. In this study there were mostly older students who had made a big commitment – socially, emotionally and financially. They were also well connected to their local community, often deliberately selecting their coordinating teacher, therefore there was often a reciprocated loyalty between the student teacher and coordinating teacher. For these distance students, they needed to be confident enough to go it alone. Professional agency brought them rewards in terms of learning opportunities. Together, the professional agency and commitment to teaching, school and learning benefitted these students through the effort that their coordinating teacher and university lecturer gave in return. They reported that where they were the only student teacher in the school that other teachers also responded positively to their commitment.

These three primary drivers, *resources, context and history* and *professional commitment*, were found to be fundamental to the perceived success of these placements. These then impacted positively on the secondary drivers that follow.

### 7.3.2 *Applying the findings to the secondary drivers of the model*

In the original model the three secondary drivers identified were, in order, *reflection, knowledge* and *perspective*. In the revised version, the order of *reflection* and *knowledge* is reversed based on the participants' perceptions.

Originally it was considered that being able to understand a setting from others' perspective impacted on knowledge about a school-based placement however, given the evidence, being well-informed influences the partners' ability to reflect.

*Knowledge* was defined in Chapter Three as knowing the school, the children, and placement requirements as well as theories and practice for both learning and teaching, and having an overall understanding of ITE and the MMP programme. From the findings, there were varying levels and depth of knowledge anticipated of the different partners, e.g. the university lecturer would know more about the programme than others. With distance learning being new to many of these students, schools and teachers, being knowledgeable and sharing what was known was reported as being important. Typically the student teachers were able to work independently and were all good oral communicators. The school needed them as the link with the university, to keep them informed about requirements. Also, where there was an enduring connection between coordinating teacher and university lecturer that gave confidence to the student that the coordinating teacher was well-informed.

Being able to stand back and reflect on their own practice, knowledge and beliefs in order to make sound judgments was important for these student teachers and coordinating teachers, especially because in this distance placement they could have been separated from other professionals. Findings show that opportunities for *reflection* were dependent on the students' confidence, professional commitment and knowledge, gained through their professional agency. This empowered them to inquire, to review the currency of their practice, approaches, strategies and theories and to think and talk with a wide range of professionals about their observations and practice. Opportunities for *reflection* occurred with many others in these school communities and lead to a deeper understanding about learning and teaching.

An identified risk for an ITE programme such as this one offered by distance, is the narrow *perspective* of those involved: the danger that student teachers were not exposed to a wide range of practices, beliefs and theories. Each person brought to the placement his/her own value orientations in terms of teaching and learning. Each of these students was the only one placed with their coordinating

teacher and with this being for a length of time there was a perceived risk of perceptions and expectations being narrowed. For these distance students, geographically separated or remote from the university, it was important to utilise a local school for their placement. This placed greater importance on making sure the student teacher was encouraged to work with a range of others to develop a wider perspective and to ensure that theory and practice were not continually treated as a dichotomy. Those students placed in smaller schools regarded the whole school as their placement and therefore developed their *perspective* across a range of teachers.

These three secondary drivers, *knowledge*, *reflection* and *perspective* were fundamental to the perceived success of these placements. These three factors impacted positively on the pivotal factors that follow.

### 7.3 3 Applying the findings to the pivotal factors of the model

The original model identified two pivotal factors. The first, influenced directly and primarily by the primary driver *resources*, was the partners' abilities to *manage the demands* of the placements. The second, *relationships*, was influenced through the other driving factors identified to this point.

Being able to rationalise, prioritise and *manage the demands* and challenges of a placement was essential for these distance students. Demands and challenges came from a range of sources including study, family, friends, school and employment. Studying at a distance created quite a different learning environment, never before experienced by these students. They often continued with employment, which created pressures. Living close to immediate and wider family/whanau often meant they were expected to continue with past commitments. They were often previously involved and well known in the local school, which meant ongoing demands and expectations. As second chance learners they had to cope with the demands of returning to formal study. As more mature students they came with confidence but this often came with assumptions about their ability and knowledge. They were often an integral person to their local community and expected to carry out voluntary work. While this involvement gave them access to support, this was not always for teaching or study. As the only student teacher in a small school or community there was a

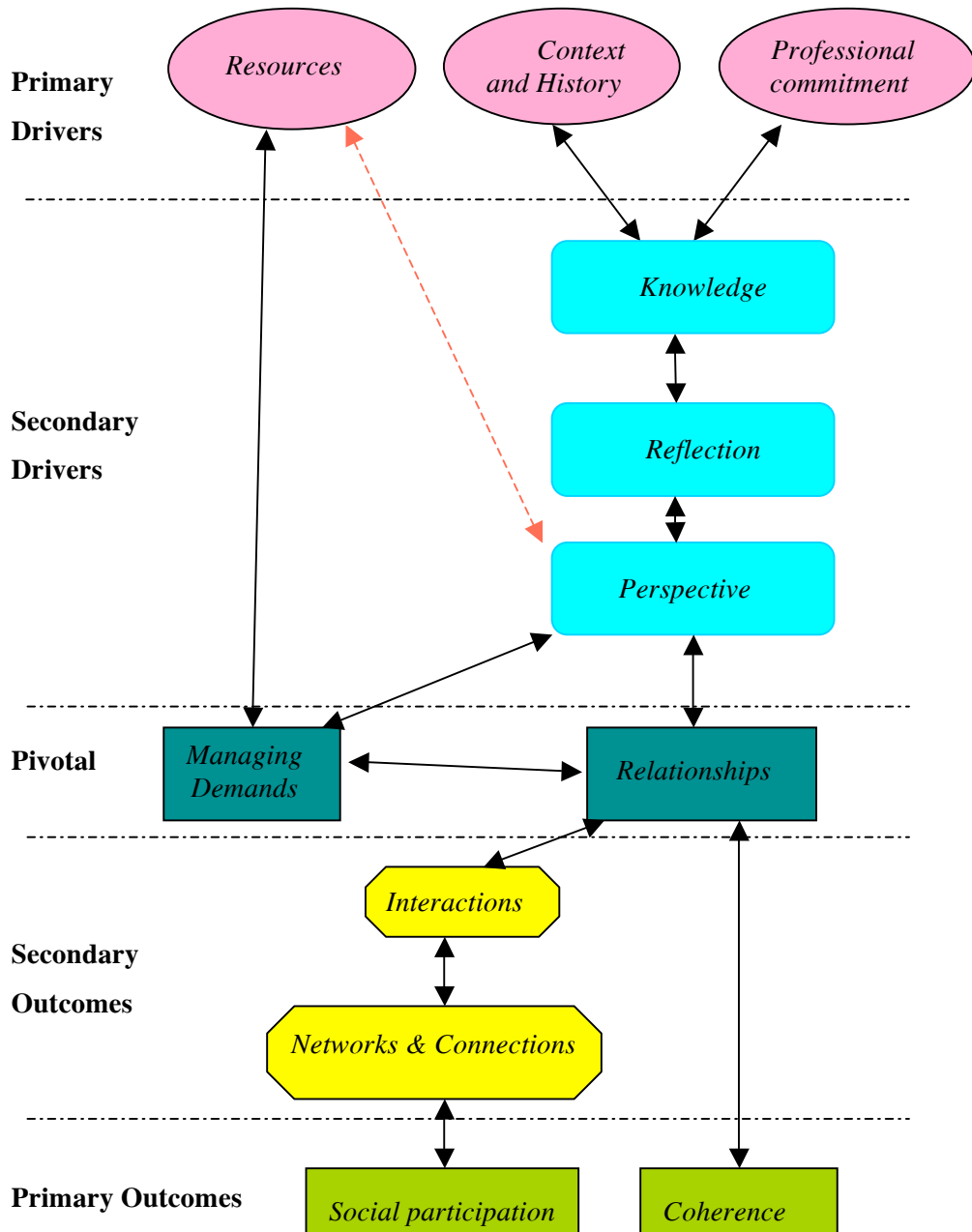
novelty factor, which created demands. Unreasonable demands were created by these various aspects, common in other ITE programmes but collectively specific to distance study and not the encumbrance of the student teacher alone. If the student, coordinating teacher or university lecturer was not robust enough to meet the challenges through good resourcing, professional commitment and strong relationships it was reported to have impacted negatively on the effectiveness of the placement.

These findings showed that effective *relationships* are reciprocal in that those involved must seek as well as provide support and advice. This study has clearly shown the importance of inter-personal knowledge and skills in establishing and developing relationships. As distance students they were likely to have an established relationship with the local school or coordinating teacher. This gave them confidence to work with people, overcoming the potential isolation and separation from the university. In a sense this gave them opportunities to use their professional agency to inquire and reflect. It often meant they had or were prepared to spend time together in preparation and reflection, especially as they spent one full day a week in their school. For these student teachers there was value in being on their own in their local school and as good communicators they were likely to keep in touch with many others. The relationships between the coordinating teachers and university lecturers were also an influence on the placement. Evidence showed that where consultation created a collaborative partnership then the placement was valued and consequently, the relationships between the student teacher, school and teacher educators was effective.

These two pivotal factors, *managing demands* and *relationships*, are highlighted as critical factors upon which many of these placements were perceived as successful in relation to the collected data. In essence, when these factors were stable and established they were linked to success. They were also linked to the following factors – *interactions, networks and connections, social participation* and *coherence*. These final five factors are not addressed in detail in this study. As a consequence of applying the findings from this study to the original model (see Figure 3.2), revision to the model was necessary (Figure 7.1). Fitting with the original conceptual model development, the new model is presented as a way of better understanding and explaining school-based

placements for all partners. It is presented as a theoretical model of the factors that make up the human and operational aspects of these distance school-based placements for the student teachers, coordinating teachers and university lecturers.

**Figure 7.1 Revised model of the key factors of a school-based placement**



### **7.4 Limitations of the study**

As with other qualitative research, this study had limitations. The limitations highlighted here do not detract from the overall quality of the research nor the findings and recommendations. The seven limitations simply indicate that as researcher, I acknowledge that there are some aspects that may be questioned in reading this report. First, as qualitative inquiry, this study did not include any direct observation as a method of gathering evidence. It was neither appropriate nor feasible for me to observe behaviours and conversations within the setting. Instead I relied on the memories of the nine second-year student teachers and others associated with their placements. Second, the primary sample of nine might be considered small. However, sharing their “voices” with others involved in their placements increased the sample size. Nine represented about one-fifth of the 2004 second-year cohort and these nine were chosen for their location and accessibility. Third, the inclusion of only female student teachers gave a bias to the perceptions. A male perspective on placements may produce some variations that are not evident here although the researcher and some other participants were male. Typically throughout the developed world the large majority of primary teachers are female (Evans & Nation, 1993) so this sample has given a realistically true account based on the current gender balance. Fourth, it might be considered that the perspective of the children in the classroom should also be included. This was adjudged to be not possible or appropriate in addressing these research questions. The fifth limitation was the creation of the collective stories. These relied heavily on my interpretation of the research data but they were also participant-checked consistently so the participants were able to suggest modifications and were used for verification purposes.

The final two potential limitations concerned the study itself rather than the participants or methodology. There was a distinct lack of literature specific to the nature of the one-day placements investigated in this study. As highlighted, the majority of literature sourced reported studies of practica that tend to be shorter but more intense than these school-based placements. There was certainly also variation in the literature between post-graduate and undergraduate programmes and between schooling sectors (early childhood, primary and secondary). Finally, this study was completed part-time therefore there has been a

gap of five years since data collection. Many things change in education in short periods however the settings in this study have not undergone any major change in this time.

### **7.5 Implications for ITE practice and further research**

This project has provided the opportunity for further investigation of the practical realities for students, teachers and lecturers associated with school-based placements, a chance to focus on the intellectual, social and emotional challenges confronting them (Kern, 2004). These findings give readers a greater understanding of the partnerships, affirming the findings of earlier researchers that there is a need to continue strengthening school-university partnerships in teacher education (Beck & Kosnik, 2001; Calder et al., 1993; Ferrier-Kerr, 2005; Lind, 2004; Sivan & Chan, 2003; Yarrow, 2004). This project has highlighted factors important in developing these collaborative school-based partnerships. While reviews of ITE continue within NZ and internationally (Cameron & Baker, 2004; Cochran-Smith, 2004; Kane, 2005, Zeichner, 2002), the importance of placing students learning teaching in settings where the factors of this revised model are taken into account will be one positive outcome of this study. Highlighted below are six key aspects of school-based placements deserving of attention by ITE providers and three recommendations for further research.

#### **Implications for ITE**

This study verifies effective relationships as influential on the success of school-based experiences. ITE providers must make available to placement partners the best opportunities to develop effective relationships. This requires that student teachers, coordinating teachers and university lecturers have well-developed interpersonal skills and knowledge and suggests that intentional partnering of student teacher with coordinating teacher may be important.

Placements are an integral part of student teachers' learning teaching. Student teachers must not be treated as clients entering a classroom to "learn the recipe of teaching" but, as shown in this study, must be allowed to build their professional agency, confidence and competence through observations, practice, reflections and theorising. For this to occur the student teacher must be focused on learning teaching opportunities, developing their practice, knowledge, beliefs

and perspective. The coordinating teacher must be encouraging and supportive of this, focusing on their student teacher learning teaching.

Pathways and opportunities between base-school teachers and teacher education providers must be created to grow coordinating teachers as mentors, co-learners, facilitators and advisers (Clarke, 2000; Le Cornu, 2006; Timperley et al., 1998). This study has shown that such opportunities help reduce the isolation of students and separation from the university-based teachers in distant placements. This is essential in bridging the practice-theory gap, evident in many partnerships even within this study. Further opportunities must be offered to teacher education partners by schools and/or universities for professional learning about roles and responsibilities so that all partners are well-informed.

Resourcing of school-based placements with quality people, time and funds is essential. For coordinating teachers and university lecturers to continue as committed partners their endeavours must be valued. The participants in this study illustrated that 'worth' is typically determined by the value that significant others show through allocation of time, funds and people to support and develop a placement.

Student teachers and coordinating teachers must have effective strategies to manage the demands and challenges of a placement. These strategies varied for the participants in this study but ensuring that pastoral and professional support is available when needed is essential. Support will derive from a range of sources and the partners must be able to provide or facilitate necessary support and encourage others to seek suitable support when needed.

A fundamental goal for every student teacher on placement is to be teacher, highlighted by all student teachers in this research. This means different things for different people and may be encapsulated in the name given a person or actions in a classroom. Student teachers on placement want to be regarded by other professionals as *teacher*, first by being referred to as a teacher but more importantly by being given responsibilities associated with the role of teacher. Progressive strategies to support this must be developed, where participation, observation and reflection allow for increasing 'teacher' responsibilities.



### **Further research**

School-based placement partners need time and strategies to reflect on practice, observations and theories. Some beginnings have been made to explore this (Clarke, 2000; Timperley, 2001). However, exploring how effective coordinating teachers manage demands, create opportunities and prioritise time to facilitate successful practice and reflection opportunities within the placement, especially in distance programmes, would be of benefit to students, teachers and lecturers.

Among their responsibilities, it is important for contemporary teachers to be open-minded, respectful, inclusive and fair. For student teachers to continue developing these dispositions in the school-based placement there must be a deliberate strategy employed. Exposure to a range of individual perspectives and diverse learning networks may assist. Working across a range of classrooms and schools seems a logical strategy and the idea of placing a student teacher with a whole school rather than one classroom teacher is a challenge worthy of further investigation.

This study included participants who began their placement in a local school where they had a previous involvement. This is not typical in ITE programmes but essential in remote and small communities where schools have difficulty attracting quality staff. If teacher education providers are to continue to provide opportunities for initial teacher education in regions that are anxious to attract local aspirants into teaching then improvements must be investigated. The findings of this study and further research will inform ITE policy and programmes.

### ***7.6 Concluding thoughts: Importance for placements at a distance***

Teacher education is an institution that “poses moral, ethical, social, philosophical and ideological questions” that are value laden and therefore require naturalistic research to explore and explain meanings (Cochran-Smith, 2004, p. 68). Building on the local research and writing of McGee (1995a; 1998) and other individuals, New Zealand Council for Educational Research (NZCER) (for example Julian, 1998) and Ministry of Education (for example Ministry of

Education, 2000) this study provides evidence that helps to better understand and explain the placement experiences of student teachers (Kern, 2004) while at the same time exploring any limitations of school-based teaching practice (Maynard, 2000). Increasing collaborative involvement for all partners and understanding placement are important in facilitating student teacher learning (Sivan & Chan, 2003). Exploring the case for sustaining and building on existing partnerships (Williams & Soares, 2002) will be an important outcome of this project.

In their briefing to the incoming Minister of Education, the New Zealand Ministry of Education (2008) highlighted a need for strengthening the quality of teacher education graduates as a priority, suggesting that:

Initial teacher education has a strong influence on the quality of teachers entering the profession, and needs to be well aligned to evidence of effective teaching practice for all students. A range of initiatives is underway to improve the quality, consistency and content of initial teacher education. This work includes building the capability of teachers who mentor both student teachers and beginning teachers, and clarifying the roles and responsibilities of teacher educators and schools from a teacher's entry into training to full registration. (pp. 18-19)

With this Government priority and the ongoing review and development of ITE programmes by NZTC and providers, it is important that research into various aspects of teacher education be completed and reported. This project will assist ITE providers to consider the goals of placements in their programmes and the preference for partnerships and what such a placement model might include (Williams & Soares, 2002). In reviewing their own policies and guidelines, this will help teacher educators clarify the roles of each partner involved in the placement (Sivan & Chan, 2003), perhaps creating opportunities for greater collaboration and trust between university and schools. The level of responsibility for placement varies greatly for schools and teachers. Evidence shows the university and students primarily determine this (Williams & Soares, 2002) so the clarifying of roles and responsibilities may be better understood as a result of findings from this study.

## **Epilogue**

Congratulations to all nine student teachers who contributed time and energy to this study, for successfully completing their school-based practice and

university study. They all graduated with a Bachelor of Teaching and most of them are now registered New Zealand teachers. Of these students, all have continued to work in the local community that supported them through their study. Two of them were appointed to positions within their base-school, one returned to the high school that supported her to complete her study, two are currently employed full time in local schools and two initially chose not to go teaching immediately. The others are employed part time and in various relief teacher positions.

Of the nine coordinating teachers eight continue their work as classroom teachers, school leaders and student teacher support in the base-school where I interviewed them. The other one I have lost contact with. All four university lecturers continue with their sterling work. They may or may not have changed roles however they all continue to support student teachers and base schools in a variety of ways. I have also changed my role since this project began, moving from coordinating the MMP programme that was the focus of this study to a broader responsibility in the Faculty of Education at the University of Waikato as Associate Director of Primary Programmes in the Centre for Teacher Education.

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## Appendices

Note, the following appendices are not displayed in their original form in consideration of space in this report. This is especially so for the schedules and narratives.

### **Appendix A: Trigger topics and information for the student teacher narratives**

#### *Preliminary information for student teacher participation in data gathering*

The following information will guide you in the preparation for each of the four discussion groups we have. Remember to access and use the forum established on the edLinked website <http://www.edLinked.waikato.ac.nz>. You should work to follow each of the guidelines outlined below:

1. Participate in the initial discussions online to share ideas, clarify understandings and initiate thinking about each of the triggers. [not achieved]
2. Write about a particular episode, action or event for you focused on the ‘trigger’ provided (eg the *beliefs and assumptions* that you remember bringing into your MMP base-school teaching placement for the first story).
3. Write your story in the third person using a pseudonym. Select an appropriate title and pseudonym for your story. Writing in the third person allows you to create personal distance and view the memory from outside and helps to avoid justification of the experience.
4. Write in as much detail as possible, including even what might be considered trivial or inconsequential. This will help to avoid an evaluation by other participants of what was important or unimportant.
5. Describe the experience; do not import interpretation, explanation or biography. Description allows the rough edges and irregularities to be included where interpretation may well cover up such important data.
6. Be prepared to rework your memory. Remember that you will be sharing this story with others, which will give you the opportunity to expand and develop in detail anything about the event that you recall later.
7. When you are satisfied with your story, email it to me as an attachment to reach me in time for copying for our discussion; to [busscher@waikato.ac.nz](mailto:busscher@waikato.ac.nz) or post it in your personal portfolio in the edLinked forum area.
8. These stories will be analysed by me and all trends, patterns, concepts, generalisations, etc. will be recorded. Also at this time I will consider sending to each member a copy of all stories received for consideration before our focus group discussion.

Each focus group discussion will follow the following format:

- Each member of the group may have a turn at briefly sharing the story they wrote with the other group members. This may include further description and annotation.
- The collective group then considers the trends, patterns, concepts, generalisations, etc. that I have interpreted from the stories. The group will have a conversation about these. As a group we may well discuss a wide range of issues.
- Up to 2 hours will be allocated for the completion of this process given that there may be up to 9 group members involved, however it will be more appropriate to organise and run two smaller groups of 5 and 4 for convenience, cost and discussion

opportunities.

Following the completion of each collective story telling I will take the written narratives along with the discussion information to create a 'collective' story that will be used as a basis for the interviews with the coordinating teachers and liaison lecturers. This will be a challenging task for me as I will be taking each individual story and the multitude of memories retold at the focus group, and condensing them down into one story. I will make every endeavour to be inclusive of ideas and people before sending them to the teachers and lecturers.

If there are issues you are unsure of or points you are not clear on please contact me through the edLinked forum or the details below.

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***Trigger topic 1***

The process from Narrative #1 to Focus Group conversation #1

- Start by considering the statements identified by Bill from the stories as trigger/focus questions
- The statements will be sorted for order
- Re-read each of the stories – self, not aloud
- Conversation protocols to include: one speaker at a time; name first; keep notes; and use the tape recorders
- The conversations will be transcribed by a third party

**Assumptions and beliefs: Thinking back to when I started in this programme in 2004**

...

- I know this school can provide for me through my previous associations through work/children
- I have always believed I would become a teacher
- I know I have the ability and commitment to study and practice to be a teacher
- I have confidence in myself to achieve this
- I know I am ready to do this – the timing is right
- I assume the people who encouraged me will be there to support me

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***Trigger topic 2***

The process from Narrative #2 to Focus Group conversation #2

Some points from Narrative #1

- Provide more detail in a more narrow focus – specific event
- Explore the event in greater depth
- All stories will be shared across the whole group prior to the group meeting
- We will start by sharing our own stories with the group as trigger/focus questions
- The conversations were readily transcribed, only needing some names and words identified by Bill

**Expectations: Thinking back to when you started in this programme in 2004 ...**

- What I expected the base school would provide/do for me
- What I expected my CT would provide for me
- What I expected the School of Education would provide for me
- What I expected I had to do at the start

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Specific suggested situations as triggers for an event:

- I expected “[CT, school, SOE, ...” to show me what to do regarding (how to do ...)
- I expected to be shown/taught about Classforum/communications by ...
- I expected that “...” would help me make the links between the theory and practice
- I expected my relationship with my CT/base school/liaison lecturer to ...
- I expected my CT and the base school to know about the MMP
- I expected that tertiary study would be ... and that others would know/support/help ...
- I had expected the School of Education to have worked closely with my base school before I arrived ...

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### ***Trigger topic 3***

The process from Narrative #3 to Focus Group conversation #3

What roles does each partner play in a distance placement – students, base-school teacher and university lecturer?”.

For this I have in mind various roles but perhaps to get you thinking beyond the “title” that people have I might suggest ‘peer’, ‘leader’ or ‘mentor’ as roles rather than ‘student’. I know I wanted to resist this but I don’t want to leave you in the dark here. If you can think across all 3 partners in trying to identify a suitable event to write about.

The method we used last time was really good and it allowed us to focus on issues. Perhaps we might try to combine aspects of both previous meetings this time around:

1. Please all send me a copy of your story this week (big ask but I think you are getting better at rattling one off)
2. Having read your stories I will identify some key issues (will probably write these on your paper)
3. I will post copies of all stories back to you on Monday at the latest (23rd) so you get them before the gathering
4. You will take turns at reading and elaborating on your own story and then with each one we can share and explore issues before moving along. We will need to keep to time at each gathering otherwise the last speaker doesn’t get a fair bite at the cherry.

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### ***Trigger topic 4***

The process from Narrative #4 to Focus Group conversation #4

Friday, June 10, 2005

Hi there

Last day of semester 3 – midway point – time for you to celebrate I hope. Hope all is well for you all.

In preparing for 20/21 June dinner meetings please could you:

1. Have a read through the attached story, which is my collation of your stories and conversations. Please look to see that YOU are there in some form and that you are not so blatantly there that your CT might take offence. I have tried hard but this does need to reflect all of you. Unfortunately there will be bits missed but I think I have your voice and story in here somewhere in part. You must talk to me about any things – little or big – that you are not totally comfortable with – whether in or not in.

2. Could you confirm a pseudonym that I could use for you when I write further. Some of you may be happy with your real name but others of you may wish me to use another. I may also use “Gisborne 1”, “Taupo 4” etc. By the way Jasmile has the first letters of 7/9 of you included. And Taku has the other 2. Please let me know if there is anything offensive about either name.
3. For our next conversation please could you write a story using one of the following triggers:
  - Tell a story that highlights a **collaborative** event [or moment or lesson or issue] you remember from your work with your coordinating teacher.
  - Tell a story that highlights an event [or moment or lesson or issue] that was **not collaborative** that you remember from your work with your coordinating teacher.
  - Tell a story that highlights how important it is to be **connected** with your learning community including wither one or both of your coordinating teacher and liaison lecturer (your learning community would also include classmates, other teachers, other lecturers, etc).
  - Tell a story that highlights the lack of **connectedness** with your learning community including wither one or both of your coordinating teacher and liaison lecturer (your learning community would also include classmates, other teachers, other lecturers, etc).

In terms of the narratives explain your own thoughts on the following issues, which may be considered “points of difference” for good placements:

1. The need for diversity - having experiences in a range of culturally diverse settings, promoting cultural understanding and overcoming the mismatch of the population and teaching force for both CTs and students, whether from background or the programme.
2. The need for collaboration - linking theory with practice effectively such as the interactions among CT, students and lecturers, and the need for resourcing, effort and knowledge to be able to achieve this.
3. The need for CT training – there are oncampus courses provided for ATs but does the MMP booklet, provided for coordinating teachers, give enough so that they are knowledgeable, well resourced and are obviously reflexive in their approach.
4. Having students clustered – considering the proximity to peers, where several students are together in one school or location. Are the interactions, relationships and collaborations enough - internet & email, lecturer liaison and supervision, SOE & school collaboration.
5. The matching and site selection – linking a student with a specifically selected CT whereas generally it is by default as being the only local school or teacher willing to “take on” a student. Perhaps the whole school should be considered as the site rather than just the CT in terms of attitude, resourcing and relationships.



**Appendix B: Collective stories**

Note: all names are fictitious and created.

*Collective story #1*

Jasmile had long believed she would become a teacher. Perhaps it all began with her bossing her siblings and cousins around or from the family line of teachers, including father Raman, aunt Magenta and cousin Catherine. While she recently worked in and around Black Pearl School as a parent helper, and more currently in her role as a teacher aide, she had assumed the role of teacher in some of her previous employment – instructing others on how to use computers and programs. Jasmile had heard of others in her district who had got into the program while teaching in schools. One of them said she thought “people had dreamed that they were going to become a teacher when the reality is not like that at all. Almost everybody had just fallen into it”. Jasmile had heard of people who just “needed to get the ticket”, the qualification, to make them legally a teacher.

Jasmile was more passionate about teaching and children than that. Being the ‘parent as first teacher’ for her three children gave her the experience, the first ‘taste’ of real teaching, and since those first beginnings, children had always been her mission – she just loves being with children. She was accepted into teachers’ college just after secondary school but life took a different path so she never made it. She now has many life experiences and maturity and realises that she still wants to be a teacher. If this is what she wants, what is there to lose? Moreover, the opportunity to study via the Internet means she can stay home with her children and study at the same time. Knowledge of this Mixed Media Programme has rekindled her dream.

Perhaps it was Jasmile’s determination and motivation rather than confidence but the life changes she had made over the past years had been bringing her life back to her and what she wanted and could achieve. It had been so long since she had done any study but she assumed from past experiences and results that she could do this. Anyway, she had maturity and life skills from her other jobs as well now. Jasmile thought it fair to assume because she had passed the selection interview then the university must have confidence in her. Her family and friends appeared to have confidence in her and she felt that without her own confidence she would be “making the job so hard”. She knew she could teach and she needed to be confident about the ‘light at the end of the tunnel’ otherwise things were going to knock her all the time.

Jasmile had been talking recently with a good friend about the issue of not knowing what was expected of her. Her friend, Taku, is really freaked out when there is something she does not know about: she is often plagued by self-doubt. It was obvious to Jasmile that her friend has a fear of the unknown and so would not be able to step out of her comfort zone for fear of failure – unlike Jasmile. Taku appears to lack confidence, perhaps stemming from her past school experiences such as exams. Jasmile does sometimes worry about her loss of control and authority as a student teacher and in fact, it took her a full month to complete and mail her application form, but generally, she is confident about her ability to succeed.

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Jasmile has never felt nervous about her ability working with children as she had looked after friends' children, often taking a teacher role with them. She had also had some previous practice of sorts in Cold Mountain Kindergarten, which her own children attended, so she knew she had the ability to work with children. Family, friends and some teachers had commented how they thought she was "a natural teacher". However, she was not so sure about working with a class of 30 children and in front of the teacher and even parents! She was vulnerable to stage fright in such situations. Nevertheless, Jasmile and her friends considered the children to be innocent and non-judgmental so imagined she could handle the classroom practice okay.

Having studied before, mainly "on the job", where she had to teach herself something new and then maybe teach others how to use it also, Jasmile imagined she could cope with the study part of this programme. She knows why she is doing this programme and this just makes it all worth her while. It's about fulfillment for her. She sees herself as being "ambitious and committed" and therefore feels she has the ability to study and develop her knowledge to be able to work effectively as a teacher.

Jasmile's own children had now grown to a stage where they had become more independent; demanding and needing less of her time. With her family duties and commitments reduced, she decided it was time to think about herself and her future. She had more time on her hands and had to think about her career and security. She thought teaching would also enable her to have a healthy balance between being a full-time mum and doing something for herself. This issue had been simmering for a while but she felt the time had not been right when her children were younger.

In addition, the jobs Jasmile had been in were not fulfilling or challenging. Her current work had become mundane and frustrating and with her reduced hours it meant she was not being rewarded for the hours she devoted to the special-needs kids she so dearly loved to work with. She felt she had been there long enough and to leave teacher training any longer might mean she would be completing her degree when she was too old and there was not enough time to do the teaching she really wanted to do. Jasmile also knew how hard it was for Taku's mother, (age 51) who was in her third year of a nursing degree. While Taku's family may not have to bear the financial struggle that Jasmile's family will, other things outweighed the short-term debt of this study. Jasmile felt this was like karma that got her into this position – with her lead up experiences, teaching was the next natural progression and it all "fits in with being a mum". The time is right for her to give it a go.

Jasmile had been in Black Pearl School such a long time with her children and work that she had a great confidence in the school being able to provide what she thought she might need for her study. She was so well known that she could just walk in everywhere; it was like an open door, her with her own key and all – it was fabulous. Several MMP students had been in this school before so Black Pearl School was experienced working with student teachers – not that Jasmile knew what needed to be provided at the time – she was quite bewildered about her role.

On the other hand, Jasmile heard of another student, David, who went in to a completely new school – “he didn’t know them and they didn’t know him”. Apparently, David had heard good things about the school but did not know what to anticipate. He convinced himself to “just wait, don’t panic”. His first visit was so quick that he did not have enough time to form any expectations but the partnership really did not come together in the way that he thought it would, that he had imagined in his mind. Luckily, he had his old school as a backup to provide for his needs.

Initial support and encouragement for Jasmile came from a range of sources. Those of her friends who are “still on the same page in life” are good to whinge to about the workload. Her wider family just needs to be ears to her – listening to her moan, while not knowing about what she is talking. They will say things like “That’s okay, you can do it” while she can complain for a whole day and they sit there and love her – its fantastic. In addition, people in the job she had been working in encouraged her, asking “How are you doing?” and showing an interest in her progress. Although some of these people who encourage her seem to think she is “Wonder Woman” as it seems their idea of support is to give her more work! Jasmile knows these people cannot be expected to read her mind; if she needs help, she must ask them because she has found that if “you look as if you’re doing okay, confident, they think you are fine”.

This has also been an issue with Jasmile’s husband. While she thought he was fully supportive of her studying to be a teacher, there have been times when he has been “a right pain”. At times, she has been made to feel guilty about her changed roles as a mother, wife and housekeeper. However her parents have been great, often saying, “Bring the kids here for a while to give yourself some space to work” - yeah for mums! Jasmile’s dad also bought her the computer she needed. Her parents have been there when needed – when she needed to know there would be care for her children.

Her children have also been very supportive, leaving little notes of encouragement for her, helping around the house, giving her the space she needs to do her work. Their timely words of encouragement have been inspirational for her. Nevertheless, most of all Jasmile gets her support from within. She knew she was going into this ‘on her own’, and she knows she wants to do this.

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### *Collective story #2*

Plain sailing? Maybe that is what other students had anticipated but not Kate. She had expected this journey to be a tough one, a huge learning curve with problems to face along the way. Not only did she think it was going to be tough for her but she also suspected that all her family members would have to adjust as well. She did however expect that she would be able to succeed, to cope with all that came her way. She saw this as an opportunity to take back control of her life. Her goal was to take responsibility, to make the effort and to do well. She did however acknowledge that there were many aspects, which might affect this goal.

Kate knew the principal and base school through her involvement as a parent at Tennyson School. She did not however know her prospective coordinating

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teacher (CT) – Juls. She supposed that the school knew what was expected of student teachers, that the liaison lecturer would have given them information and guidelines from the School of Education (SOE). She knew that the principal had been involved with MMP in the past so would have a grasp on the ‘nitty-gritty’. She was anxious about this big step in her life but assumed that the school and SOE would inform her about the programme and all it entailed, including her work with Juls.

Fitting together the pieces of the ‘teaching’ puzzle, Kate expected would be the role of her CT. She anticipated that Juls would be confident and knowledgeable in her role, a model of ‘best practice’, and be able to provide opportunities for Kate to link her reading and the theories to classroom practice. One aspect that Kate was unsure of was the difference between this placement and the other teaching practicum that she had heard about. She hoped that Juls was not expecting her to know about such things as sometimes her involvement at Tennyson gave others the impression that she ‘knew everything’. Kate anticipated that there would be differences between different teacher education programmes and requirements and she thought Juls would know these things; after all, she appeared so enthusiastic about everything.

Kate expected to have a close relationship with Juls that would develop over the two years. She hoped for a reciprocated respect for each other. She had worried about the “only one day a week” nature of her work in school, which would mean no continuous time in the class. She wanted her relationship with Juls to be open and easy, because she had observed another student-teacher relationship at their school that had become frosty and difficult. She saw that there was a real personality clash between those two, that they could not easily resolve by themselves. She considered that her relationship with Juls, staff and the children would probably be critical. However there was a catch-22 in this for Kate. She felt that by working with a CT she did not know that she would be able to ask ‘the stupid questions’ without fear whereas if she was to be working with someone she knew well, the ‘friendship’ may get in the way of “harsh truths” and honest feedback.

Having been a parent in the school, Kate knew that her relationship would change with her new role as student teacher. While she already knew the school and principal she had some anxiety about how she would work on developing a sound relationship with this one person that she did not really know – Juls. Another new MMP student in town, Meg, was going into a brand new school, where she knew no-one, and Kate thought that would be very daunting. A good part of going into a school that she already knew was that she had some choice and felt that many of the staff would be interested in her progress. Her small, local school was almost like home and the staffroom was a place of warmth and support.

Kate expected that she would get strong support from her school. Her past associations made her feel comfortable in the school and she anticipated that any University of Waikato student would be welcomed and supported. While her teaching role was an “unknown” for her, she felt that with support and guidance she would be eased into the workload. She thought the support would be important for her and would come from a variety of sources, after all “feedback

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and affirmation are important". She expected to be well looked after and supported by Juls and that this might be reflected in the opportunities given for her to try out new ideas and practices, to make a mess and mistakes as she learned about teaching. She also anticipated that the SOE would provide her with information about getting started – on coursework and the Internet. She was expecting the university to be like an "ivory tower" but she also felt that her studying via the Internet would make it all different. She anticipated that with the computer, she would just "get it", and she did, although she did not get any of the important information or tutorial support from SOE that she anticipated.

Of course, there would also be other support within the programme. While Kate expected to be working alone, she hoped that the base school and SOE would provide support for Juls. She also imagined that all her tutors wanted to see their students pass the papers so would provide support for them via online feedback. In a previous workplace, she felt that people were all too busy to care or give feedback but she hoped that staff at Tennyson would look forward to her one-day a week in school. Kate really wanted to be actively involved in the classroom with the children. She had no thoughts of being an observer, she wanted hands-on, to be able to try things out, to make a mess or mistake and to be able to 'fall over' without Juls interfering unless it was dangerous for the children. Really, Kate did not want to be eased into this part of the programme, she wanted to hit the classroom with a bang!

Kate expected to be able to ask Juls about anything and everything, to talk directly with her about experiences, issues and practices. She thought she would have time to talk with Juls in class, at meetings and through feedback. She did not expect Juls to be too busy to spend much time with; after all, she had volunteered to have Kate in her room. She thought that as the SOE rewarded each CT financially they would have given an indication of the time commitment required for a MMP student. Kate hoped Juls would be accommodating and not feel that her presence in the classroom was either an intrusion or a nuisance. If she ever got the feeling that she was "in the way", she would be mortified and want to leave. She was able to calm these anxieties in the knowledge that every CT taking on a student and associated tasks will be committed to helping because they value people – they belong to a caring profession.

Kate expected her commitment to be severely tested at the beginning because she felt there would be hard times with everything being so new. She expected to stumble along for a while, just coping with it all – computers, study, school, class of children, etc. A major challenge to her commitment would be her ability to manage the challenge of other people's expectations of her. She felt she would probably be trying to satisfy and please her family, friends, school, principal, children and CT. In becoming a student teacher in this programme, Kate felt her 'family' had become extended overnight, and her commitment to completing her degree successfully was impacted by her past relationships and roles and therefore obligations to these people.

Of all the aspects that Kate had talked about with people, it was the transition of roles that concerned her most. She expected there to be some changes, from parent to student teacher, but she had no real understanding of what that might entail. In her past involvement with the school she was appreciated for work she

did as a parent, such as tidying up in the classroom to allow the teacher and children to get on with their learning and teaching. However, she expected that sort of thing to change but she was not really looking forward to becoming a “stranger in an unfamiliar role” within a familiar environment. She did not really know whether she would be like a teacher’s aide and jump at every opportunity or whether she should wait for Juls to invite her to do things. She decided she should not try to “cross the bridge until [she got] to it” but that she would still be required to do much individual research to find out about the many more new things that lay ahead of her.

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### *Collective story #3*

Syrenka hadn’t really given much thought to the roles of the many other people involved in her teacher education programme. She thought more of her own role and how she needed to sort out her own problems and just “get on with things” since it had been her choice to do the Mixed Media Programme rather than attend an on-campus programme. At times she thought she needed to be ‘superwoman’ coping with study, family and work, because there was just so much involved in being a university student training to be a teacher. In her new role as student she had limited prior knowledge but appreciated that she was learning like the children in her base classroom. She knew she had to be independent but often felt she was ‘independently lost’ and relied on the help and support of others to get through.

Mostly, the roles of helper and supporter for Syrenka came from her colleagues. She was lucky enough to have developed a genuine learning community based on a local study group. This group provided her with friendship and companionship in the tough times – they commiserated and celebrated, whinged and coffeed with her through personal and academic events. While this group was the heart of her learning community, lecturers and teachers also played important roles in supporting her. Other students, including those from other teacher education programmes and 2<sup>nd</sup> year MMP students, were supporters and mentors in different ways and at different times as well.

The ‘D’ that she received for an assignment was a real wakeup call for Syrenka in her first year: this prompted her to seek support from peers and lecturers. She realized that her course lecturers were approachable for advice and guidance once she asked. She figured out that the more astute students took advantage of such opportunities. One of her 2<sup>nd</sup> year colleagues had suggested that the lecturers were ‘unbending’ and not easy to approach but once she had established the relationship that her study group had encouraged, she found each lecturer was supportive when the focus of relationship was on the content of his/her course. Syrenka quickly worked out that the role of the lecturer was to assist with assignments, establish meaningful discussions, challenge her thinking and to generally encourage her as a learner. This responsibility was mainly carried out through emails, phone calls and the Internet. She really loved being able to ask the big questions as well as the “silly” little ones which she was able to do with lecturers and her coordinating teacher.

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Syrenka's coordinating teacher (Lynlee) was all of this – and more. She was very accommodating, always able to find the time to answer her questions. When asked to list the roles of her CT she reeled off mentor, role model, inspiration, helper, adviser, provider and critic. Syrenka felt that Lynlee was a provider in that she made available her classroom, the children, school resources, an effective learning environment, time and knowledge (especially in her specialty curriculum area). Lynlee was a constant role model in all the many roles that she undertook within the school community and also in providing learning opportunities and a rich learning environment for Syrenka. Initially, Lynlee was a critic also, offering to read essays and discuss assignments. This was such a help at the start. She certainly provided feedback and suggestions on the lesson plans and observations that Syrenka was required to complete for her studies. However, Syrenka learned that Lynlee's advice regarding assignments was not always accurate - she did not have the background and programme knowledge to know what to do. This was highlighted when Syrenka sought help from Lynlee on an important essay, rather than dealing directly with her course lecturer. Unfortunately, at the beginning Syrenka had the perception that Lynlee should know everything about teacher education programmes. After all, she was "in the thick of it", being at the chalk-face and working with children, other teachers and having had students on practicum in the past. Lynlee had also implied that the lecturers were "up there in their offices" and did not get to see all the new things going on in schools. Lynlee's comments were at times a little negative. It did take Syrenka some time to realize that Lynlee did not know everything about the programme – she needed to get a more balanced perspective for her studies.

Syrenka had worked hard at developing a positive working relationship with Lynlee, which had become close to friendship – they had both developed a mutual respect and reciprocal support of each other's responsibilities in the programme and at school. Lynlee, and other staff members, "rejoiced" in Syrenka's successes and improvements. From this position, Lynlee provided support and feedback on specific teaching and learning issues and also made sure Syrenka was included in school activities, such as social occasions and school photos. While Syrenka considered herself lucky on this, she knew of two other students where the base school and CT were not so accepting of them – they felt a little left out in the cold rather than embraced into the staff and school community. For Syrenka, Lynlee had endeavoured to have other teachers on the staff take on a supporting role. It was natural that the ex-MMP students who were now staff members would be interested but Lynlee encouraged other teachers to take on the roles of mentors, supporters and advisers, after all Lynlee's role was one of coordinating teacher. To her this implied that she was not to be the only staff member involved in Syrenka's programme and progress. The university suggested the role of a coordinating teacher would be more of a facilitator for Syrenka in the school.

Syrenka had been told many times that the development and maintenance of key partnerships was critical. She understood the children's role as a given as without them – well! In addition to the children, she had worked at getting a "mix of partners" – a wide range of relevant people who could help and support her. Her liaison lecturer (Terry) proved invaluable on one occasion. She needed help to sort through a problem she was having. Terry came with a business-like approach, facilitating very thorough and relevant discussions with a range of

people. Syrenka understood Terry's responsibility as being to make sure that the teaching placement continued to work for all concerned – student, teacher, base school and university. Syrenka felt he was supportive of her needs and also made sure everyone involved understood – he seemed to take control of the situation, which originally arose through problems with her not being able to complete a required lesson. Syrenka found it challenging to take responsibility for negotiating the “interface between course and curriculum”. At times when she was required to teach specific lessons, such as for maths or PE, the content of the proposed lesson did not match with the current class programme and Lynlee was loathe to change just for a one-off lesson. This role had Syrenka stretched between the course requirements and the class programme – she disliked “visiting” such lessons on the children in Lynlee's class, as there was no real ‘student achievement’ underpinning the lessons.

Of all the responsibilities that Syrenka found she had, the role of teacher education student placed the greatest demands on her ability to prioritise and organise. There were times when student teacher came a long last in the list of things to be done. At other times this was top of the list. In this role she found she became a teacher of teachers, sharing new ideas and knowledge with Lynlee and other teachers in her learning community. At times she was a teacher of lecturers, pointing out that not everything is ‘black and white’, that there are other views on particular issues that course lecturers might like to consider. While Syrenka spent most of her time in the role of student and learner-teacher, she did not mind being dropped into the role of teacher occasionally to allow Lynlee to get on with her other school responsibilities. Lynlee was a busy person in her school community and if Syrenka was able to repay her in some small way by taking a group or the class, or doing some preparation for her, she “jumped at the chance”.

As a student teacher Syrenka got used to having a lot of people telling her how to do things. She was often told how she's going to have to change the way she does things no matter how ever long she have done them. In her roles and responsibilities, Syrenka felt sure that change would be a constant. In summing it all up Syrenka said “Most of all it's about finding yourself and knowing for a fact that during this course of study you will find out how you learn best. I have learned a lot about myself as a learner. Every child in a class will be different and, likewise, it is not possible to define an adult by one thing - we are really complex.”

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#### *Collective story #4*

Tamjyl's learning community has been both extensive and diverse. It has been more extensive than just her coordinating teacher (Rachel) and base school (Robinson Primary). It has included other students, other teachers, other schools, siblings, friends and now, her practicum school. It has also been more than one single community. For example, she has developed one community focusing on her computer and technology, another based around her reading and studying, and a third based on her teaching practice experiences. These learning communities have had a major impact on her. Tamjyl learns best by co-constructing knowledge and practices with others and so relies on interaction with others to help her learn and reflect on new concepts, theories and practices. While she thought initially

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that her learning community would be a teaching, professional group, it has proved greater than that. She discovered that she went beyond the “taken for granted”, local community, finding there were many others out there who were wanting to help her in a range of ways. Some wanted to help directly with her learning while with others it was indirect. Most valuably, Tamjyl finds that in all her communities, while she is helping others, she is also learning herself and this occurs across all her learning communities. While there are many people in **her** communities, she is also in many other learning communities. She is almost giddy from “moving in and out” of the many diverse learning communities to which she belongs.

Diversity has been such an important part of her learning. Tamjyl feels that in order to gain a deeper appreciation of the communities in which she will work as a teacher, she needs to be exposed to such diversity early. She has been talking with colleagues and some of them are in base schools where the teachers, children and community are very mono-cultural. Tamjyl really likes her communities for the obvious diversity. The people are diverse in culture and pedagogy. As an example, Rachel brings with her, past experiences as a principal in small rural schools, overseas teaching, extensive classroom practice and as an educational advisor. This gives a rich source of ideas and Tamjyl feels that such experiences contribute strongly to Rachel's effectiveness. It is important to get a different perspective on things associated with becoming a teacher – getting someone else to read your assignment work, talking through a problem, considering a lesson plan, understanding children, and more, so support from an extensive and diverse learning community is important.

For Tamjyl, support often comes from unexpected sources including principals, other teachers and non-teachers. Learning communities and support is all about people and Rachel has been essential to this. Rachel and Tamjyl spend a lot of time together, working through issues, planning, teaching, reflecting and learning. Of all her relationships this has developed into the strongest tie as each week they spend up to 10 hours in each others' company. Nothing is too much for Rachel when it comes to Tamjyl's programme. While the many other members of her learning communities are important, the bond Tamjyl has with Rachel is much more important than that with her colleagues or university lecturers. Rachel is positive and constructive in her feedback to Tamjyl and she makes a point of acknowledging, affirming and rewarding her effort and commitment across the range of her current life activities. This may be a simple action like a smile, a touch or a nod or a more significant one such as a quiet comment to other staff members or out loud in the staffroom. Having been a giver most of her life (probably her motherly role), Tamjyl does not find it easy to seek help but with Rachel she has always felt included and supported. The feedback, advice and guidance that Rachel gives “have been indicative of her connection to me. There have been some identifiable, significant moments that have occurred that were valuable – markers of being seen as more professional and competent. Becoming the teacher”.

Tamjyl finds it really affirming when Rachel seeks her opinion - collaborating regarding a child's progress or the best way to develop a lesson. She likes being given opportunities to utilise her new and developing knowledge. Having the chance to practice her teaching and learning and to be able to talk with

Rachel about ideas and theories she is coming to terms with is like her entry to the teaching profession – a rite of passage. On the occasions when Rachel ducks out of class to fulfill other duties, Tamjyl feels it is a confirmation of her growing ability and knowledge.

These face-to-face connections she has with Rachel are very important. Tamjyl's style of learning really requires that she has personalised experiences, especially face-to-face but also via the telephone. The computer is not her preferred style but this programme gives her the freedom to be able to remain in her local community. Isolation from her "place of study" has been "a big knock" to cope with but her local study group has created a bond nearly as strong as with Rachel. Such close ties impact strongly on her confidence and competence. These have made her feel confident about taking her work and ideas to Rachel and the group to "try them out" before she commits them to an assignment or teaching practice. These two close learning communities have a real professional feel about them.

Hand in hand with this professionalism has been a sense of real trust. Tamjyl finds her base school, coordinating teacher and study group secure and supporting. She knows she can talk in confidence about issues and ideas, knowing their feedback will be positive and constructive. Her friend, John, had experienced an "attack" by another teacher who felt a drama lesson was impacting on his own class lesson negatively. Tamjyl trusts her school and teachers. From her experiences at Robinson Primary she has developed the notion that "teaching is that type of career where teachers are all people like that [caring and professional] or else they would not survive". After all, all teachers are leaders, not only in their own classroom but in the school and local community. This demands that they be capable of making decisions based on "head and heart" deliberations – to be fair and just to all including new teachers as learners. This is why Tamjyl considers her whole base school as her placement.

While Rachel is her number one teacher, Tamjyl works with many other teachers on Robinson's staff as well. When the principal of Robinson had first spoken to Tamjyl about this placement, she had implied that other staff would be involved with her programme at different times. The principal had selected Rachel as the coordinating teacher because of her knowledge, experiences and leadership. Tamjyl was glad that she had not been given a choice, as the principal knew her staff members well and was in the best position to make such a decision. An exciting part of working with Rachel is that she also considers this as part of her own professional development. At Robinson Primary there is a real culture of learning – for children and teachers. Rachel is always talking about learning and teaching – to Tamjyl and others, including parents and children. She feels she has an obligation to grow and rejuvenate the profession and this is best done through her involvement and contribution to many learning communities. It is as if Rachel has deliberately clustered many learning communities around her and is constantly creating learning experiences for herself and others. Tamjyl loves the practical teaching and conversations that Rachel creates for her in and around her classroom. She feels special.

In Rachel's words "Each of us is on our own personal learning journey and I am so pleased to be a part of yours. We have developed a very strong bond, which

I am sure the oncampus students would develop with their lecturers. I feel an integral part of your journey and I hope you feel part of mine as I value what you have contributed to my journey.” Tamjyl feels a real loyalty to Rachel.

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## Appendix C: Semi structured interview schedules

### *University Lecturer/Coordinating teacher first interview guide*

**Introduction:** a reminder that the purpose of this interview is to explore the teaching placements of our MMP students, the regular, one day a week that they spend in your classroom and school through the first two years of their programme. This first interview will be based around the collective stories written from the data collected from the student participants in their first two narratives and focus group discussions. Each collective story attempts to reflect the many issues highlighted in the students' own stories and the following focus group discussions.

1. Are there any definitions we need to explore that may help us to better understand the ideas we are discussing together.
2. When sharing ideas and issues associated with the **beliefs and assumptions** that each student brought to the placement, they highlighted...

Dreaming of being a teacher; passion for working with children; their own self-belief as motivation; self-confidence; the influence of previous school and other experiences; their perceived ability to study at university; the time being right for this venture; their personal space being suitable; believing the school would know; importance of support from a range of sources.

#### **What do you think about these from the collective story? Notes ...**

3. When sharing ideas and issues associated with the **expectations and requirements** that each student had before arriving at their placement, they highlighted ...

Expecting this whole thing to be tough; relationships with people and their interpersonal skills; people's knowledge about roles and programmes and becoming informed; communication among the partners; resourcing by school, coordinating teacher and SOE, such as time; the intrusion into personal life; support and guidance; self-determination; commitment to the tasks; and the changing roles for the students.

#### **What do you think about these from the collective story? Notes ...**

4. Tell me about what you think are some important aspects that make for a good teaching placement that we have not already talked about.
  5. Anything further you would add?
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### *Coordinating Teacher/University lecturer second interview guide*

**Introduction:** a reminder that the purpose of this interview is to explore the teaching placements of our MMP students, the regular, one day a week that they spend in your classroom and school through the first two years of their programme. This second interview will be based around the collective stories written from the data collected from the student participants in their third and fourth narratives and focus group discussions. Each collective story attempts to reflect the many issues highlighted in the students' own stories and the following focus group discussions.

It has been most helpful where interviewees have taken some time to write some notes to guide their thoughts and comments. I appreciate any extra time you can give to this.

1. When sharing ideas and issues associated with the **roles and responsibilities** that
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students, teachers and lecturers had in the placement, they highlighted...

Coordinating teacher as mentor, inspirator, adviser, helper, critic, supporter.

Liaison lecturer as placement controller and facilitator

Course lecturers as advisers, guides and facilitators of course content only

Themselves as learners and learner-teachers

Others with roles & responsibilities including children, peers, other teachers and their base school

**What do you think about the ideas from collective story #3? Notes ...**

2. When sharing ideas and issues associated with **connections with a learning community** that each student had in their placement, they highlighted ...

Extensiveness and diversity of the learning communities.

The opportunities for support and collaboration across the range of learning communities

The impact of being able to personalise things on their competence and confidence in the communities

The base school as a professional community where many others see their study as a form of PD

**What do you think about the ideas from collective story #4? Notes ...**

3. I have included the characteristics from the model that I am using to guide this research. Please take some time to consider these characteristics. Tell me what you think are the important characteristics that make for a good teaching placement and how they might relate to each other.
4. Anything further you would add?

**Appendix D: Examples of student teacher narratives***Narrative #1 received 21/3/2005*Beliefs And Assumptions About The Base School

Helen was nervous when she first called her old primary school to ask if she was able to be a student teacher there. There were so many questions running through her head; what's the principal's name? Do I call the teachers by their first names? Will they take me on? The phone call went well. An appointment was set up for her to go and meet with the relieving principal to discuss the possibility of Valley School being her base school.

On the morning of the appointment, Helen woke up early. She always wakes up early when something important is going to happen. Helen got up and got ready. "What shall I wear? Do I dress casual or flash? What do teachers wear?" Helen thought as she was searching through her wardrobe. She decided on a tidy pair of black pants, a casual white shirt and nice shoes. Once she was dressed and had eaten breakfast she waited. Helen had a habit of being early, especially when she was nervous or excited.

At 10:30am, Helen drove to the school. She had arrived half an hour early. To pass the time while waiting for her appointment, Helen went and bought a small bag of lollies to eat, something to pass the time and calm her nerves.

"Eleven o'clock, time to go." Helen made her way to the office. Everything had changed around since she was a pupil at Valley School so she just followed the signs and hoped for the best. "Hi, my name is Helen Green, I'm here to see Mrs. Taylor." She told the receptionist. "She's ready for you, go right in."

After a short discussion about what the school would be required to do for Helen, (not that Helen knew a huge amount about it!!) a decision was made that Mrs. Taylor would check to see if there was a teacher willing to take her on as a student.

A few days later Helen got a phone call from Mrs. Taylor telling her that they would be able to have her as a student in their school.

For the next week, as Helen prepared to go into the school to meet her teacher, she thought about what it would be like to be in a classroom teaching. It had always been her dream to be a primary school teacher, so she was excited. Was the school the same as when she attended? What teachers of hers would still be there? Helen felt she'd be comfortable around students' as she'd always had a good rapport *[sic]* with children. She also felt that, because she had a daughter, she had a slight advantage in understanding children.

When Helen next went into the school, to meet her teacher, the principal (whom was back from leave) told her that the teacher willing to take her on as a student has now left so they no longer had a place for her in the school. What to do now! There was only one week until she was expected to be on campus to start the year and she had to find a new school!! Helen went home and started ringing schools. After ringing about three schools and waiting a further couple of days, she had another class set up to go into.

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Before meeting her new teacher, the same questions again raced through her head; what do teachers wear? Do I call the teachers by their first names? Will the children respond to me well? She also had never been to Aberdeen School before so her mind created a picture of what it may look like, though she knew it would most likely not be like that in reality. Helen imagined the teacher to be slim, with short, dark hair, in her late 30's maybe, for some reason, it was just the image that her mind conjured up. Helen hoped that she would be able to successfully fulfil all the university requirements as well, she was still not entirely sure what she had to do, so that was something she would have to wait to find out about.

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*Narrative #2 received 20/4/2005*

Expectations.

Thinking back to when Jamie started the MMP programme in 2004, she anticipated all things would be smooth sailing and that the base school and the support teacher knew what was expected of them in relation to accommodating her as a teacher trainer. For the initial week she had to do a 3 day observation in her base class. This was done in a Year 13 class only because the teacher was the only one to volunteer to have her. Jamie didn't expect this but carried out her assignment anyway in that class, and enjoyed the experience in there. The following week she requested another room to do her base class in, knowing that the class prior was of college level and not primary level which was the required level by the School of Education. Jamie apologized to the Year 13 teacher for the mishap, thanked her and told her that she was going into another class. The Year 13 teacher wondered where Jamie had gone to and asked her if she could write out an evaluation report after her training on the class and the students about their performance and any other improvements suggested. Jamie agreed to this request.

Jamie had the choice of which level she would like to sit in with and she choose a Year 5 class, and so took the initiative to ask the new teacher if she could attend her class. Jamie picked this particular teacher to work with and learn from because of what she saw in this teacher in terms of the Māori language and her management skills. Jamie anticipated her teacher knew about the MMP programme, her role as a teacher trainer and her expectations and requirements from the SOE after talking to the liaison officer to help clear up a few things that Jamie wasn't sure about, and to be able to help her make her class time enjoyable. Jamie expected more though from her CT by way of advice, ideas on performance, constructive criticism in regards to lesson planning. She assumed that the teacher would naturally share her own experiences with Jamie about her training, any highs or lows that may help but, this was not the case. So, Jamie got on with what she was to do while in the class and helped where the children needed assistance in and around the class, knowing her CT was a busy person, and didn't bothering her too much. Jamie learned from this experience and decided to change her outlook on things, such as being more confident to ask for help, ask anything when she needed it and not assumed it would happen. If she wasn't sure about anything, to ask until she was sure, the CT was sure, and the base school was sure of her expectations as well. The year 2005 was going to be a year with positive expectations for Jamie.



*Narrative #3 received 20/5/2005*

Roles And Responsibilities

Going into the MMP programme Claire had certain ideas of the roles that certain people would play.

Claire's biggest assumption was that since it was a long distance form of learning, and since she had to be self motivated in order to succeed, that it was up to her to keep up and do every thing right. So in a sense Claire thought that she could be super women, and that she really had to be in order to succeed. Claire knew that she had to be an independent learner. Being in her school one day every week Claire thought that her associate teacher would be like a mentor for her. Some one who she could observe to learn from and someone that would give her feed back when she taught her compulsory lessons as part of her course work. Claire really saw her associate teacher as being a mentor.

The role that Claire thought the university played was like being big brother, the controller of whether she passed or failed. Claire knew that she would have a visiting liaison officer from the university who she saw as a facilitator to make sure that things were working correctly in Claire's relationship with the school, making sure that she was settled well and representing the University in a sound manner by being at the school when she was required and that she was conducting herself in an appropriate manner.

Back at the university Claire knew the lecturers were there, but didn't really realize that they were there to support her. She thought of them more as the people that set the work, the discussions and the assignments. Claire thought of the lecturers as the people who established meaningful conversations in the discussion groups in the class forum on specific subject content areas that challenged her to think across a spectrum, expanding her mind, as well as the others that were taking the paper. Claire saw the lecturers as people that were there to ensure that she was completing the required work that was a part of her degree. Claire didn't realize the extent of the role of the lecturers and didn't realize that she could call them if she was struggling with something, she thought of this more as her role, her job to sort out her problems and get on with it since it had been her choice to do the MMP program rather than being on the campus.

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*Narrative #4 received 19/6/2005*

A Brief Final Reflection From Teresa Rex.

Teresa had been having a wonderful time in the classroom during her Base School days. Her Coordinating Teacher, Magenta Clark, was an awesome teacher and on these school days had modelled many strategies that Teresa saw herself using in her future teaching. They seemed to work well together and Magenta involved Teresa in the classroom setting where she was able to practise and participate in activities such as taking the roll, listening to groups read and marking the students' handwriting. Magenta was always willing to answer Theresa's queries and had also given Theresa valuable feedback on the lessons that she had planned

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and carried out as part of her studies. Magenta also supported Teresa in her interactions with others within the school setting as can be seen in the following scenario.

Teresa had taken several of her own lessons so far but the lesson she next had to take – dance - was a bit daunting because it was **really** not in her repertoire! She was not worried about the students – most of her lessons so far had involved the whole class and they had gone well, but the venue was a problem because of the open plan of the classrooms. The noise from the music would disturb other classes if she took the lesson in either her room or the adjoining room which she had used for her other lessons. Magenta suggested the school hall and told Teresa to book it through the office for the time she wanted – this would then be put into the teacher notices to let other teachers know what was happening. Teresa promptly did this and then returned to focus on planning the lesson.

A few days later, Teresa was all set. She had planned a lesson that was fun, covered the requirements and involved some cool music from the “Shrek” soundtrack that the kids would love (the CD belonged to her daughter, who loved it!) – especially if it was played **loud**. Magenta thought the lesson plan was great and on the day everything was going really well - the students were really getting involved and doing what they were supposed to as well as having great fun. Little did either Teresa or Magenta know that the \*\*\*\* was about to hit the fan! Another teacher had decided to use the small room off the hall to take a music lesson whilst Teresa was taking her lesson but unfortunately those students were somewhat distracted by the loud music and enthusiasm of Teresa’s students.

The other teacher concerned stormed into the hall and berated Magenta about how he saw the lesson being taken as “unprofessional” with little regard for others. He always used that room on that day of the week and the list went on! Magenta pointed out that Teresa had booked the hall in advance and had not been told of any clashes – it had also been put in the teacher’s notices - had he not seen it? She also told him that the lesson was going very well but as a consideration, that the music would be turned down. After he had gone, Magenta urged Teresa to forget the interruption and continue on with the lesson – it was great. Theresa did this but remained feeling rather flat after the incident. During the recess, Magenta explained to Teresa that her lesson had been excellent and that she had done everything right, from booking the hall to taking the lesson. She assured her that she had not behaved unprofessionally and that the other teacher had been out of line in his approach. Magenta also said that she would follow the incident up by having a private word with the other teacher.

Teresa began to feel better about the incident and was very thankful that Magenta had understood her feelings and had addressed them. She was fortunate to have found such a supportive and empathetic CT.

**Appendix E: The participant samples**

**Student teachers**

Details of the student teacher participants (names are pseudonyms)

Student	Dispositions	Self description from data	Familial & Financial circumstances	Location. Distance to campus and base school	Education, Teaching & School experiences
<b>Catherine</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Committed</li> <li>• Confident</li> <li>• Leader</li> <li>• Relates well to others</li> <li>• Self manages</li> <li>• Participates &amp; contributes</li> <li>• Uses knowledge &amp; information</li> <li>• Communicates effectively</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mature</li> <li>• Many life skills</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Married</li> <li>• Working partner</li> <li>• Children all 13+ years</li> <li>• Regular work force in a secondary school</li> <li>• Previously a supervisor</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Small</li> <li>• Rural</li> <li>• campus 250k</li> <li>• base 20k</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ongoing</li> <li>• vocational</li> <li>• Working in secondary school</li> <li>• Parent helper</li> </ul>
<b>Claire</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Committed</li> <li>• Confident</li> <li>• Determined</li> <li>• Self manages</li> <li>• Participates &amp; contributes</li> <li>• Uses knowledge &amp; information</li> <li>• Communicates effectively</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “black sheep”</li> <li>• Very individual</li> <li>• Ultimate dream to be an art teacher</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• de facto partner</li> <li>• one child 5-10 years</li> <li>• child at home</li> <li>• parents nearby</li> <li>• regular work force</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• medium</li> <li>• Urban</li> <li>• campus 200k</li> <li>• base 5k</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• vocational</li> <li>• no work in schools</li> <li>• parent helper</li> <li>• began career in management</li> </ul>
<b>Helen</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Energetic</li> <li>• Relates well to others</li> <li>• Self manages</li> <li>• Participates &amp; contributes</li> <li>• Uses knowledge &amp; information</li> <li>• Communicates effectively</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “airy-fairy”</li> <li>• young</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• sole parent</li> <li>• one child 0-5 years</li> <li>• child at home</li> <li>• parents nearby</li> <li>• not working</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• small</li> <li>• Urban</li> <li>• campus 400k</li> <li>• base 5k</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2 years out of school</li> <li>• no work in schools</li> </ul>
<b>Jamie</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Quiet</li> <li>• Relates well to others</li> <li>• Self manages</li> <li>• Uses knowledge &amp; information</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Friends and family told me I could be a teacher</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• sole parent</li> <li>• 1 teen living at home</li> <li>• part time work</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• small</li> <li>• Urban</li> <li>• campus 250k</li> <li>• base 5k</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• no formal ongoing education</li> <li>• teacher aide at base school</li> </ul>
<b>Margaret</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Confident</li> <li>• Committed</li> <li>• Determined</li> <li>• Relates well to others</li> <li>• Self manages</li> <li>• Participates &amp; contributes</li> <li>• Uses knowledge &amp; information</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Quiet</li> <li>• “committed to at-risk school children”</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• married</li> <li>• older children at secondary school</li> <li>• regular work force</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• large</li> <li>• Urban</li> <li>• campus 400k</li> <li>• base 5 k</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• education ongoing</li> <li>• working as untrained secondary teacher</li> </ul>
<b>Mary-Lou</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Confident</li> <li>• Determined</li> <li>• Self manages</li> <li>• Participates &amp; contributes</li> <li>• Uses knowledge &amp; information</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New to schools</li> <li>• Independent</li> <li>• Had previous leadership roles at work</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• married</li> <li>• 2 children 0-5 years</li> <li>• children at base school</li> <li>• parents nearby</li> <li>• part time work</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• large</li> <li>• Urban</li> <li>• campus 400k</li> <li>• base 1k</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• vocational education</li> <li>• no work in schools</li> <li>• parent helper</li> </ul>
<b>Melissa</b>	<p>• Data from this student participant not included in the report as the participant did not provide evidence beyond the first narrative. She was initially invited to participate and agreed but later found her personal circumstance did not allow her the time to commit to focus groups and writing narratives.</p>				

<b>Sandra</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Confident</li> <li>• Committed</li> <li>• Determined</li> <li>• Relates well to others</li> <li>• Self manages</li> <li>• Participates &amp; contributes</li> <li>• Uses knowledge &amp; information</li> <li>• Communicates effectively</li> </ul>	•	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• married</li> <li>• 4 children; 2 at home</li> <li>• 1 child at base</li> <li>• part time work at base</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• small</li> <li>• Rural</li> <li>• campus 400k</li> <li>• base 3k</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• no further education</li> <li>• teacher aide at base school</li> <li>• Parent helper</li> </ul>
<b>Sarah</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Confident</li> <li>• Competent</li> <li>• Self manages</li> <li>• Participates &amp; contributes</li> <li>• Uses knowledge &amp; information</li> <li>• Communicates effectively</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Had previous leadership roles in her work</li> <li>• Been a teacher most of her life – just not formalised</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Married</li> <li>• 4 children</li> <li>• 1 at base</li> <li>• not working</li> <li>• husband shift worker off-shore</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• small</li> <li>• Rural</li> <li>• campus 50k</li> <li>• base 5k</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• time at university</li> <li>• parent helper</li> </ul>

**Coordinating teachers**

Details of the coordinating teacher participants (nomenclatures are random)

Coordinating teacher (SBTE)	Years teaching	Previous ITE student contact? With a student in this study?	Other School obligations	Class Year level	School decile rating and roll	Own ITE programme
CT1	10+	Yes including MMP. No	Acting principal	-	3/370	NZ teachers' college
CT2	10+	Yes including MMP. Yes	Deputy principal	4&5	9/160	NZ teachers' college
CT3	10+	Yes including MMP. Yes	nil	1	8/170	NZ teachers' college
CT4	4	No. Yes	nil	4	8/360	MMP programme
CT5	10+	Yes. Yes	nil	2	8/360	NZ teachers' college
CT6	10+	Yes. Yes	Senior teacher	1	2/140	NZ teachers' college
CT7	6	Yes including MMP. Yes	Senior teacher	1	1/210	MMP programme
CT8	7	Yes. Yes	nil	1	3/370	NZ teachers' college
CT9	Data from this coordinating teacher is not included in the report. The interview material was not focused on her student and was not able to be transcribed with sufficient detail.					
CT10	8	Yes including MMP. Yes	Senior teacher	1	5/370	NZ teachers' college

**University lecturers**

Details of the university lecturer participants (nomenclatures are random)

Liaison lecturers (UBTE)	Years in liaison role	Course lecturer within MMP / other programmes)	Years in teaching service	Years as university-based teacher educator	Experienced associate teacher?	Well-established relationships with these base schools?
LL1	9	No. No	20+	10+	yes	yes (1/1)
LL2	3	Yes. Yes	20+	8	yes	no (0/1)
LL3	9	Yes. Yes	5	10+	no	no (0/2)
LL4	9	Yes. Yes	20+	10+	yes	yes (4/5)